

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 2010

BY DAVE MEARS

THE WEEK'S TOP RAIL AND TRANSIT NEWS (in chronological order):

(MON) Amtrak President Joseph Boardman said that the railroad was anticipating "an exciting 2010" and would shortly announce plans for major equipment purchases, which he said would include over 100 locomotives and "several hundred" passenger cars. Mr. Boardman also highlighted several major infrastructure improvements Amtrak was undertaking, including replacement of the 102-year-old bridge on its Northeast Corridor line in Niantic, CT and installation of Positive Train Control technology on the rail lines it owns and operates, the latter targeted for completion by 2012, three years in advance of the deadline mandated by the Railway Safety Improvement Act of 2008. (ffd: NARP, Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) Canadian National suffered an on-duty employee fatality. The CN brakeman, whose name was withheld at the time of this news report pending notification of next of kin, was reported crushed between two boxcars while switching the Ford plant in Oakville, ON, Canada. (ffd: Hamilton Spectator)

(TUE) Norfolk Southern experienced a trestle fire at Jackson, AL on its line between Birmingham and Mobile. The fire was of such intensity that it greatly damaged the locomotives of a train halted by the blaze. One of the train's crewmen, Aaron Milhouse, Age 46, suffered injuries in the fire that he died of later in the week. (ffd: Trains)

(TUE) The Federal Railroad Administration released its final rule concerning Positive Train Control (PTC), the installation of which is called for by the Railway Safety Improvement Act of 2008. The rule promulgates regulations that require PTC on lines over which scheduled intercity and commuter passenger service is operated, and on Class 1 railroad lines that carry over 5 million gross tons annually and also transport toxic-inhalation-hazard (TIH) commodities. The RSIA mandates that PTC implementation plans be filed with the FRA by April 16, 2010 and that all PTC installation be completed by December 31, 2015. (ffd: Logistics Management, Los Angeles Times, Wall Street Journal)

(TUE) A class action lawsuit was filed in Chicago alleging that funding for Chicago-area transit is administered in a manner that discriminates against minority peoples. The suit charges that Metra commuter rail service is overfunded at the expense of Chicago Transit Authority buses, subways and elevateds. A Metra spokesman said that the railroad "categorically denies any type of racial discrimination" and that "a lot of information stated in the lawsuit [is] not true." (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) Noting that 2010 is the tenth anniversary of Acela Express service, Amtrak said that it would have wireless Internet service available on Acela trains starting in March. Amtrak said that it would also replace current Acela seating with "blue, shiny leather seating," update carpeting and curtains, and install sturdier tray tables, the latter in response to complaints from customers about noisy and loose trays. (ffd: New York Times, wire services)

(WED) New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority debuted its new website. The new site features real-time updates on delays and service disruption occurring on buses, subways and commuter trains serving New York City and its surroundings. It also provides a trip planner, as well as improved system map and fare information. (ffd: New York Times)

(THU) U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood announced new guidelines for federal funding of transit projects. The new guidelines allow funding requests to be evaluated on their environmental, community, and economic benefits, instead of evaluating them strictly by their cost and how quickly they would move riders. The change was quickly lauded by transit planners and advocates, including the American Public Transportation Association, which issued a statement saying, "This new policy will

rescind budget restrictions issued by the previous administration that focused primarily on 'cost effectiveness' (i.e. how much a project shortened commuter times in comparison to cost) and now recognizes the wide range of benefits that public transportation provides." (ffd: NARP, Trains, Washington Post)

(FRI) In a notable advertising campaign, Amtrak has placed ads in the gray bins at O'Hare Airport in which air passengers place carry-on items for security screening. The ads encourage air travelers to consider Amtrak as a travel alternative to, from and through Chicago, which is served by approximately 50 Amtrak trains daily. Ad slogans appeal to potential train travelers to "upgrade to coach" and "wear mismatched socks – we'll never know." (ffd: Chicago Tribune)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending January 9, 2010 – the first full week of 2010 – U.S. rail volume grand totaled 25.5 billion ton-miles, down 12.4 percent from the comparable week in 2009. U.S. carload rail traffic was also down 12.4 percent, down 12.0 in the East and down 12.7 in the West. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 3.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 20.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 0.2 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was up 32.1 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was up 44.4 percent. (ffd: AAR)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The North Carolina Department of Transportation announced that the Carolina Coastal Railway would be the interim operator for its P&N rail line. The Carolina Coastal will begin operating the first four miles of the rebuilt rail line in February. The state purchased the P&N line in 1991. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) Carolina Coastal Railway filed to acquire the Morehead & South Fork Railroad's lease with the North Carolina State Ports Authority. Approval of this filing will permit the Carolina Coastal to operate approximately 1 mile of line and 4 miles of intra-terminal trackage in Moorehead City, NC. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Pioneer Industrial Railway and the Central Illinois Railroad jointly filed to discontinue service over approximately 15 miles of the Kellar Branch, in and around Peoria and Peoria Heights, IL. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) YCR Corporation filed to lease and operate approximately 20 miles of line between Wesley Junction, WA and Toppenish, WA, and approximately two miles of industrial spur near White Swan, WA. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(MON) Related to the change of New Jersey governors, James Simpson was appointed as the head the New Jersey Department of Transportation, succeeding Stephen Dilts. Mr. Simpson is a former chief of the U.S. Federal Transit Administration. Also, Jim Weinstein, a former NJDOT commissioner, was appointed the head of New Jersey Transit, succeeding Richard Sarles. (ffd: Bergen Record, Times-Herald Record)

(TUE) Kansas City Southern announced a reorganization of its transportation and mechanical departments, including the following appointments: Chad Devenney as the GM of its new Midwest Division, covering territory from East St. Louis, IL west to Kansas City, MO, and south to Shreveport, LA; David Carroll as the GM of its new Southeast Division, covering territory from Counce, TN to Jackson, MS, west to Shreveport and south to New Orleans; and Mark Redd as GM of its Southwest Division, covering territory from Laredo, TX to Shreveport. KCSR also appointed Claude Friesland as AVP-Positive Train Control/Advanced Train Implementation; Rick Stones as AVP-Advanced Systems Planning; and Greg Walling as AVP-Network Services. (ffd: KCSR RR)

(WED) Bill Browder of the Association of American Railroads was recognized for his work achievements prior to his February 1 retirement. Mr. Browder is the AAR's Director-Operations and was earlier with the Southern Railway and Amtrak. Mr. Browder, who may be reached prior to his retirement at <mailto:wbrowder@aar.org>wbrowder@aar.org, was recognized in a presentation made this date by the Federal Railroad Administration's Switching Operations Fatality Analysis Working Group.

(WED) Patriot Rail announced the promotion of Lawrence Rutstein from Manager-Special Projects to VP-Contracts & Administration. Patriot Rail also appointed Sandra Dahl its new divisional controller. (ffd: Patriot Rail Corp., Progressive Railroading)

(THU) John Catoe announced that he would resign as general manager of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority effective April 2. Mr. Catoe has WMATA GM for the last three years. (ffd: NARP)

(FRI) The U.S. Surface Transportation Board announced that its Railroad-Shipper Transportation Advisory Council (RSTAC) had elected Terry Voss its chairman and Reilly McCarren its vice-chairman. Mr. Voss is SVP of Ag-Pro and Mr. McCarren is CEO of the Arkansas & Missouri Railroad. RSTAC meetings are not open to the public. (ffd: STB)

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BE SAFE AND PROSPER,

Dave Mears

Cherry Hill, NJ