

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2009

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(MON) Iowa Governor Chet Culver and U.S. Rep. Bruce Braley (D-IA) attended opening ceremonies for Iowa Northern Railway's new bridge across the Cedar River in Cedar Rapids, IA. IANR's earlier bridge across the river was washed away by the June, 2008 floods to that region, which also destroyed or damaged several other railroad bridges. The new bridge incorporates state-of-the-art flood mitigation construction techniques to limit the effects of future flooding. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) Norfolk Southern unveiled an experimental battery-powered locomotive at its Altoona, PA locomotive shops. The 1,500 horsepower switching locomotive, dubbed "NS 999," uses 1,080 12-volt lead acid batteries to store power, and can run for about a day on a charge. It also utilizes regenerative braking energy and has zero exhaust emissions. (ffd: NS RR)

(MON) Canwest News Service reported that Canadian Pacific is planning construction of a new \$400 million tunnel under the Detroit River between Windsor, ON and Detroit. The news report said that construction of the new tunnel, which would replace CPR's current limited-clearance tunnel, would start in two years and said that CPR already had necessary U.S. construction permits. A CPR spokesman declined to comment on the Canwest report, describing it as "speculative" and saying that Canwest did not contact CPR for input on the story. (ffd: Canwest News, Trains)

(MON) Developments were reported related to CSX's and Norfolk Southern's multi-state, public-private corridor improvement projects. CSX reported that its \$842 million National Gateway project had been named "Competitiveness Project of the Year" by the North American Strategic Infrastructure Leadership Forum. NS reported the launch of a new website for its Crescent Corridor project, <<http://www.thefutureneedsus.com/>>www.thefutureneedsus.com. (ffd: CSX RR, NS RR)

(MON) Agricultural observers noted that the overall decline in freight rail traffic due to the economic recession had improved chances for the more timely providing of rail cars needed for harvest transport. "Just place your order today...and we can be there right away," said a BNSF spokesman on a website podcast. Other observers noted that another contributing factor to improved car availability has been increased efficiency through the concentration of harvested grains at a much shorter list of originations and also through increased use of 80 to 100-car unit trains from those locations. (ffd: Lincoln Journal Star)

(MON) The New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority said that it would no longer hamper software developers using publicly-available data about MTA train, bus and subway services. It had previously launched legal battles against these developers, but has recently dropped these and now admits them a mistake. "It's clearly an emerging area, and we're going to keep trying to evolve to keep up with it," said an MTA spokesman. The spokesman said that it would now only ask software developers for fees if they use copyrighted material, such as the round symbols for subway routes. (ffd: New York Times)

(MON) Austin, TX authorities said that their area's new Capital Metro commuter rail line will not now open until at least the first quarter of 2010. The line was originally expected to open last year. A Capital Metro spokesman said that problems including malfunctioning crossing gates and other control devices were still being worked on. The line will run from Leander, TX to downtown Austin. (ffd: Austin America-Statesman)

(MON) A railroad museum volunteer earlier diagnosed with a bipolar disorder was sentenced to three years' probation for stealing aboard a CSX locomotive and operating it seven miles to a trackside bar where he then went to hear a local band play. Brandon Dowdy, Age 22, was also issued a restraining order to keep him away from railroad trains and railroad property. Mr. Dowdy is currently in jail on unrelated charges. (ffd: Miami Sun-Sentinel, Trains)

(MON) Model train manufacturer Lionel said that it had mistakenly included Metro North station stickers in its first shipment of its long-awaited Long Island Rail Road 175th Anniversary commemorative train set. The set is supposed to include stickers replicating the station signs at each of LIRR's 124 stops, but instead included stickers for Metro North's 122 stations. "This has never happened before and all precautions have been made so that it won't happen again," said Lionel's manager of business affairs, William Finkel. (ffd: Newsday)

(WED) Newsweek included four Class 1 railroads on its first-ever "Greenest Companies" list for transportation and aerospace companies. The magazine ranked BNSF No. 6, CSX No. 7, Norfolk Southern No. 11 and Union Pacific No. 20. In their ranking for BNSF, the magazine noted its initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and efforts to phase-out older locomotives and install idle-control devices. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) Canadian Pacific began testing what it referred to as a "monster" intermodal train. The train originated in Vancouver, BC and was to be operated to Toronto, ON. At Calgary, AB, the train was 12,000 feet in length, and included 119 intermodal loads on 165 platforms, and five locomotives. A CPR spokesman said that it was the longest and heaviest intermodal train the railroad has to date operated. (ffd: CPR RR, Railway Age)

(WED) New Jersey Transit began weekend service on its Montclair-Boonton Line from Bay Street Station in Montclair to Newark and Hoboken Terminals. NJT said that weekend trains, which are additional to customary weekdays trains, would run at approximately two hour intervals from about 7AM until a little past midnight. (ffd: Newark Star-Ledger)

(WED) Canadian Pacific announced a new three-year labor agreement with its clerical workforce. The agreement provides for a six percent wage increase for the three years between 2010 and 2012. The clerical workers are part of the United Steelworkers Union. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Amtrak began its new daily train operating over Norfolk Southern's line between Lynchburg, VA and Washington, DC. The train operates into Washington in the morning and back to Lynchburg, in the afternoon. In a related story, a new website was launched, <<http://www.amtrakvirginia.com/>>www.amtrakvirginia.com, to provide specialty information on all Amtrak service in the state. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) A railroad marketing official expressed concern about possible cap-and-trade climate legislation. "We believe the net impact for us is a negative," said BNSF AVP Paul Nowicki. Cap-and-trade is already in use in Europe as part of the effort to limit the effect of climate change. The system works by placing a cap on the total amount of emissions. The cap is lowered over time to reduce the amount of pollutants released into the atmosphere. Businesses are required to buy permits for the amount of pollutants they can emit. If they produce a lower amount than the permit allows, they can trade credits to other businesses that can't meet their limits. (ffd: Galesburg Register Mail)

(THU) Three new railroad bridge projects were noted by news media. In Boone, IA, Union Pacific formally opened its new 2,800-foot-long, 190-foot-high bridge across the Des Moines River. Earlier in the week, BNSF announced that it would replace its 118-year-old swing bridge across the Mississippi River in Burlington, IA with a vertical lift span; the \$70 million project is scheduled for completion in summer 2011. And CSX awarded a contract for the replacement of its built-in-1925 swing bridge across the Mobile River also with a vertical lift span. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, RT&S, wire services)

(THU) Canadian Pacific announced the schedule for its U.S. and Canadian holiday trains. The U.S. train will begin in Scranton, PA on November 28 and conclude in Carpio, ND on December 17. The Canadian train will begin in Montreal, QB on November 28 and conclude in Port Moody on December 18. Complete schedule details, downloads, pictures and video for the holiday trains are available on the CPR website at <<http://www.cpr.ca/>>www.cpr.ca. (ffd: CPR RR)

(FRI) The National Association of Railroad Passengers wrote to Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff criticizing current

design plans for the new passenger rail tunnels under the Hudson River. NARP referred to the current plan, which will have the new tunnels dead-ending at a new New Jersey Transit-only station under 34th Street in Manhattan instead of linking with current Pennsylvania Station and future Moynihan Station as "one of the greatest wastes of taxpayer money in history." The letter went on to say that "The NJT plan is irresponsible at its core...and offers a case study as to why deference to the 'locally preferred alternative' does not always serve the public interest." Construction on the new tunnels began several weeks ago. (ffd: NARP)

(FRI) The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum announced a special celebration of the 10th anniversary of the start of its affiliation with the Smithsonian Institution. The celebration will be held the evening of October 15 at the museum's Baltimore roundhouse, and will include an appearance by Actor Michael Gross, now the museum's spokesperson and best known as the father in the "Family Ties" television series; Mr. Gross worked in railroad service prior to becoming an actor. Further details about the event may be gained by calling Kathy Hargest at (410) 752-2490 x207. (ffd: B&O Museum)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending September 26, 2009, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 28.8 billion ton-miles, down 17.2 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was down 17.1 percent – down 19.3 percent in the East and down 15.5 percent in the West – and U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 16.5 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 15.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 13.8 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was down 8.9 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was down 13.9 percent.

For the period January 1 through September 26, 2009, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 1.08 trillion ton-miles, down 17.3 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 18.2 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 16.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 22.6 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 16.3 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was down 14.0 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was down 18.9 percent. (ffd: AAR)

(NOTE: Canadian traffic totals include those of the U.S. operations of Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National.)

STATS CONTINUED – SAFETY FOR THE FIRST HALF OF 2009:

(FRI) The Federal Railroad Administration reported the following statistics for the first seven months of 2009 versus the first seven months of 2008: train accidents declined 30.9 percent to 1,041; trespasser fatalities declined 6.6 percent to 248; grade crossing fatalities declined 13.1 percent to 139; and on-duty employee fatalities declined 14.2 percent to 12. (ffd: FRA)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(WED) Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa noted the forthcoming construction of a light rail vehicle manufacturing facility in the city. Italian manufacturer AnsaldoBreda agreed to build a \$70 million plant as part of its successful bid to deliver 100 additional light rail cars to the city's light rail system. Construction of the plant will begin next summer. (ffd: Los Angeles Times)

(WED) San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit held a groundbreaking ceremony for the start of construction on the system's Warm Springs extension. The project calls for extending a BART line 5.4 miles south through Fremont Central Park. The work is expected to be complete and the line opened by 2014. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(THU) BNSF appointed Judy Carter its Chief Compliance Officer. Ms. Carter has been a senior general attorney with BNSF since June, 2006. (ffd: BNSF RR)

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BE SAFE AND PROSPER,

Dave Mears

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