

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

For the week ending SAT, November 1, 2003

By Dave Mears

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

(SUN) Burlington Northern Santa Fe suspended rail service into and out of Southern California for several hours due to wildfires in the vicinity of its tracks. Also on Sunday, Amtrak suspended operation of its "Coast Starlight" between Los Angeles and Oakland and also suspended operation of its "Surfliner" services north of Los Angeles due to the wildfires. Amtrak resumed these services the next day. Although further affect on the region's rail operations was minimal, the wildfires continued to burn through the week, spreading across several hundred thousand acres in Southern California. (ffd: BNSF Corp., NARP)

(MON) Washington, DC. bus and subway operator Metro placed the first 4 of its newly renovated subway cars in service. The 4 are the first of 364 Metro subway cars to be renovated by Alstom Transportation at Hornell, NY. between now and December, 2005. A Metro spokesman said that the cars were originally built between 1983 and 1988, and that the renovations would add another 20 years to their service life. (ffd: Hornell Evening Tribune)

(WED) The Canadian Transportation Agency ordered Via Rail Canada to remodel 139 newly acquired "Renaissance" passenger cars to better accommodate travelers with physical disabilities. The CTA's ruling concerning the cars, which were originally built for passenger rail services in Europe and later sold to Canada, was in response to a complaint filed in late 2000 by the Council of Canadians with Disabilities. Among the problems the CTA order Via Rail Canada to correct on the cars are: doors too narrow to accommodate wheelchair travelers; sleeping car rooms too small to allow a traveler to keep his/her wheelchair in his room; and restrooms configured such that a wheelchair traveler cannot make a side transfer to a toilet. (ffd: Canada National Post)

(WED) In one of the most consequential misuses of a cell phone ever aboard a train, a passenger on a Metro North commuter train dropped his phone into a restroom toilet, reached into the toilet to try to recover the phone and there got his arm stuck. The train then halted near Fordham Station in the Bronx, where emergency rescue personnel used power tools including the "jaws of life" apparatus to free the man's arm from the toilet. The halted train backed up service on Metro North's Harlem Line at rush hour, delaying thousands of commuters headed home. (ffd: NY Times)

(WED) New Jersey Transit announced the first class of its new "Transit Academy" educational program aimed at preparing New Jersey high school students for possible careers in a transportation-related field. The class is made up of 24 high school juniors and seniors recommended for the program by their school's guidance counselors. The program includes pairing the students with NJT workers for mentoring, as well as field trips to NJT and other facilities, including to the Federal Transit Administration in Washington, DC. (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer)

(THU) Norfolk Southern announced that 563 of its approximately 4,300 management employees had opted to take its most recent management buyout plan. An NS spokesman said that most applications for buyout would be accepted. The buyout included 3 weeks' pay for each year of service, a year of free health care benefits and 90 days' outplacement assistance. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(FRI) The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers announced that it had signed what it called "a landmark agreement" with shortline Texas Mexican Railway related to remote control locomotive operation. A BofLE spokesman said that the agreement gives remote control assignments to both locomotive engineers and conductors, includes job protection for both crafts and ensures that no current employees will lose their jobs or be furloughed due to RCL implementation. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey announced that PATH subway service would resume to a temporary PATH station at the World Trade Center site on November 23. The station, which will serve until a permanent transit hub facility is constructed following plans for rebuilding the site being finalized and acted on, was constructed over a 16 month period. A PATH spokesman said that the station and its approaches cost \$253 million and involved gutting the train tunnels entering and exiting the site down to their iron frames and then installing 7,000 feet of new track and 50,000 tons of new steel. (ffd: wire services)

(FRI) The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority issued what it called its "final contract offer" to its striking workers. The strike has idled Los Angeles transit bus and subway service since October 14. (ffd: wire services)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending October 25, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 0.4 percent from the comparable week last year, up 1.4 percent in the East, but down 0.4 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included coke up 63.2 percent, non-grain farm products up 49.0 percent and stone, clay and glass products up 14.2 percent; notable traffic decreases included metallic ores down 16.9 percent and coal down 3.2 percent. Also for the week ending October 25, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 5.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 3.6 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.0 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 8.1 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 12.1 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through October 25, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.2 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.6 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 6.8 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 1.7 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 15.2 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

STATS CONTINUED - 3RD QTR., 2003 RESULTS - PART 2:

(WED) Kansas City Southern reported third quarter net income of \$4.3 million, down from \$10.6 million in the third quarter last year. Third quarter revenues were \$146.3 million, up from \$138.9 million in the third quarter last year. KCS's third quarter operating ratio improved to 87.5 percent, compared with 94.3 percent in the third quarter last year. (ffd: KCS Corp.)

(WED) Norfolk Southern reported third quarter net income of \$137 million, up from \$126 million in the third quarter last year. Third quarter revenues were even with the third quarter last year at \$1.6 billion. NS's third quarter operating ratio was also even with the third quarter last year at 80.5 percent. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(THU) Canadian Pacific Railway reported third quarter net income of \$95 million, up from \$65.3 million in the third quarter last year. Third quarter revenues were \$904 million, down from \$917 million in the third quarter last year. CPR's third quarter operating ratio worsened slightly to 76.9 percent, compared with 75.6 percent in the third quarter last year. (ffd: CP Corp.)

(THU) Regional and shortline conglomerate RailAmerica reported third quarter net income of \$4.23 million, down from \$5.91 million in the third quarter last year. Third quarter revenues were \$91.19 million, up from \$84.83 million in the third quarter last year. RailAmerica's North American operating ratio worsened slightly to 75.4 percent, compared with 74.5 percent in the third quarter last year. RailAmerica also announced plans to sell its Freight Australia subsidiary. "We have made a strategic decision to...focus our efforts on North America," said RailAmerica Chairman Gary Marino. (ffd: RailAmerica Corp.)

(THU) Regional and shortline conglomerate Genesee & Wyoming reported third quarter net income of \$7.6 million, up from \$7 million in the third quarter last year. Third quarter revenues were \$61.5 million, compared with \$53 million in the third quarter last year. G&W's North American operating ratio improved slightly to 85.0 percent, compared with 86.2 percent in the third quarter last year. (ffd: G&W Corp.)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Norfolk Southern filed to abandon approximately 2 miles of line between Oakwood, SC. And Montmorenci, SC. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe granted temporary trackage rights to Union Pacific over BNSF's line between Fort Worth, TX. and Temple, TX. totaling approximately 129 miles. The trackage rights, effective from November 1 through approximately December 23, will allow UP to detour over BNSF while UP performs maintenance on its line. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(MON) The Bush Administration nominated Arnold Havens as the new general counsel for the Department of the Treasury. Mr. Havens is presently CSX's SVP-Government Affairs. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe appointed Danny Reynolds as General Manager-Kansas Division and T.D. Smith as General Superintendent-Transportation of its South Region. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

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Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly, usually on Sunday or Monday, to the rail and transit industries and those interested in them. Send an e-mail to weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,
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