

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, NOVEMBER 6, 2004

BY DAVE MEARS

(NOTE: The expression "ffd" at the end of a news item represents "for further details" and suggests a reference source for further related information.)

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

(SUN) While 2 CSX freight trains were passing each other near Little Falls, NY., cars on the first train derailed, which then caused cars on the second train to also derail. A total of 34 cars were derailed with no injuries reported. The accident closed CSX's main line between Albany, NY. and Syracuse, NY. into Monday. Amtrak's Empire Service trains using this line were also temporarily canceled (ffd: Trains)

(MON) Canadian Pacific Railway confirmed that it incurred an on-duty employee fatality on October 27. Christopher Lewis, Age 29 with approximately 1-1/2 years service, was killed while switching cars at Cambridge, ON. Burlington Northern Santa Fe also suffered an on-duty employee fatality on Monday. Brian Henry, Age 45 with approximately 6 months service, was killed when he stepped off his stopped eastbound freight train into the path of an approaching westbound freight train at Bowdoin, MT. Later in the week, Federal Railroad Administration Acting Administrator Betty Monro issued an "urgent safety message" noting that 7 railroad employees had been killed in on-duty accidents in the past 60 days and reminding railroads to continue carrying out the recommendations of FRA's Switching Operations Fatality Analysis Working Group. (ffd: Progressive Railroadng, UTU)

(MON) NBC's Washington, DC. station WRC-TV reported that CSX had voluntarily begun rerouting hazardous material rail shipments away from the Washington area. The station said that this information had been furnished by 3 area congressman and had also been confirmed with officials of the Department of Homeland Security. CSX's action follows publicized concerns, reported in last week's WRR, that the sabotaged release of hazardous chemicals moved on CSX's line skirting government and residential buildings in Southwest and Southeast Washington had the potential to kill or injure thousands. (ffd: WRC TV)

(MON) Amtrak's issued its new system timetable effective this date. Among service changes going into effect is the increase, to 11, of Acela Express weekday roundtrips between New York, NY. and Boston, MA. Also effective are changes in Florida Service, with the "Palmetto" now operating between New York and Savannah, GA. only and on a daylight schedule, and the "Silver Star" again routed via Tampa, FL. Also this date, Amtrak said that it would begin strict enforcement of its baggage policy limiting each passenger to 2 pieces of carryon luggage and 3 pieces of checked luggage. (ffd: Amtrak)

(MON) Little Rock, AR. opened the first leg of its River Rail Streetcar Line. The new service initially operates over 2.5 miles of line between Little Rock and North Rock, with a planned future extension to Little Rock Airport. (ffd: NARP)

(TUE) Voters nationwide participated in the presidential election and also voted on 31 rail and transit-related initiatives at the state and regional level, reportedly the most ever presented on a single election day. In Florida, voters repealed their earlier passage of an amendment to the state's constitution mandating construction of a high-speed passenger rail network. However, Denver, CO. area voters approved a sales tax increase to fund construction of more light rail lines, expansion of bus routes and creation of a commuter rail network, all over a 12-year period. Altogether, 24 of the 31 initiatives were passed. (ffd: NARP, Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) The Federal Railroad Administration proposed new standards of crashworthiness for new and rebuilt locomotives. The proposed standards include new anti-climbing features, collision posts, short-hood structures, under-frame structural improvements and strengthened external fuel tanks. An FRA spokesman said that the agency would accept public comment on its proposals through January 3, 2005. (ffd: Progressive Railroad, USDOT)

(TUE) An Amtrak passenger who had phoned in a bomb threatening the train on which he was riding was sentenced in Madison, WI. Michael Conwill, Age 35, of Anchorage, AK. was sentenced to 3 years and 10 months in prison and also ordered to pay Amtrak \$28,552 in restitution. Mr. Conwill testified that he made his July 6 threat from his mobile phone because he was angry at being served food on board that contained hot peppers, which he said he was allergic to. The sentencing judge also ordered Mr. Conwill to undergo a mental health evaluation while in prison. (ffd: UTU, wire services)

(WED) An empty Washington Metro subway train backed into another subway train with approximately 70 passengers aboard. Approximately 20 of its passengers were injured in the accident, which occurred on the system's Red Line near its National Zoo station. The accident upended the rear car on the empty train and demolished about one-third of it. A Metro spokesman commended the operator of the impacted train, who warned passengers that it was about to be struck in time for them to brace and protect themselves. The cause of the accident is still under investigation. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) Canadian rail industry officials held their own version of the U.S. rail industry's "Day On The Hill." The event was held on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada's capital. Organizers of the event said that they planned to promote the industry's impact on the Canadian economy and environment to encourage lawmakers to draft "meaningful" rail legislation. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) New York State's Metropolitan Transportation Authority scaled back its earlier announced fare increases and service cuts, saying that they would now not need to be as drastic as earlier feared. An MTA spokesman said that the \$2 base bus and subway fare would remain, but that the price of 7-day and 30-day Metrocards would rise and that commuter rail fares would increase by about 5 percent. The spokesman also said that the planned layoff of over 1,000 employees would be canceled (ffd: New York Times, UTU)

(FRI) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced that they had begun testing a new track inspection reporting system. The new system utilizes a disconnected laptop-based tool that allows track inspectors to evaluate and record track status and then upload the collected data at the end of their shift. Called the BNSF Track Inspection Management System, it was developed jointly by BNSF's Engineering and Technology Departments, in collaboration with representatives of the Federal Railroad Administration. (ffd: AAR)

(FRI) The Discovery/Times cable network announced the airing of a world premiere documentary entitled "Trouble On The Tracks." A Discovery/Times spokesman said that the program would cover issues of current interest related to rail-highway grade crossing and rail trespasser fatalities, and is based on a recent series of New York Times articles by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Walt Bogdanich. The show will air on the Discovery/Times Channel at 9 PM on Sunday, November 14. (ffd: Discovery/Times Channel)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending October 30, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.8 percent from the comparable week last year, up 0.8 percent in the East and up 2.6 percent in the West. Also for the week ending October 30, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 12.4 percent – and at 235,876 units, was also a new weekly U.S. record. Finally for the week ending October 30, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 0.2 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.5 percent.

For the month of October, 2004, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.9 percent, compared with October, 2003. Notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 17.1 percent, crushed stone and gravel up 7.4 percent and coal up 1.5 percent; notable traffic decreases included grain down 6.4 percent and motor vehicles and equipment down 5.5 percent. Also for the month of October, 2004, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 10.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 3.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 1.7 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 11.8 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 30.8 percent.

For the period January 1 through October 30, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.9 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 7.6 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 0.3 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 3.2 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 7.0 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The Surface Transportation Board granted emergency service authority to the Arkansas Midland Railroad to allow it to continuing operating approximately 40 miles of Union Pacific line between Dermott, AR. and Warren, AR. The authority allows AKMD to continue operating the line until its formal lease agreement with UP becomes effective. (ffd: STB)

(MON) The Surface Transportation Board approved Great Northwest Railroad's earlier request to abandon the line between Orofino, ID. and Jaype, ID., totaling approximately 28 miles. (ffd: STB)

(WED) The State of Washington announced that it had purchased the Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad, totaling approximately 300 miles of line. The line was purchases from Watco, Inc., which will continue to operate the line under a 15-year lease. (ffd: Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Trains)

(WED) The Red River & Western Railroad filed to abandon approximately 28 miles of line between Carrington, ND. and Bowdon, ND. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The Surface Transportation Board approved the lease and operation, by Buckingham Branch Railroad, of the CSX line between Clifton Forge, VA. and AM Jct., VA., totaling approximately 190 miles of line, and, also, the sublease and operation of the NS line between Gordonsville, VA. and Orange, VA. The line between Orange and Clifton Forge is also used by Amtrak's tri-weekly Cardinal passenger train. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Burlington Northern Santa Fe filed to abandon approximately 44 miles of line between Glendive, MT. and Circle, MT. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The Lake Superior & Ishpeming Railroad filed to abandon approximately 9 miles of line between Humboldt Jct., MI. and the end of track at Republic Mine, MI. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) R.J. Corman Company filed to abandon approximately 36 miles of its Dawkins Line, between Dawkins, KY. and Evanston, KY. (ffd: STB)

PERSONNEL CHANGES AND ALIKE:

(THU) Portec Rail Products announced that they had reached agreement to acquire Kelson Technologies of Vancouver, BC. (ffd: AAR)

(FRI) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced the following appointments: Dick Ebel to AVP-Automotive Marketing; Julie Piggott to AVP-Direct Marketing; and Paul Bischler to AVP & Assistant Controller. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

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Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly to those working in, or interested in, the entities of rail and transit. Send an e-mail to <<mailto:weeklyrailreview@aol.com>>weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND INDUSTRIOUS WEEK,
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