

Weekly Rail Review
For the Week Ending SAT, December 20, 2003
By Dave Mears

(Editor's Note: My apologies for again being behind editing and publishing "Weekly Rail Review." I'm looking to get it current again as soon as possible. As always, I thank you very much for your patience.)

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

(MON) A top official of the U.S. Department of Transportation warned of increasing congestion on portions of the U.S. rail system. In a report released by his office, USDOT Inspector General Kenneth Mead noted that "despite railroads' investments, certain parts of the system have become severely congested." Mr. Mead went on to note that steady declines in track miles and railroad employment over the last 20 years have aggravated already crowded track capacities and that, in many regions, the system "cannot accommodate the conflicting demands of both increasing freight movement and increasing commuter and [intercity passenger] traffic." (ffd: wire services)

(MON) New Jersey Transit's new \$450 million Secaucus Transfer Station began full operation. The station initially opened on August 4 to Bergen Line passengers only and then on September 6 for weekend-only service to all other lines. The station, located near (but connected with) the New Jersey Turnpike in Secaucus, NJ., allows passengers to transfer between 11 of the 12 New Jersey Transit commuter rail lines serving Northern New Jersey. (ffd: NARP, New York Times)

(MON) The Chicago Transit Authority dedicated its renovated station and adjacent rail yard at 54th St. on the Cermak/Douglas Branch of its Blue Line. The renovation is part of a \$482 million rebuilding of the Cermak/Douglas Branch scheduled for completion in January, 2005. A CTA spokesman noted that the project is CTA's largest and most expensive capital improvement project to date. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(MON) The nations of Spain and Morocco announced agreement to build a rail tunnel between their two countries. A spokesman for the two nations said that the tunnel, which is as yet unfunded, would total approximately 25 miles in length linking the continents of Europe and Africa. The spokesman added that initial plans call for the tunnel to be constructed in the comparatively shallow waters of the Straits of Gibraltar, approximately 25 miles west of the British territory of Gibraltar. (ffd: BBC)

(TUE) Baltimore, MD.'s Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum received a \$300,000 grant from Maryland's Community Legacy Program. The grant will go toward repairing the museum's roundhouse roof, which collapsed under the weight of snow on February 18, and also that part of the museum's collection damaged in the collapse. "This is an investment in a challenged part of the city and a wonderful statement of significance for the museum," said the museum's executive director, Courtney Wilson. (ffd: Baltimore Sun)

(TUE) The AirTrain light rail line opened in Queens, NY. The line, which totals approximately 8 miles in length and cost approximately \$1.9 billion to construct, connects JFK International Airport with the Long Island Rail Road's Jamaica Station and 4 New York City subway lines. Opening ceremonies were marred by a train door closing unexpectedly on New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and the line having to be temporarily shut down later in the day for other door problems. AirTrain marks the first time a New York City airport has been served directly by a passenger rail line. (ffd: NARP, New York Times)

(WED) The U.S. Federal Railroad Administration released an "interim final rule" outlining conditions under which communities may impose bans on locomotive horns being blown at highway-rail grade crossings. The rule allow communities to establish or continue "whistle bans" provided that specific safety improvements are made to protection devices and setups at such crossings. The rule is set to take effect December 18, 2004 and will pre-empt existing state and local laws governing "whistle bans". (ffd: USDOT)

(WED) Officials dedicated and reopened the former Chesapeake & Ohio Main St. rail station in downtown Richmond, VA. The station, which was originally opened in 1901 but closed in 1975, will serve Amtrak train services operating between Newport News, VA. and Washington, DC. Amtrak's current station at Staples Mill Road in Richmond's northern suburbs will also continue in service. The following day, Thursday, Amtrak had to temporarily suspend services through Richmond due to the derailment of a CSX freight train at the junction of CSX and NS lines just south of Alexandria, VA. Service was resumed later in the week. (ffd: Richmond Times-Dispatch)

(WED) Officials in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania announced the building of a new rail station at Paradise, PA. The station will allow connection between the Amtrak Philadelphia-Harrisburg Line and the famed tourist line operated by the Strasburg Railroad. The station, which is to cost approximately \$2.75 million, will include a turntable for Strasburg Railroad locomotives. The complex is scheduled for completion in late 2004. (ffd: Intelligencer Journal)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending December 13, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.8 percent from the comparable week last year, up 1.5 percent in the East, but down 2.7 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases include coke up 42.5 percent, crushed stone, sand and gravel up 19.3 percent and non-grain farm products up 18.4 percent; notable traffic decreases included nonmetallic ores down 31.8 percent and coal down 4.5 percent. Also for the week ending December 13, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 8.9 percent, Canadian

intermodal rail traffic was down 8.8 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 2.3 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 2.8 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through December 13, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 6.7 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 1.4 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 1.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 5.6 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 2.9 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 11.4 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

None of note this week.

PERSONNEL CHANGES:

None of note this week.

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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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