

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, DECEMBER 4, 2004

BY DAVE MEARS

(Editor's 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) A Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train derailed 42 cars near Ottumwa, IA. There were no hazardous material problems and no one was injured in the derailment, which blocked BNSF's mainline through Ottumwa into Monday. The train, which totaled 110 cars in length, had been enroute from Wyoming's Power River Basin to interchange and finally to East Lake, OH. (ffd: Trains)

(SUN) 15 students were struck and killed by a train at Sukhi Sevania station in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. The students apparently got off their train, which was standing in the station, and opted to squat on an adjacent track waiting to reboard their train when they were struck. An additional but unknown number of other students were injured in the accident. (ffd: Trains)

(SUN) Hong Kong awarded Ko Lai-chak and Li Ching lifetime passes on its Kowloon-Canton Railway. The passes were in appreciation of Ko and Li winning silver medals in table tennis at last summer's Athens Olympic Games. Their Olympic medals were only the second ever won by Hong Kong, which although now part of China has continued to field a separate Olympic team. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) 2 CSX freight trains collided head-on at 2:30AM near Vitus, FL., approximately 25 miles northeast of Tampa. The crash killed one of the involved crew members, who was later reported to have leaped from his train just before impact. 2 other crew members were seriously injured. Between the 2 trains, 4 locomotives and 14 cars were derailed. Investigators said that one of the trains appeared to have improperly passed a stop signal and that thick fog in the area may have been a contributing cause. (ffd: St. Pete Times, wire services)

(MON) The Association of American Railroads reported that the railroad industry would hire more than 80,000 new employees this year through 2010. The AAR added that the hiring surge was due to an aging workforce, many of whom will soon retire, as well a significant upturn in rail traffic. A related article in the Toledo Blade newspaper included interviews with Norfolk Southern engineers Jack Tighe and Bo Williamson, who discussed the significant commitment of time required for train and engine service. (ffd: AAR, Toledo Blade)

(MON) Burlington Northern Santa Fe was recognized by InfoWorld Magazine in its annual listing of the top 100 technological advancements made by companies. BNSF, which placed 6th in the magazine's rankings, was recognized for its new voice train reporting system. The system uses information spoken by train crews to input car and train

arrivals, departures, pickups and setouts into BNSF's information network. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(MON) The New York City Transit Authority moved forward on its proposed ban on picture taking, filming and videotaping in the city's subway system. The proposal was notably criticized by subway riders, transit advocates, civil libertarians and even New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg when it was first outlined last May. In announcing that they were nevertheless moving forward, NYCTA spokesman Charles Seaton said, "In this time of heightened security, we don't want individuals documenting anything that could be used to harm riders." The proposal faces a 45-day public comment period, after which it will be voted on by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority board. (ffd: New York Daily News)

(MON) Toyota announced that it had partnered with Amtrak to advertise the Toyota Tundra Double-Cab pickup truck. A Toyota spokesman said that a full-size image of the truck with related information had been painted on the sides of 2 Amtrak locomotives, one of which will be operated in Texas Eagle Service between Chicago, IL. and San Antonio, TX. and the other operated in Silver Service between Washington, DC. and Florida. The spokesman added that Toyota had chosen these routes because they gave high exposure through key markets for their pickup truck. (ffd: Toyota Corp.)

(TUE) Virgin Trains announced that it had joined with other British passenger rail operators in a campaign against abuse of rail personnel. The campaign, known as the Rail Personal Security Group, includes a series of "eye-catching and thought-provoking posters" for display at rail stations. Last year, 3,500 assaults were reported against British rail personnel, an increase of 18 percent from the previous year. (ffd: Virgin Trains Corp.)

(TUE) Canadian scientists announced that they believed they had found 4 rail tank cars that had vanished nearly 30 years ago into coastal waters near Vancouver. The 4 cars, all loaded with chlorine, were believed to have fallen overboard off a car float during the night of February 18, 1975. The scientists said that their findings were the result of newly available underwater detection equipment. They added that they would conduct further examinations to determine if the chlorine still posed a threat or if it had slowly leaked out and turned to bleach in the intervening years. (ffd: Toronto Globe and Mail)

(WED) The Alaska Railroad awarded Union Switch & Signal a contract to install a Positive Train Control System for the railroad. A US&S spokesman said that this would be the first significant stand-alone PTC installation, as up to now PTC systems have been overlaid on existing signal systems. The spokesman noted that ARR is currently mostly unsignaled, with train locations determined by onboard GPS transceivers. (ffd: Railway Age, US&S Corp.)

(WED) U.S. Representative Ernest Istook (R-OK.) reconsidered his action, reported in last week's WRR, deleting funding for local transportation projects of fellow representatives who had supported full funding for Amtrak. In a letter to those congressmen, Mr. Istook, who is chairman of the House Subcommittee on Transportation, Treasury and Independent Agencies, said "I will do everything in my power to rectify this as promptly as possible, and to give your requests every proper consideration." The National Association of Railroad Passengers reported that Mr. Istook reconsidered due to "elements of pressure, including a reported near-physical confrontation between himself and one of the slighted Republican legislators." (ffd: NARP)

(WED) Burlington Northern Santa Fe began another segment of their effort to double-track their Transcon Line between Chicago, IL. and Los Angeles, CA. A BNSF spokesman said that the new project would add a second main track between

Milan and Attica, KS. The spokesman added that, once this segment is completed, more than 90 percent of this 2,214 mile long route will be double-tracked. (ffd: Wellington Kansas Daily News)

(WED) Amtrak announced that it had contracted with Skanska AB Corporation to renovate ventilation and safety systems in its tunnels underneath the East River between Manhattan and Queens. The work, totaling \$126.6 million in improvements, will include new ventilation air shafts and improved emergency access to and from the tunnels. Work will begin in January, 2005 and is expected to be complete by 2009. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) Rail manufacturer Bombardier announced that it would cut 2,200 more jobs in its rail transportation division, totaling 7,600 job cuts by April, 2006, which represents 21 percent of the division's current workforce. The cuts will mainly be at Bombardier facilities in Germany, Britain and Canada. A Bombardier spokesman said that the changes were made necessary by lowered growth projections in its core European markets. (ffd: BofLE, wire services)

(THU) The National Small Shipments Traffic Conference announced plans to hold a seminar February 8 and 9 at the Oak Brook Marriott in Chicago, IL. A spokesman for the conference said that the seminar would be entitled "Logistics 101" and was "designed for professionals who need a broader understanding of logistics fundamentals." The spokesman added that the event would include presentations on all transportation modes, emerging logistics trends, current technologies, trade and compliance issues, legal requirements and best logistics practices. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) Norfolk Southern announced its planned capital spending for 2005. An NS spokesman said that planned spending would total \$938 million, including \$671 million for roadway projects and \$225 million for equipment. The spokesman added that equipment spending would include \$154 million to purchase 52 6-axle locomotives, upgrade existing locomotives, certify and rebuild 300 multilevel automobile racks and purchase 317 bilevel racks at the end of their lease. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(FRI) CSX dedicated its new consolidated training center in Atlanta, GA. A CSX spokesman said that the \$8 million center is a "multi-disciplinary facility for students who are training to be locomotive engineers, conductors, track and signal technicians, mechanics and yard managers." The spokesman added that the center would conduct its first classes training conductors in January. (ffd: CSX Corp.)

(FRI) The Chicago Transit Authority reversed its earlier decision not to operate its annual Holiday Train this year. A CTA spokesman said that the agency would now operate the decorative train, which it had earlier said it would not operate in the face of significant budget and service cuts currently projected for early next year. CTA has operated its Holiday Train for the last 12 years and has incurred Chicago media and political criticism for its recent stance. (ffd: Chicago Tribune, Trains)

(FRI) Washington, DC.'s Metro subway system launched a new campaign to discourage eating and drinking on trains and at stations. The campaign features 4 somewhat humorous posters, one of which has the expression, "If we let people eat and drink on the train, we'd get a lot of new riders," beneath which is a large picture of a cockroach. Metro came under great criticism a few years' back after one of its police arrested a 12-year old for eating french fries on a train. (ffd: wire services)

(FRI) Minneapolis, MN. opened 4 more miles of its Hiawatha light rail line. The line now totals 12 miles and extends service to the Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport, the nearby city of Bloomington, MN. and the Mall of America. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending November 27, which included the U.S. Thanksgiving Holiday, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 4.8 percent from the comparable week last year, up 5.1 percent in the East and up 4.5 percent in the West. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 13.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 4.7 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 0.6 percent.

For the month of November, 2004, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.6 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 12.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 2.3 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 0.8 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 8.8 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 23.9 percent, all when ranked with November, 2003.

For the first 11 months of 2004, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.9 percent, compared with the first 11 months of 2003. Notable traffic increases during this period included metals and metal products up 8.9 percent, chemicals up 4.4 percent and coal up 3.1 percent; notable traffic decreases included motor vehicles and equipment down 3.7 percent. Also for the first 11 months of 2004, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.9 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 7.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 0.2 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 3.6 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 8.4 percent. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The Surface Transportation Board approved Kansas City Southern's earlier request to absorb the Texas Mexican Railway into KCS. The approval also includes the U.S. portion of the International Rail Bridge at Laredo, TX. (ffd: KCS Corp., STB)

(MON) Norfolk Southern filed to abandon approximately 34 miles of line between Burkeville, VA. and Pamplin City, VA. In its filing, NS stated that the proposed abandonment is a surplus line parallel to the NS "B-Line" main line between these 2 points. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) Indiana Rail Road filed to acquire, from the Monon Rail Preservation interim holding company, and operate approximately 4 miles of line between Hunter, IN. and Ellettsville, IN. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) Norfolk Southern filed to abandon approximately one-quarter mile of line in Urbana, IL. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) Norfolk Southern also filed to abandon approximately 14 miles of line between Virginia Beach, VA. and Tidewater Jct. in Norfolk, VA. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) Norfolk Southern also filed to remove its automatic block signal system between CP-Stell in Lemoyne, PA. and CP-Day in Enola, PA., totaling approximately 2 miles. In its filing, NS stated that the removal would provide "greater operating efficiency" related to switching in Enola Yard. (ffd: USDOT)

(TUE) Union Pacific filed to remove its traffic control system on approximately 6 miles of its Milpitas Subdivision, between Irving, CA. and Milpitas, CA. In its filing, UP stated that the signal system was no longer required, "due to changes in operation and traffic." (ffd: USDOT)

(WED) The Columbus and Ohio River Railroad announced that it had acquired, from CSX, and would operate approximately 20 miles of line between Newark, OH. and Mt. Vernon, OH. (ffd: Mt. Vernon News)

(WED) Santa Cruz County, CA.'s Regional Transportation Commission announced that it had reached agreement with Union Pacific to acquire UP's line between Watsonville, CA. and Davenport, CA. An RTC spokesman said that the it would pay UP approximately \$19 million for the line. (ffd: Santa Cruz Sentinel, Trains)

(THU) Sierra Pacific Industries filed to abandon approximately 12 miles of line between Lone, CA. and Martell, CA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The City of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada announced that it was negotiating with Canadian Pacific Railway to purchase CPR's line in Ottawa between Leitrim Road and the Ottawa River. A city spokesman said that it had offered CPR \$12.6 million for the line, which would then be used as right-of-way for an expansion of Ottawa's light rail system. (ffd: CBC)

(FRI) The State of Washington filed to acquire, from the Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad, approximately 188 miles of line between various points. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The State of Wisconsin and the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad jointly filed for the former to acquire and the latter to operate approximately 37 miles of line between Saukville, WI. and Kiel, WI., which was earlier abandoned by the Wisconsin Central. (ffd: STB)

PERSONNEL CHANGES AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Canadian National announced that it had renamed its St. Clair Tunnel in honor of Paul Tellier, who was CN's president and CEO between 1992 and 2002. The tunnel, which was opened in 1995, runs beneath the St. Clair River between Sarnia, ON. and Port Huron, MI. (ffd: CN Corp.)

(WED) William Loftus passed away at Age 74. Mr. Loftus was president of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association between 1990 and 1993 and had earlier been a 23-year Federal Railroad Administration employee, eventually becoming FRA's Executive Director. (ffd: NARP, Railway Age)

(WED) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced the following appointments in its Domestic Intermodal Department: Julie Piggott to head its Expedited Services Group; Tom Williams to head its Premium Truckload Group; Jim Clark to head its J.B. Hunt Group; Tom Plowman to head its National Account Sales Group; and Scott Webb to head its Domestic Marketing Group. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) The Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway appointed Frederick Jones VP-Sales and Marketing. Mr. Jones replaces William Schauer, who is retiring. (ffd: MM&A Corp.)

(FRI) Furthering its recent efforts to intensify supervision of its San Antonio, TX. area operations, Union Pacific appointed Michael Mitchell General Director of Operating Practices of its San Antonio Service Unit. The duties of Mr. Mitchell's newly created position will include overseeing operating practices and safety initiatives in the unit, as well as ensuring UP regulatory compliance. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, UP Corp.)

(FRI) Union Pacific appointed Chris Peterson Director-Government Affairs, for the states of AZ., KS., MO., NM., OK., OR., UT. and WA. (ffd: UP 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 PROSPEROUS WEEK,

Dave Mears

Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA