

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2010

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(SAT) Three teenage girls trespassing across a railroad bridge in Melbourne, FL were struck and killed by an approaching train. The incident was reported by national news media. The train and tracks were those of the Florida East Coast Railway. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) U.S. Rep. Jim Oberstar (D-MN) introduced, "The Public Transportation Safety Program Act of 2010." The bill intends increased federal and state oversight of the nation's transit systems. In a prepared statement, Mr. Oberstar said that "[this] proposal...will assure that each state has adequate number of fully-trained staff, that it has sufficient authority granted by the state legislature and governor, that it can compel compliance by transit agencies, and that the state oversight entity has financial independence from the transit systems it oversees." (ffd: wire services)

(MON) Kansas City Southern replaced BNSF as one of the 20 U.S. transportation stocks on the Dow Jones Transportation Average. The move follows BNSF having been taken private as a result of the recent completion of its purchase by Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway LLC. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(MON) Amtrak said that it has asked several architectural and real estate firms to improve the commercial facilities of Chicago Union Station, including improving retail space in and around the station's Great Hall and office space above it. It said that a previous effort to do this in partnership with the real estate firm Jones Lang LaSalle did not materialize. Amtrak also said that it was looking at plans to improve the station's passenger concourses, which have been criticized by riders for their many narrow corridors, locomotive exhaust fumes, and other problems. (ffd: Chicago Tribune)

(MON) Austin, TX's Capital Metro said that it expected to start service on its new commuter rail line sometime in March. The line's opening has been delayed for some time due to numerous problems, including those related to its communications and signaling system. The line will operate from Leander, TX to stops in Austin, Texas's capital city. (ffd: Austin American Statesman)

(TUE) In response to a projected budget deficit totaling in the hundreds of millions of dollars, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority said that it would eliminate more than 1,000 positions. It said that "these cuts represent 15 percent of [its] administrative payroll" and will also include laying off up to 500 subway station agents. The New York Daily News reported that the agency would re-launch its long-sought effort to eliminate conductor positions on subway trains, with MTA Chair Jay Walder noting that some layoffs and service cuts might be averted if significant savings can be found by altering "outdated work rules and past practices." (ffd: NYMTA, New York Daily News)

(TUE) The Orlando Sentinel reported that Amtrak had notified the Florida Department of Transportation that it would terminate a previous agreement to share tracks with the SunRail commuter rail service, which is projected to serve riders in the Greater Orlando area starting in 2012. The newspaper reported that the agreement termination results from liability concerns. Presently, Amtrak's "Silver Meteor" and "Silver Star" trains operate on the CSX line that is to be owned by SunRail. (ffd: Orlando Sentinel, Trains)

(WED) CSX and Union Pacific announced the creation of UMAX, a new interline intermodal partnership for domestic shipments. The railroads said that the service will launch March 29 and offer service to 600 origin-destination lanes. They added that customers will have access to more than 20,000 53-foot containers, and that shipments can move on just one transportation bill

and ramp-to-ramp. (ffd: CSX RR, UP RR, Trains)

(WED) The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum in Baltimore, MD announced the completion of restoration of its famed "Thatcher Perkins" steam locomotive. The locomotive was severely damaged in the February, 2003 collapse of the museum's roundhouse roof during a severe snowstorm. The museum said that the locomotive would be unveiled and commemorated in a ceremony on Saturday, March 13. (ffd: B&O Railroad Museum)

(THU) Two notable rail events took place in and near Washington, DC this date. During the day, the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association and sister rail associations and organizations presented "Railroad Day On Capitol Hill." The event saw hundreds of railroaders, rail shippers, and rail suppliers conduct congressional visits to relate the federal legislative needs of the rail industry. Also this date, in nearby Crystal City, VA, the U.S. Federal Railroad Administration held a forum to present the initial findings of its Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) Working Group. The forum was presented to senior railroad operations and safety officials, who helpfully commented on the findings and suggested behavioral and procedural change that could reduce and possibly eliminate employee fatalities occurring during switching operations. (ffd: FRA, Progressive Railroading)

(THU) VIA Rail Canada's "Ocean" train derailed near Quebec City, QB. The locomotives and several cars of the train were derailed, and several passengers were injured, none seriously. The train was en route from Halifax, NS to Montreal, QB at the time of the accident. (ffd: Trains, wire services)

(THU) Another snowstorm, the fourth of note this winter, deposited measurable snow accumulations in various parts of the nation's Middle Atlantic states. The wet snow notably downed trees and power lines, caused some passenger trains of Amtrak, Long Island Rail Road, Metro North and New Jersey Transit to be delayed or canceled. A train on Metro North's and New Jersey Transit's Port Jervis line was delayed nearly 11 hours when trees fell on tracks in front of it and behind it. (ffd: Mid-Hudson News, New York Times)

(FRI) The Wall Street Journal reviewed a new book on the history of railroading. Entitled "Blood, Iron And Gold: How The Railroads Transformed the World," the 376-page book was written by Christian Wolmar and published by Public Affairs Press. In his book, which covers railroading from its beginnings to the present time, Mr. Wolmar writes, "Trains may be of the past, but they are still the future...They will improve, not just on high-speed lines, but elsewhere too as technology makes them more efficient....And there is the rather delicious prospect that they might conceivably outlive the car." (ffd: Wall Street Journal)

#### STATS – CLASS 1 RAIL TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending February 20, 2010, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 29.8 billion ton-miles, down 0.7 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.6 percent, down 7.1 percent in the East, but up 2.2 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included metals and metal products up 44.6 percent, motor vehicles and equipment up 30.5 percent, and grain up 21.9 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 19.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 9.6 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 12.5 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was up 25.3 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was up 12.7 percent.

For the period January 1 through February 20, 2010, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 201.8 billion ton-miles, down 0.8 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.8 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.7 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 12.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.9 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was up 24.1 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was up 31.7 percent. (ffd: AAR)

#### EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(WED) The Nebkota Railway withdrew its objection to the purchase of Canadian Pacific's former Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern line between Chardron, NE and Dakota Jct., NE. The move appears to clear the way for the Nebraska Northwestern Railroad purchase of the seven miles of line from Chardron to Dakota Jct. and its lease of an additional 20 miles of line from Dakota Jct. to the BNSF connection at Crawford, NE. (ffd: RT&S, STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(TUE) Gregory Deibler was appointed executive director of the newly-formed Railroad Management Association. According to its website, the association will work to "serve and support the careers of freight and passenger railroad management personnel." (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) The New York City Transit Authority appointed Carmen Bianco its SVP-Subways. Mr. Bianco was earlier with the NYCTA, and also earlier worked at Amtrak and New Jersey Transit. Mr. Bianco succeeds Steven Feil, who will now serve as VP & Chief Maintenance Officer. (ffd: NYMTA)

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BE SAFE AND PROSPER,

Dave Mears

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