

## WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

For the week ending SAT, March 13, 2004

By Dave Mears

(NOTE: The abbreviation "ffd" represents "for further details" and denotes a website or other news reference where further details of this news may be found.)

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

(MON) A poll released by the American Public Transportation Association revealed that Americans, by a large majority, support public transit. The survey results showed that 80 percent of Americans believe increased investment in public transportation will strengthen the economy and reduce traffic congestion, air pollution and energy consumption, and that 76 percent support increased public funding to expand and improve public transportation services. The survey was conducted by Wirthlin Worldwide Corp. for the APTA. (ffd: APTA)

(MON) Amtrak announced that the project to rebuild the Rohr Turboliners for Amtrak Empire Services in New York State would be scaled back. An Amtrak spokesman said that only 4 Turboliners trainsets would now be rebuilt, instead of the 7 originally planned. The spokesman added that an additional car would be put in each trainset to increase seating capacity. The Turboliner project is being co-funded by New York State, with the rebuilding being performed by Super Steel Schenectady in Schenectady, NY. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) The National Transportation Safety Board issued a report commenting that more than half of the 60,000 rail tank cars in service and carrying hazardous materials are not built to current industry standards and are more likely to break open after derailing. The comments were included in an NTSB report relating to a January, 2002 tank car derailment near Minot, ND. in which hazardous materials were spilled and poisonous fumes were released that killed 1 person and injured 333 others. The report recommended that the Federal Railroad Administration study older tank cars and rank them by the likelihood of their coming apart in a crash, and also develop standards for new tank car construction. (ffd: NTSB, wire services)

(TUE) A Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train derailed 31 cars near White Earth, ND. There were no injuries in the derailment. A BNSF spokesman said that the cause of the derailment was under investigation. The derailment blocked the BNSF line until Thursday. (ffd: KMXA TV, wire services)

(WED) Metro North Railroad suffered an on-duty employee fatality. Robert Ard, Age 46, was killed while switching commuter rail cars early Wednesday morning in MNRR's Stamford, CT. rail yard. Mr. Ard was an MNRR conductor. (ffd: WNBC)

(WED) In an unusual event in New York City, a locomotive rolled loose and traveled for approximately 1 mile before coming to a halt. During the course of its runaway trip, the locomotive, which belonged to the Long Island Rail Road, struck several vehicles at crossings, injuring the occupants of these vehicles, 2 of them critically. The locomotive traveled on tracks of the Bushwick Branch and finally came to a stop at Varick Avenue in Brooklyn. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said that the cause of the accident was under investigation. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) New Jersey Transit's Board of Directors approved construction of a commuter rail link to the Meadowlands Sports Complex in East Rutherford, NJ. Funding for the link, expected to cost approximately \$150 million, was authorized last December by the Port of New York and New Jersey. An NJT spokesman said that the new line would be a loop off NJT's Pascack Valley Line and that construction was expected to start in 2005 and be complete by 2007. NJT's Board also approved a \$43.5 million link between the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail Line and a new Hudson River ferry terminal at Weehawken, NJ. (ffd: Newsday)

(WED) The National Transportation Safety Board announced that toxicology tests on the remains of one of 2 crewmembers operating a UP freight train involved in a February 21 collision near Carrizozo, TX. were positive for marijuana. An NTSB spokesman said that tests were positive for Anthony Rodella, Age 57, the engineer who died in the collision. Tests were negative for Jeffrey Bohler, Age 32, who was also killed in the crash, and were also negative for the crewmembers of the freight train that Rodella's and Bohler's train struck. The spokesman added that the test results would be sent to an additional testing laboratory for further verification. (ffd: NTSB, wire services)

(WED) The U.S. Department of Transportation released its first monthly Transportation Services Index. A USDOT spokesman said that the TSI is intended as a new monthly economic indicator intended to measure the performance of the economy as reflected in air and rail passengers and freight. The first data released indicated a TSI of 118.5 for December, 2003, representing a 1 percent increase between November and December. (ffd: USDOT)

(THU) 10 bombs exploded nearly simultaneously aboard several passenger trains in and near the Spanish capital of Madrid. The bombs caused the deaths of over 200 persons and injured nearly 1,400 others. Although terrorists advocating a separate state for Spain's Basque region were initially blamed for the attacks, attention shifted over the next several days to their possibly being the actions of other terrorist organizations, including al-Qaida. In the U.S., the Department of Homeland Security issued a bulletin advising state officials, police, rail and transit agencies to increase their security alertness in light of the attacks. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Officials of the Altoona, PA. Railroaders Memorial Museum and Osram Sylvania Corporation announced a celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of the completion of Altoona's landmark Horseshoe Curve. A spokesman noted that Osram Sylvania is the successor to Sylvania Corporation, which took several celebrated pictures of the Horseshoe Curve during its 100th anniversary celebration in 1954 utilizing over 6,500 Sylvania Blue Dot flashbulbs. The spokesman said that celebration festivities, which are scheduled for July 4, would include an extensive fireworks display and a commemorative relighting of the Curve. (ffd: Railroaders Heritage Corp., Norfolk Southern Corp.)

(FRI) The former Soviet state of Kazakhstan announced plans to build a railroad ultimately linking China with Eastern Europe. A spokesman for Kazakhstan National Railways said that the railroad, which is not yet funded, would take approximately 4 years to construct at a cost of approximately \$3.5 billion. The spokesman said that the railroad would provide a more expedition rail link out of China to Eastern Europe, the only existing link being a line off of the Trans-Siberian Railway out of Eastern Russia. (ffd: wire services)

#### STATS:

(THU) For the week ending March 5, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 4.0 percent from the comparable week last year, up 2.4 percent in the East and up 5.5 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included coke up 54.5 percent, grain up 17.6 percent and waste and scrap materials up 14.1 percent; notable traffic decreases included primary forest products down 14.0 percent and non-grain farm products down 4.9 percent. Also for the week ending March 5, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 10.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 14.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 1.1 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 9.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 4.8 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through March 5, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.9 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.5 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 5.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 1.8 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 9.8 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 10.2 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

#### ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(WED) California's Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit District filed to acquire, from Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority, approximately 66 miles of line between Healdsburg, CA. and Lombard, CA. via Schellville, CA. The purpose of the acquisition is to preserve the rail line for possible future commuter rail service. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe filed to abandon approximately 3 miles of line in and near South Hutchinson, KS. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Columbia Basin Railroad filed to lease, from Clark County, WA., and operate approximately 14 miles of line between Vancouver Jct., WA. and Battle Ground, WA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Heart of Georgia Railroad filed to lease, from Ogeechee Railway, and operate approximately 43 miles of line between Midville, GA. and Vidalia, GA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Georgia Midland Railroad filed to lease, from Ogeechee Railway, and operate 1) approximately 15 miles of line between Roberta, GA. and Fort Valley, GA. 2) approximately 13 miles of line between Fort Valley, Ga. and Perry, GA. 3) approximately 29 miles of line between Dover, GA. and Metter, GA. 4) approximately 22 miles of line between Ardmore, GA. and Sylvania, GA. (ffd: STB)

PERSONNEL CHANGES:

(MON) The Canadian government announced that it had dismissed Via Rail President Marc LeFrancois. Mr. LeFrancois's departure follows that of Via Rail Chairman Jean Pelletier last week. Both Mr. Pelletier and Mr. Francois had recently come under severe criticism related to Via Rail's handling of government sponsorship monies. (ffd: Montreal Gazette)

(FRI) RailAmerica appointed William Pagonis Chairman. Mr. Pagonis had previously been RailAmerica Vice Chairman. A RailAmerica spokesman said that Gary Marino would continue to serve as its President and CEO. (ffd: RailAmerica 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](mailto:weeklyrailreview@aol.com) to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,  
Dave Mears  
Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA