

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, MARCH 5, 2005

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) Officials in Charlotte, NC. broke ground for the city's South Corridor Light Rail Line. The new line will total 9.6 miles in length and cost approximately \$427 million to construct, which includes track and signal, vehicles, a maintenance facility and an operations center. City officials noted that this will be the first modern light rail line to be constructed in North Carolina and in the Southeastern U.S. (ffd: Railway Age)

(SUN) Construction engineers in Japan blasted through the last layer of rock to join 2 opposing tunnel borings and create the world's longest overland tunnel. The tunnel is part of a new "bullet train" line connecting Japan's capital of Tokyo with the city of Aomori, approximately 360 miles to the north. The tunnel, which is beneath Japan's Mount Hakkoda, totals 16.4 miles in length. Although now the world's longest, the tunnel will shortly be eclipsed in length by a new overland tunnel now under construction beneath the Swiss Alps. (ffd: New York Times)

(MON) Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell announced that the state would divert approximately \$412 million in new federal highway grants for the benefit of the state's transit agencies. The governor said that the U.S. Department of Transportation had given the state permission to spend \$666 million in new grants, with approximately two-thirds of that amount going to transit and approximately one-third to highways and bridges. The governor added that this amount should stabilize state transit agency funding until 2007. (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer)

(MON) Canadian National announced that they had reached a tentative labor agreement with the United Steelworkers of America on a new 4-year contract. The USWA represents approximately 2,250 CN employees who maintain the railroad's track and structures. A CN spokesman said that they are still working to reach new labor agreements with the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, who represent CN locomotive engineers, and with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who represent CN communication and signal maintainers. (ffd: CN Corp.)

(MON) BNSF announced the opening of a new Locomotive Reliability Center. The new center, the fourth such for BNSF, locates at the railroad's Glendive, MT. diesel shops. A BNSF spokesman said that the centers' address the "worst-of-the-worst" performing BNSF locomotives, diagnosing their problems and then putting together a repair and maintenance plan to improve their reliability. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(TUE) Representatives of the 2 major U.S. western railroads told the 5th Trans-Pacific Maritime Conference that shippers should see marginal improvement in peak-season intermodal rail performance this year. "I don't believe we

will see 2- or 3-day delays on our network," said Union Pacific VP-Intermodal John Kaiser. BNSF VP Steve Branscum echoed Mr. Kaiser's remarks and went on to comment that unexpectedly high volume, delays at ports and inadequate drayage capacity also contributed to last year's delays. "Shippers [also] have a role in helping carriers understand how much trade volume is coming," Mr. Branscum added. (ffd: JofC)

(TUE) New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority fare increases took effect. On the Long Island Rail Road and Metro North Commuter Railroad, fares were increased an average of 5 percent to 7 percent, with the penalty for buying a ticket on the train when the station ticket office is open increasing to \$5 from \$3. On the city's buses and subways, the price of a 7-day MetroCard rose to \$24 from \$21 and a 30-day MetroCard rose to \$76 from \$70. A subway spokesman noted that, while this is the 15th fare increase in the 100-year history of the subway system, it is the first to occur without an adjustment in the base fare for a single ride, which will remain \$2. (ffd: Newsday, New York Times)

(TUE) Union Pacific said that it would modify its near-dock intermodal terminal operation near the Port of Los Angeles to further eliminate highway congestion. A UP spokesman said that the terminal, which is located approximately 4 miles from the port, would load and unload nearly all international containers not handled on dock so that area ports don't have to truck them to other UP intermodal terminal ramps. The spokesman added that the change would eliminate approximately 500,000 truck trips annually through greater Los Angeles. (ffd: Los Angeles Business News)

(TUE) The U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics released North American surface trade data for 2004. During the year, approximately \$633 billion worth of goods traveled by rail, truck or pipeline between the U.S., Canada and Mexico, a 12.6 percent increase compared with 2003. Also comparing 2004 with 2003, rail exports to the 2 countries increased 10.5 percent, while rail imports increased 12.1 percent. (ffd: USDOT)

(TUE) The New York City Transit Authority awarded a contract to rebuild the South Ferry subway terminal on its Nos. 1 and 9 subway lines. The award, which totals \$261 million, was to 2 firms as a joint venture, Granite Construction and Schiavone Construction. A NYCTA spokesman said that reconstruction of the station will include changing it from a loop-track station to a stub-track station, which will allow passengers to enter and exit all cars of a subway train. The spokesman added that the station will remain open during reconstruction, which will begin in March, 2005 and is expected to be complete by May, 2007. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, wire services)

(TUE) San Francisco, CA.'s Bay Area Rapid Transit announced that it would continue to manage California's Capitol Corridor passenger rail services, which operate between San Jose and Sacramento. A BART spokesman said that this decision was made by a 16-member joint powers board representing the 8 counties that Capitol Corridor services run through and that BART has had this managerial responsibility since 1999. The spokesman added that BART assigns 11 employees to manage the Capitol Corridor, with Amtrak separately handling train operations and maintenance. (ffd: San Francisco Business Times)

(WED) BNSF train dispatchers at the railroad's dispatching center in Fort Worth, TX. walked off the job in a dispute over what their union said were unilateral changes to their compensatory time policy. The walkout, which began at approximately 4PM, disrupted train traffic across the BNSF system, including Amtrak intercity and METRA commuter services operating over BNSF lines. The dispatchers returned to work at approximately 6PM after BNSF agreed to revert to the compensatory time policy that was in effect before January 1 while a federal court mediates the dispute. (ffd: Chicago Tribune, Fort Worth Star-Telegram)

(WED) New York City officials said that Spanish authorities investigating last year's terrorist bombings to trains in Madrid that killed 191 persons had found sketches of NYC's Grand Central Terminal on the laptop of one of the bombing suspects. However, City Police Commissioner Ray Kelly said, "We have no information to indicate that these drawings were part of an operational plan to attack Grand Central." Mr. Kelly added that the sketches, which he described as "amateur renderings of the interior," appeared not to have been made from actual surveillance of the station. The discovery was made by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation working with Spain, the FBI officials eventually determining that the sketches were of Grand Central and then passing this information on to city officials. (ffd: Newsday)

(WED) The U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee approved replacement legislation for the Transportation Equity Act that expired in September, 2003 and has since been extended 6 times. The new bill authorizes \$284 billion over 6 years for federal transit, highway and road projects, with \$52.3 billion earmarked for the Federal Transit Administration. The legislation now goes to the full House for debate and voting. (ffd: APTA, Progressive Railroading)

(THU) The State of Texas said that it would appropriate \$5.2 million to the Port of Corpus Christi to assist in expanding rail and military cargo capacity. A state spokesman said that they this would effect a doubling of military shipment handling capacity at the port. The spokesman also noted that, during the past 2 years, approximately 40 percent of all military equipment moving through U.S. seaports has passed through Texas ports. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) An American Public Transportation Association "peer review" panel recommended improvements to the operation of Washington, DC.'s Metro subway system. The panel, composed of top officials of several domestic and foreign city subway systems, proposed improvements that include fewer but longer trains, additional line supervisors, and reconfiguring car interiors with bench-style seating for higher passenger capacity. A Metro subway spokesman said that they were in the process of reviewing the panel's recommendations. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) A Canadian National freight train derailed 37 cars near Brighton, ON. No one was injured in the derailment, which temporarily closed CN's main line between Cobourg and Belleville. VIA Rail Canada services were also affected, with passengers on some trains between Toronto and Ottawa and Toronto and Montreal being bused around the derailment. The line was reopened on Saturday. (ffd: VIA Rail, wire services)

(FRI) A former BNSF boxcar was debuted, having been repainted into its original railroad logo and colors as an Eagle Scout project. Ted Holvet, Age 17, thoroughly cleaned the boxcar, sanded the rust spots, primed and top-coated the car. Ted's dad, John Hotvet, then painted on the lettering and logo of the Great Northern Railway, the railroad that had originally put the boxcar in service in 1967. The boxcar was 1 of 3 recently donated by BNSF to the Minnesota Museum of Transportation in St. Paul, MN. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

STATS – TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending February 26, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 32.3 billion ton-miles, up 2.5 percent from the comparable week last year. Also for the week, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.9 percent, up 2.0 percent in the East

and up 1.8 percent in the West, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 11.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 2.2 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 17.8 percent.

For the month of February, 2005, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 5.3 percent from February, 2004. Notable traffic increases included coke up 18.4 percent, metallic ores up 14.7 percent, stone, sand and gravel up 11.4 percent and coal up 9.2 percent; notable traffic decreases included motor vehicles and equipment down 3.6 percent. Also for the month, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 13.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 6.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 8.8 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 13.1 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 11.8 percent.

From the beginning of January through the end of February, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 247.5 billion ton-miles, up 3.1 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.3 percent. Notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 11.3 percent, stone, sand and gravel up 10.1 percent and coal up 4.8 percent; notable traffic decreases included waste and scrap materials down 5.8 percent, food products down 4.2 percent, grain down 1.4 percent and motor vehicles and equipment down 1.3 percent. Also for this period, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 10.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 3.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 5.0 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 8.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 17.3 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – "BIG 6" OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(THU) For the week ending February 26, average train speed was 24.6 mph for BNSF, 24.2 mph for Canadian National, 24.4 mph for Canadian Pacific, 19.6 mph for CSX, 21.3 mph for Norfolk Southern and 21.3 mph for Union Pacific. Average train speed is calculated by dividing train miles by hours operated, excluding dwell time.

Also for the week ending February 26, average terminal dwell time was 9.7 hrs for BNSF, 13.6 hrs for Canadian National, 35.5 hrs for Canadian Pacific, 30.0 hrs for CSX, 25.4 hrs for Norfolk Southern and 28.7 hrs for Union Pacific. Average terminal dwell time is the average time a car is at specified terminal locations, expressed in hours. (ffd: AAR)

(Note: Concerning the above statistics, AAR comments that "one railroad's performance metrics cannot meaningfully be compared to another railroad's, due to differences in the carriers' calculation methodologies, operational strategies, network characteristics, terrain, traffic mix and volume, length of haul, extent of passenger operations, and other factors, such as weather.")

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Union Pacific granted Keokuk Junction Railway overhead trackage rights between Hollis, IL. and Iowa Jct., IL., totaling approximately 5 miles. The purpose of the trackage rights is to allow KJRY to interchange with the Tazewell & Peoria Railway. (ffd: STB)

(WED) San Diego & Imperial Valley Railroad filed to lease, from Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and operate approximately 2 miles of line in and near Escondido, CA. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe filed to acquire, from the State of South Dakota, and operate approximately 368 miles of line in and bordering South Dakota. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Columbia Basin Railroad filed to acquire, from Clark County, WA., and operate approximately 19 miles of line between Battle Ground, WA. and Chelatchie, WA. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Georgia Central Railway filed to acquire, from CSX, and operate approximately 58 miles of line between Macon, GA. and East Dublin, GA. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Union Pacific filed to abandon approximately 16 miles of its Thornton Industrial Lead Track, between Flint, IA. and Thornton, IA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Portland & Western Railroad filed to abandon approximately 3 miles of line in and near Hillsboro, OR. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) R. J. Corman Railroad filed to acquire, from CSX, and operate approximately 3 miles of line, known as the Water Street Lead Track, in and near Louisville, KY. (ffd: STB)

PERSONNEL CHANGES AND ALIKE:

(MON) TTX announced that its SVP, Robert Hulick, was resigning from the company effective this date. (ffd: Railway Age)

(TUE) Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway appointed Dale Williams as AVP-Business Development and Robert Haluzak as Director-Finance. Both Ms. Williams and Mr. Haluzak will locate at the railway's headquarters in Bangor, ME. (ffd; MM&E Corp.)

(FRI) AAR subsidiary's, Transportation Technology Center Inc., appointed Jon Hannafious Manager-Business Development. Mr. Hannafious, who was previously TTCl's Marketing Manager, succeeds Ryan McWilliams in that position. (ffd: AAR)

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Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly to those working in, or interested in, 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

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