

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

For the week ending SAT, March 6, 2004

By Dave Mears

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

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

(SUN) Thieves in the former Soviet state of Ukraine stole a displayed steam locomotive from an open-air museum in the city of Donetsk. A police spokesman said that the locomotive was probably pulled off site by a crane, whose operators used false documents authorizing the locomotive to be moved to a new location. The spokesman said that the locomotive was probably stolen for its scrap value. (ffd: Trains)

(MON) The U.S. Congress voted a second extension to the existing TEA-21 highway and transit improvement program, which was originally set to expire September 30. The extension, for another 2 months, allows Congress further time to debate a reauthorization bill, which the Bush Administration has proposed at \$256 billion over a 6-year period, the Senate has passed at \$318 billion and the House of Representatives is still considering to a level of \$375 billion. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(MON) Norfolk Southern announced the start of what it said was the longest length coal haul in the U.S. The move, which is handled jointly with the Union Pacific, takes coal from Wyoming's Powder River Basin and transports it more than 2,600 miles to a Connecticut Energy power plant near Atlantic City, NJ. "We believe this is the longest west-to-east coal movement in the U.S.," an NS spokesman said. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(WED) The European Union proposed plans to ease cross-border rail freight movements. The plans are aimed at increasing rail freight movements in EU member nations, which presently total only 8 percent of all cargo that is transported. The plans also include measures to compensate passengers for late or canceled rail services. The plans must be approved by both EU governments and the European Parliament, which have still not agreed on previous EU proposals relating to rail safety issues. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Florida Governor Jeb Bush announced that he and the state's Chief Financial Officer, Tom Gallagher, would lead an effort to repeal the state constitutional amendment passed by voters in 2000 that requires construction of a Florida high-speed rail network. The governor has been a longtime opponent of state high-speed rail, claiming that voters did not know the ultimate cost of what they had approved. The repeal effort will require 488,000 signatures before it can be put on the next Florida ballot. (ffd: NARP)

(THU) Canada's Northern Development Minister announced that the Ontario government was abandoning its 3-year effort to privatize the Ontario Northland Railway. The minister, Rick Bartolucci, announced that the railway would remain in public hands, but that steps would be taken to improve its financial health. The privatization effort found no buyers and was met by protests from those in areas served by the Ontario Northland, who feared that privatization would result in the railway's total or partial closure. (ffd: The Canadian Press)

(THU) A report was released indicating that Canada's freight railways hauled 28 percent more freight in 2002 than they did in 1990, but did so using diesel fuel at a lower rate of consumption. The report, which was jointly released by the Railway Association of Canada and Environment Canada, credited the purchase of more fuel-efficient locomotives and related new technology for the fuel savings. The report also noted that Canada's passenger railways transported 53.8 million passengers in 2002. (ffd: AAR)

(FRI) The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority announced that it would close Boston, MA.'s North Station during this summer's Democratic National Convention at the Fleet Center, which adjoins North Station. An MBTA spokesman said that, during the closure, Fitchburg Line passengers would change to the "T" Red Line at Porter Square; Lowell Line and Eastern Line passengers would change to buses at Anderson and Lynn; and Reading Line passengers would change to the "T" Orange Line at Malden Center. An MBTA spokesman said that closing North Station during the convention was necessary for security and to help relieve congestion at and near Fleet Center. In a related story, New York City officials said that Pennsylvania Station would remain open during the Republican National Convention at

Madison Square Garden. (ffd: NARP, New York Times)

(FRI) The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Customs and Border Protection implemented new rules related to monitoring freight shipped into and out of the U.S. The new rules include requiring railroads to electronically submit to the Bureau incoming cargo data no later than 2 hours before freight arrives in the U.S. A Bureau spokesman said that failure to forward such information could significantly delay shipments. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending February 28, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 8.1 percent from the comparable week last year, up 7.0 percent in the East and up 9.1 percent in the West. Also for the week ending February 28, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.3 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 9.1 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 14.9 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through February 28 - the first two months of this year - U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.7 percent compared with the first two months of last year. Comparing the first two months this year with the first two months last year, notable traffic increases included coke up 35.6 percent, crushed stone, sand and gravel up 12.5 percent, and grain up 8.8 percent; notable traffic decreases included metallic ores down 10.9 percent and motor vehicles and equipment down 6.7 percent. Also for the period January 1 through February 28, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 3.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 2.1 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 9.8 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 10.9 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) The U.S. Surface Transportation Board approved BNSF's application to abandon approximately 60 miles of line between Pawnee, NE. and Endicott, NE. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Timber Rock Railroad filed to lease, from Burlington Northern Santa Fe, and operate approximately 30 miles of line between Kirbyville, TX. and Silsbee, TX. (ffd: STB)

(THU) The U.S. Surface Transportation Board approved Burlington Northern Santa Fe's request to construct approximately 850 feet of new line off its Stockton Subdivision Line to access the new Quebecor World printing and distribution facility in Merced, CA. (ffd: STB)

PERSONNEL CHANGES:

(MON) The Canadian Government announced that it had dismissed Jean Pelletier from his position as Via Rail chairman. Mr. Pelletier had recently come under rebuke for criticizing a former Via employee, Myriam Bedard, who had publicly questioned VIA's handling of sponsorship monies. Mr. Pelletier had referred to Ms. Bedard, a former Canadian Olympic athlete, as a "pitiful" single mother seeking publicity. (ffd: Toronto Star)

(MON) Union Pacific's logistic subsidiary appointed Wayne Tatro President and CEO. Concurrent with the appointment, the subsidiary, formerly known as Timera, Inc., will now be known as PS Technology. Mr. Tatro had previously been the subsidiary's VP-Business Development. (ffd: Railway Age)

(WED) The United Transportation Union suspended Byron Boyd from his position as the union's president. Mr. Boyd is scheduled to go to trial starting March 22 on racketeering charges. A UTU spokesman said that Mr. Boyd's duties would be assumed by UTU Assistant President Paul Thompson. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) RailAmerica appointed Thomas Owen SVP-Marketing and sales-North American Group. Mr. Owen was earlier RailAmerica's AVP-Agricultural Products. (ffd: RailAmerica Corp.)

(FRI) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced the following appointments: Fritz Draper as VP-Business Development; Steve Bobb VP-Business Unit Operations and Support; Kevin Kaufman Group VP-Agricultural Products. (ffd: BNSF)

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 <mailto:weeklyrailreview@aol.com>weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,
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