

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2011

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(MON) Amtrak announced the first tour segment for its 40th Anniversary Exhibit Train. The train, which Amtrak says will showcase "rail travel over the decades, displaying memorabilia like vintage advertising, past menus, dinnerware, period uniforms and photographs," will start its national tour at Washington, DC Union Station on May 7. For the train's schedule so far, link to the Amtrak website at <<http://www.amtrak.com/>>www.amtrak.com. (ffd: Amtrak)

(MON) Canadian National announced that it had acquired 1,000 new 53-foot intermodal containers. A CN spokesman said that most of the new containers are heated, for hauling temperature-sensitive products, and that the acquisitions brings CN's overall domestic container fleet to a size of nearly 6,000 units. (ffd: CN RR, Journal of Commerce, Trains)

(MON) The Association of American Railroads reported that 298,649 freight cars remained in storage as of April 1, representing 18.7 percent of the North American freight car fleet. The AAR said that approximately 26,667 had left storage since March 1. The AAR defines stored cars as those in an inactive event status and that have not had a revenue load in the last 60 days. (ffd: Journal of Commerce)

(TUE) River flooding hampered rail operations in the Dakotas. In North Dakota, high water rendered lines of BNSF, Canadian Pacific, and the Red River Valley & Western temporarily out of service. High water in Harwood, ND compelled the city to construct a makeshift dike across BNSF's line. Due to flooding of CPR and BNSF lines in its route, Amtrak's "Empire Builder" train did not operate from Chicago, IL through to Seattle, WA from Saturday, April 9 until Friday, April 15. (ffd: Trains, wire services)

(TUE) The Massachusetts Bay Commuter Railroad said that it would expand its "quiet car" pilot program to all commuter rail lines on a permanent basis. The program had been tested during a previous 90-day period on the MBTA's Fitchburg and Franklin lines. A MBTA spokesman said that the car closest to the locomotive would now be designated the "quiet car," on peak hour trains only. (ffd: MBTA)

(WED) Canadian National announced that it was working with two other companies to develop a liquefied natural gas (LNG) engine technology for locomotives. The parties are to receive C\$2.4 million in funding for the project from the Sustainable Development Technology Canada program. CN said that it hoped to have a prototype LNG-powered locomotive operational by 2013. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) Amtrak debuted and put on the head end of its eastbound "Capitol Limited" train the third and fourth Class P42 locomotives that it has repainted in a "heritage" paint scheme. The repainting was done at Amtrak's Beech Grove, IN shops in commemoration of the company's 40th anniversary. (ffd: Trains)

(THU) Congress passed and sent to President Obama for signature an appropriations bill to complete funding of the federal government for the fiscal year that ends September 30. As a result of the compromise worked out between Democrats and Republicans, \$40 billion in overall spending was cut, which included cuts to several transportation programs. Among these were cancellation of high-speed rail funding for the current fiscal year (FY2011), cancellation of \$400 million of the prior fiscal year's unobligated high-speed rail funding, reduction of \$130 million of Amtrak's capital funding, reduction of \$400 million of transit capital funding, and cancellation of \$280 million in prior transit appropriations. (ffd: AASHTO, NARP)

(THU) Greater Toronto commuter rail operator GO Transit announced that it would again offer seasonal weekend service between Toronto and Niagara Falls. Trips will run Fridays, Saturday and Sundays, starting May 20 and concluding October 10. (ffd: GO Transit)

(FRI) The Surface Transportation Board canceled plans announced last August to establish a toxic-by-inhalation hazard transportation advisory committee. In making their announcement, the STB said that comments they received "on the proposed advisory group raised a number of antitrust issues and reveal sharply conflicting positions on fundamental legal questions...Not wanting to expose stakeholders to potential antitrust liability by participating in this advisory group, and given the wide difference of opinions between stakeholders on basic liability-sharing issues, the board has decided not to create this group." (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced that it had reached agreement with BNSF allowing the extension of the Gold Light Rail Line. Under the agreement, BNSF will abandon freight rail operating rights on approximately 12 miles of former Santa Fe Third Subdivision line. The deal allows the eventual extension of the Gold Line from its current eastern terminus at Sierra Madre Villa on Pasadena's east side to the town of Azusa. (ffd: RT&S, Trains)

(FRI) Amtrak launched a new website for young people, "Kids Depot." Amtrak said that the website allows "kids of all age levels the chance to discover and explore the rich and vast history of rail travel." The website may be linked to at www.amtrakkidsdepot.com. (ffd: Amtrak)

(FRI) Canadian passenger rail operator VIA Rail Canada announced a special sale featuring 50 percent off the adult regular fare in Economy, Sleeper and Sleeper Touring classes. The sale is good for travel across Canada between April 18 and September 5, 2011. VIA encouraged passengers to book quickly as the sale runs only through April 19. (ffd: NARP, VIA Rail Canada)

STATS – CLASS 1 RAIL TRAFFIC:

(THU) The Association of American Railroads reported that, for the week ending April 9, 2011 and ranked with the comparable week last year:

-U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 293,798 units, up 1.8 percent

-Notable U.S. carload traffic increases included metallic ores up 59.2 percent, motor vehicles and equipment up 28.9 percent, and grain up 16.5 percent; notable decreases included primary forest products down 33.2 percent, coke down 16.7 percent, and waste and nonferrous scrap down 12.8 percent

-U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 228,713 units, up 12.4 percent

-Canadian carload rail traffic totaled 77,363 units, up 3.7 percent

-Canadian intermodal rail traffic totaled 49,297 units, up 12.4 percent

-Mexican carload rail traffic totaled 14,497 units up 6.1 percent

-Mexican intermodal rail traffic totaled 6,886 units, up 4.7 percent

For the period January 1 through April 9, 2011 and ranked with the comparable period last year:

- U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 4,067,747 units, up 4.8 percent
- U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 3,084,940 units, up 9.0 percent
- Canadian carload rail traffic totaled 1,010,164 units, up 0.2 percent
- Canadian intermodal rail traffic totaled 637,885 units, up 4.3 percent
- Mexican carload rail traffic totaled 203,900 units, up 8.9 percent
- Mexican intermodal rail traffic totaled 98,748 units, up 9.6 percent

Note: Canadian traffic totals include that traffic on U.S. operations of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways.

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

Note: The Surface Transportation Board's website was offline for part of the weekend of April 8,9 and 10. In the week preceding those days, two abandonments were filed : On April 7, the Alabama Great southern filed to abandon approximately four miles of line near Toca, LA. And on April 8, CSX filed to abandon approximately one-half mile of its Clearwater Subdivision Line in St. Petersburg, FL. (ffd: STB)

(SAT) Watco's Autauga Northern Railroad started operations. The railroad operates approximately 44 miles of line between Maplesville, AL and Autauga Creek, AL. (ffd: RT&S)

(MON) RailAmerica announced that it had acquired three railroads from Gulf & Ohio Railways for approximately \$12.7 million. The railroads are the Three Notch Railroad, with 35 miles of line between Georgiana and Andalusia, AL; the Wiregrass Central Railroad, with 20 miles of line between Waterford and Enterprise, AL; and the Conecuh Valley Railroad, with 15 miles of line between Troy and Goshen, AL. (ffd: Andalusia Star News)

(WED) Manufacturers Railway formerly filed to discontinue service on its lines in St. Louis, MO. As reported in our last edition, the railroad's principal customer, Anheuser-Busch, has reached agreement with Foster Townsend Rail Logistics, a contract switching service, to provide freight rail service on Manufacturers Railway lines. (ffd: STB, Trains)

(FRI) Montreal, Maine & Atlantic Railway filed to abandon approximately one-half mile of line in Van Buren, ME. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Norfolk Southern broke ground for a new intermodal terminal in McCalla, AL. The new terminal, which will cost approximately \$97.5 million to construct and ready, is expected to be operational sometime in 2013. (ffd: Birmingham Business Journal)

(FRI) Progress Rail Services announced that it had reached agreement with Balfour Beatty to acquire the latter's trackwork business. Terms of the deal were not immediately disclosed. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) Rocky Mountain Railcar filed to acquire, from Utah Industrial Depot, and operate approximately 12 miles of industrial park line at the depot's location in Tooele County, UT. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(WED) San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit announced the resignation of its general manager, Dorothy Dugger. Ms. Dugger had been with BART for 19 years and, for the last four years, was its first female GM. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) CSX announced the following appointments in its Engineering Department: Mike McMaster as AVP-Strategic Development & Execution; Kelly Piccirillo as Assistant Chief Engineer-Capital Projects; Greg Mellish as Assistant Chief Engineer-Inspection Process Engineering; and Leo Kreisel as Director-Engineering Standards. (ffd: CSX RR)

(THU) Norfolk Southern appointed Brad Kerchoff as Director-Research & Tests. Mr. Kerchoff succeeds Bob Blank, who retired last month. (ffd: NRCMA, NS RR)

(THU) Walter Bruening passed away in Great Falls, MT. Mr. Bruening lived to be Age 114 and, since 2009, had been recognized as the world's oldest man. Mr. Bruening was a U.S. railroad retiree, having worked for BNSF predecessor Great Northern Railway from 1913 until 1963. (ffd: Agence France-Presse, Trains)

CORRECTION:

Two corrections to the last edition:

-I referred to the new yard and terminal Union Pacific will build as being in Santa Teresa, MX. It is of course in the Santa Teresa that is in the State of New Mexico (NM).

-I stated that the new Volkswagen assembly plant near Chattanooga, TN would be served by the Tennessee Valley Railroad Authority. In fact, the plant will be served by the Tyner Terminal Railway, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum.

Thanks to WRR Reader Bill Schafer for this helpful information.

EDITOR'S NOTES:

-In case it is helpful to anyone who may not have received the last edition sent due to it possibly having been caught in or deleted by a spam filter, please know that it was sent April 11 for the week ending April 8.

-The expression "ffd" stands for "for further details" and denotes a news periodical, website, etc. that may have more information.

-I always appreciate any readers who send on Weekly Rail Review to let me know to whom they forward it, so that I may learn more about my total readership. Thank you to those of you who have so advised! All names, email addresses, etc. sent me are kept confidential and are never used for any other purpose.

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BE SAFE AND PROSPER,

Dave Mears

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