

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, May 11, 2002

By Dave Mears

(NOTE: The expression "ffd" at the end of a news item means "for further details" and usually represents what I believe to be the most helpful news resource if a reader wants more information on a particular item.)

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

(MON) The United Transportation Union and the National Carriers' Conference Committee, the latter representing Class I railroads, announced that they had reached tentative agreement on a new contract covering wages, work rules, remote control technology and health care. A UTU spokesman said that further details of the agreement, which must still be ratified by the UTU's membership, would be released at a meeting of UTU general chairpersons on May 23. (ffd: UTU)

(MON) Association of American Railroads CEO Edward Hamberger reiterated his proposal of 6 goals for the American railroad industry, which he first proposed at the previous week's meeting of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. The goals proposed by Mr. Hamberger are support for legislation to provide shortlines with \$350 million annually for infrastructure improvements, support for legislation to repeal the 4.3 cents per gallon diesel fuel tax paid by railroads, support for portable locomotive control technology, replacing current federally mandated daily and 92 day locomotive inspection regulations with performance-based standards, greater shortline involvement in overall railroad security strategy and support for an industry communications program to convince policymakers of the importance of railroads to the American economy. (ffd: AAR)

(MON) Norfolk Southern restored service to its main line between Kenova, WV. and Williamson, WV. Service to the line had been suspended for several days due to rising floodwaters in the region. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(MON) Los Angeles, CA. area commuter rail operator Metrolink began through service between Los Angeles and Riverside, CA. Metrolink riders between the 2 cities previously had to change trains in Orange, CA. Metrolink calls the new service its "91 Line", naming it for the interstate highway paralleling the line. (ffd: Los Angeles Times)

(MON) The Georgia Department of Transportation announced that it would dedicate all its utility permit fees toward new intermodal projects, including passenger rail, intermodal terminals and transit. A Georgia DOT spokesman noted that the dedicated fees, which are expected to total approximately \$5 million annually, mark the first time the state has had a dedicated transportation funding source for something other than roads and bridges. (ffd: NARP)

(MON) The city of New Orleans, LA. announced its takeover of the New Orleans Union Passenger Terminal, Amtrak's passenger station in the city. A

spokesman for the city said that they would undertake a \$6.5 million rehabilitation of the terminal, built in 1954, making it into a "modern intermodal transportation center." (ffd: New Orleans Times-Picayne)

(MON) Dallas, TX.'s Dallas Area Rapid Transit opened a 3.5 mile extension of its light rail line. The extension takes the line beyond Dallas's highway loop into suburban Skillman, TX. (ffd: Dallas Morning News)

(TUE) San Francisco, CA's Caltrain, operator of the commuter rail line between San Francisco and Gilroy, CA., said that it would eliminate 2 morning and 2 afternoon trains on the line due to declines in ridership, which it said were the result of the current economic downturn. The eliminations will take effect August 25. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) The U.S. House Railroads Subcommittee approved a bill reauthorizing Amtrak through Fiscal Year 2003. The bill, H.R. 4545, also appropriates \$1.2 billion for Amtrak plus \$775 million for Amtrak safety and security projects. The bill now goes to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and then the full House for debate, after which it must be reconciled with a Senate counterpart bill. The subcommittee also approved H.R. 2950, which provides \$12 billion over ten years for high-speed rail improvements through federal tax credited bonds. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced that it had settled with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission over genetic testing it had conducted on 36 employees without their knowledge or consent related to the employees' carpal tunnel injury claims. Under terms of the settlement, BNSF will pay \$2.2 million in fines to the EEOC. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(WED) Burlington Northern Santa Fe announced that it would reopen its gateway at El Paso, TX. for selected carload shipments to and from Mexico. A BNSF spokesman said that the shipments through the gateway would be interchanged with Mexico's Ferromex Railway and allow improved transit times. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(WED) Philadelphia, PA. real estate developer Brandywine Realty announced that it had reached agreement with Amtrak to build a 28 story office building adjacent to the northwest corner of Amtrak's 30th St. Station. The new building will be designed by a team headed by Cesar Pelli, who designed the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, presently the world's tallest structures. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) Canadian National announced that it had formed a shortline council, which it said would help boost business and address concerns between CN and its shortline partners. A CN spokesman said that the council would be comprised of top CN executives and officials of 6 Canadian shortlines. (ffd: AAR)

(FRI) Although construction workers are already halfway finished with the foundation, Union Pacific officials this date held a groundbreaking ceremony for UP's new \$260 million headquarters facility in Omaha, NE. The building, which is being built across the street from UP's current headquarters, will include 1.2 million in office space and is scheduled for completion in 2004. (ffd: Omaha World Herald)

(FRI) A passenger train derailed into a passenger station platform in Potters Bar, England. The resulting accident killed 7 persons and injured at least 45 others. Officials had not yet determined the cause of the crash at press time. (ffd: wire services)

(SAT) A Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train collided head-on with a

stopped BNSF train on its main line through Wyoming's Powder River Basin. The resulting accident injured 4 crew members and derailed 9 cars. Officials said that the crew of the colliding BNSF train, which was traveling at approximately 30mph, may have passed a stop signal. The accident occurred near Wright, WY. (ffd: wire services)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending May 4, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 2.7 percent from the comparable week last year, down 3.8 percent in the East and down 1.8 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included nonmetallic minerals up 19.1 percent, non-grain farm products up 12.1 percent and petroleum products up 7.8 percent; notable traffic decreases included coke down 34.2 percent, primary forest products down 15.7 percent, metallic ores down 8.1 percent and coal down 4.8 percent. Also for the week ending May 4, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 7.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 0.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 11.5 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Mexicana Ferroviaria's carload rail traffic was down 5.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 137.1 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through May 4, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 3.5 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 1.9 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 3.7 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 4.4 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 2.8 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 7.7 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Canadian National announced that it would lease its line between Bremen, SK. and St. Louis, SK., totaling approximately 47 miles in length, to Wheatland Rail, a new company set up by 6 local Saskatchewan governments. Wheatland Rail will perform maintenance and marketing for the line, with CN continuing to operate the line's train services. (ffd: The Western Producer)

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe filed to abandon approximately 6 miles of line between Tolna, ND. and Hamar, ND. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) CSX filed to abandon approximately 2 miles of line in Greenville, SC. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

None of note this week.

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Weekly Rail Recap 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 djmservices@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,
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