

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, MAY 7, 2010

BY DAVE MEARS

(NOTE: In case it is helpful to anyone who may not have received the previous edition due to it possibly having been caught in or deleted by a spam filter, please know that it was sent on June 18, 2010 for the week ending April 30, 2010.)

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

(SAT) Amtrak operated a ceremonial test train over RailAmerica's Florida East Coast line between Jacksonville, FL and Miami, FL. A number of state dignitaries were aboard the train, all of whom expressed interest in restoring passenger service on the line as soon as possible, which would serve the many communities between those two cities on Florida's east coast. Passenger service on the line was discontinued in 1968, before the 1971 Amtrak startup. (ffd: Florida Times Union)

(SUN) Notably heavy rains resulted in flooding in parts of Kentucky and Tennessee, particularly so in mid-Tennessee, where more than 13 inches of rain fell in a 24-hour period. Flooding resulted in the temporary cancellation of the Nashville & Eastern's Music City Star commuter train, as well as the temporary closure of Norfolk Southern's line between Memphis, TN and Sheffield, AL. Most impacted was probably CSX's line between Memphis and Nashville, TN, which saw three major bridges washed out. (ffd: Nashville Business Journal, Trains, wire services)

(SUN) Union Pacific closed what was believed to be the last Armstrong-type interlocking tower in service in the U.S. Armstrong towers operated signals and switches that were connected to the controlling levers in the tower through iron pipe. The tower, known as Ridgely Tower, located in Springfield, IL. (ffd: Trains)

(MON) House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Chair James Oberstar (D-MN) and House Railroad Subcommittee Chair Corrine Brown (D-FL) held a field hearing in Miami, FL to promote and encourage more national passenger train service. Said Rep. Brown, "As the chair of the Rail Subcommittee, [my] eventual goal is to have high-speed intercity passenger and commuter rail lines connected nationwide to serve as an alternative to our current systems of transportation." (ffd: Jacksonville Transportation Examiner)

(MON) The U.S. Department of Transportation announced said that it had begun accepting applications for the second round of Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants. USDOT will award \$600 million in TIGER-II discretionary grants through the federal Fiscal Year 2010 Appropriations Grant Program. A USDOT spokesman said that pre-applications will be accepted until July 16 and final applications will be accepted until August 23. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, USDOT)

(MON) Southern California commuter rail operator Metrolink took delivery of the first of 117 new passenger rail cars. The new cars include in their design new "crash energy management" technologies that, if the car is collided with, will allow it to crumple so that non-passenger areas, such as electrical service closets, bicycle storage areas, vestibules and stairwells, absorb the main impact. (ffd: The Daily Breeze)

(TUE) The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority announced that it had sued Rocla Concrete Tie Corporation related to the deterioration of their concrete ties installed several years ago on MBTA's Old Colony commuter rail line near Boston, MA. The ties were marketed by Rocla as having a 50-year lifespan, and so the agency is suing for negligent misrepresentation, unfair and deceptive trade practices, and breach of warranty. Rocla earlier settled with Amtrak and Metro-North over the same issue. (ffd: Boston Globe, Trains)

(TUE) Two BNSF trains collided at slow speed on the BNSF main line near Ashland, NE. No one was injured in the accident, which derailed two locomotives and one car, although two crewmembers were taken to the local hospital for evaluation. The cause of the accident was under investigation at press time. (ffd: WOWT TV)

(TUE) The Association of American Railroads released a report that said that, for every \$1 billion in capital investment on freight rail, 7,800 green jobs are created across the U.S. economy. Entitled "Full Speed Ahead: Creating Green Jobs Through Freight Rail Expansion," the report was prepared by the BlueGreen Alliance and the Economic Policy Institute. (ffd: AAR)

(WED) Various rail officials noted recent domestic economic growth. Among these was a spokesman for the Association of American Railroads, who noted that all 19 carload commodity groups increased in the week ending April 24. The spokesman said that this was the first week in more than five years that every one of these groups had shown increase. (ffd: Bloomberg News)

(WED) Speaking before a small group of shipper activists, Senate Commerce Committee Chair Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) said that one major railroad is resisting efforts to negotiate rail re-regulation legislation being proposed by him and his committee. "There are four railroads. I think we are making inroads with three; there's one that we are not making inroads with," said Sen. Rockefeller. He added, "Can three trump one with pressure? I think the answer to that should be yes, but what they want is complex." (ffd: Journal of Commerce)

(THU) New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced that the scheduled layoff of approximately 1,000 of its employees will save approximately \$115 million of a projected \$400 million budget deficit. However, it said that several programs will be curtailed, including a planned zero-tolerance policy against scratched windows on two subway lines. The scratched-window vandalism, which significantly obscures Plexiglas windows, is known as "scratchiti." (ffd: New York Times)

(THU) San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit subway system noted the apparent success of a smart phone application known as "Foursquare." The app allows BART riders to share their locations on the system, as well as tips, such as places to go near BART station stops. A BART spokesman said that, in a recent survey, 14 percent of respondents said that they have been riding BART more often because of Foursquare. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) New York State and CSX officials met concerning high-speed rail service on the CSX line between Albany and Buffalo, NY. The state and CSX have been in disagreement over high-speed rail, with the state insisting that maximum passenger train speeds increase from 90mph to 110mph, and CSX insisting that a third track must be built for 110mph trains, with that third track at least 30 feet from the existing CSX double-track main line. (ffd: Rochester Democrat and Chronicle)

(FRI) In a prepared report, Amtrak noted that it had paid host railroads 16 percent more in the previous fiscal year, which ended September 30, 2009, because more Amtrak trains on those railroads had improved on-time performance. Among various statistics in the report, Amtrak also noted that it had paid BNSF \$115.4 million for passenger train operating rights in that fiscal year, which it said equated to \$4.44 per train-mile. (ffd: Bloomberg News)

(FRI) The U.S. Department of Transportation discussed a new national transportation planning initiative, "Transportation For A New Generation." Elements of the initiative include shifting more freight from trucks to rail, establishing community "livability" concepts into freight facility planning, and putting greenhouse gas considerations firmly into freight funding and regulatory practices. USDOT said that the initiative's draft plan will be open for public comment starting May 15. (ffd: Journal of Commerce)

STATS – CLASS 1 RAIL TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending May 1, 2010, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 32.9 billion ton-miles, up 16.7 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was up 16.3 percent, up 22.3 percent in the East and up 12.5 percent in the West. All 19

carload commodity groups showed increase, notably metallic ores up 333.1 percent, metals and metal products up 109.2 percent, and waste and scrap materials up 67.0 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 13.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 29.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 15.0 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was up 13.3 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was up 11.7 percent.

For the period January 1 through May 1, 2010, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 521.4 billion ton-miles, up 6.2 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 5.3 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 18.3 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 9.0 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was up 22.8 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was up 35.4 percent. (ffd: AAR)

(NOTE: Canadian counts include traffic from the U.S. operations of the two Canadian-based Class I railroads, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railway.)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) A new connection between CSX and the North Carolina Railroad, operated by Norfolk Southern, was put in place at the junction between the two in Greenville, NC. The new connection enables southbound CSX trains to proceed directly east onto the NS-operated line. Previously CSX trains had to cross the diamond and then make a reverse move. (ffd: NCDOT, Trains)

(THU) Progress Rail Services announced their acquisition of FCM Rail. FCM Rail specializes in maintenance-of-way equipment leasing and related equipment services, including warehouse leasing and short- and long-term equipment rentals. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) Port Harbor Railroad filed to lease, from Illinois's Tri-City Regional Port District, approximately three miles of line in and near Granite City, IL. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Wichita, Tillman & Jackson Railway filed to grant overhead trackage rights to the Hollis & Eastern Railroad over approximately five miles of line in and near Altus, OK. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(WED) Steve Allman passed away from acute melanoma at Age 51. Mr. Allman was a longtime Amtrak engineering and transportation principal, and was most recently the general superintendent of Amtrak's Mid-Atlantic Division.

(WED) Stephen Branscum was re-elected chair of the University of Denver's Intermodal Transportation Institute (ITI). Mr. Branscum is currently, and will continue as, BNSF's Group VP-Consumer Products. (ffd: ITI, Progressive Railroading)

(WED) The California High-Speed Rail Authority appointed Roelof van Ark as its new chief executive officer. Mr. van Ark was most recently the president of Alstom Transportation. (ffd: San Mateo County Times)

(FRI) Phillip Pagano, the executive director of Chicago area commuter rail operator METRA, took his own life by stepping in front of a METRA train. Mr. Pagano, who had been with METRA since 1990, had been put on paid administrative leave the previous week related to allegations of misconduct. (ffd: Chicago Tribune)

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BE SAFE AND PROSPER,

Dave Mears

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