

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, August 24, 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) Albany, NY.'s Capital District Transportation Authority announced that it had reached tentative agreement with Amtrak to use the new and nearly complete 80,000 square foot train station constructed by the CDTA to replace Amtrak's current and smaller station in Rensselaer, NY. Amtrak President David Gunn had earlier stated that Amtrak might not be able to afford use of the new station, but the Albany Times-Union reported that the tentative agreement leases space to Amtrak at a lesser rate in return for a greater share of station concession and related revenues. The Albany-Rensselaer station is Amtrak's 10th busiest, serving approximately 630,000 passengers annually. (ffd: Albany Times-Union, wire services)

(MON) CSX revised its heat restriction policy, which had drawn criticism from commuter rail operators using CSX tracks, who said it had been unnecessarily slowing commuter train operations. Under the new guidelines, passenger trains using CSX tracks will slow to 20 mph less than maximum passenger train track speed on CSX subdivisions experiencing extreme hot temperatures or extreme temperature fluctuation. CSX heat restrictions stem from the July 28 Amtrak "Capitol Limited" derailment in Kensington, MD., which was initially linked to a possible heat kink in a rail. In a related story later in the week, a National Transportation Safety Board preliminary report on the derailment stated that a CSX track supervisor had mistakenly lifted a slow order for the section of track where the Amtrak train derailed, although the NTSB cautioned that the exact cause of the derailment had not yet been conclusively determined. (ffd: WJLA, wire services)

(TUE) A federal district court judge in West Virginia rejected a lawsuit filed by CSX, Norfolk Southern and American Premium Underwriters, the latter the successor company to the former Penn Central, over West Virginia's consolidation of asbestos-related cases as class actions. The lawsuit alleged that the consolidation "effectively forces defendants...to settle because of the risk of bankrupting judgments in mass cases." There are currently 5,592 asbestos-related claims filed against railroads in West Virginia state courts. The plaintiffs are expected to appeal the district court's decision. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) Colorado Railcar Corp. debuted a new prototype diesel multiple unit (DMU) passenger car. The prototype includes single-level seating for 92, can accelerate from 0mph to 55mph in 38 seconds, and is fully compliant with FRA specifications for passenger cars. A spokesman for Colorado Railcar said that the prototype is now being tested at the Transportation Technology Center in Pueblo, CO. and that a double-decker design is also available. (ffd: AAR)

(WED) Pennsylvania State Rep. George Gekas noted work underway to improve "Keystone Corridor" passenger rail services on Amtrak's line between Philadelphia, PA. and Harrisburg, PA. In a prepared statement, Mr. Gekas noted that work has already begun on signaling improvements and catenary renewal. A total of \$140 million in federal, state and local spending is planned for the line over the next several years, which will fund renewal of infrastructure, new locomotives and cars, construction of a station serving Harrisburg's airport and other line station improvements. (ffd: NARP)

(WED) Union Pacific noted their continuing rollout of their new Crew Management and Timekeeping System (CMTS.) A UP spokesman said that the new system will automate many existing manual crew management processes by including such features as an outgoing automated voice response function to dispatch crews and another function whereby the crews themselves will enter end-of-shift reporting and related pay information. UP said that it expects to begin cutover to the new system later this year. (ffd: UP Corp.)

(WED) The Delaware River Port Authority, operators of the PATCO transit line between Philadelphia, PA. and Lindenwold, NJ., announced plans to replace their fare collection system with more modern technology. A DRPA spokesman said that the existing fare collection system, one in the first in the U.S. to be completely automated, dates from the line's opening in

1969. DRPA said that it expects the new system to be operational within 3 years. (ffd: UTU News)

(THU) Logistics Management Magazine announced the results of a satisfaction survey conducted of U.S. rail freight customers. The survey noted slightly increased customer satisfaction with standard rail freight service from a similar survey conducted 2 years ago. Customers surveyed also gave the rail industry improved ratings for on-time performance, value, information technology, and customer service. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) Union Pacific announced that it would undertake a special disinfection of its South Morrill Shops near Scottsbluff, NE. after a worker there died of hantavirus, which is contracted from exposure to rodent excretions. A UP spokesman said that the disinfection was being done as a precautionary effort, as it has not yet been conclusively determined where the deceased worker, Steven Harberts, Age 30, contracted hantavirus. (ffd: Omaha Times Herald)

(FRI) Traffic World Magazine reported that CSX and NS have reached agreement on splitting up the Detroit, MI. intermodal terminal operated by its Conrail Shared Assets subsidiary. The report said that the split is designed to improve delivery of each railroad's intermodal services to and from the Detroit area, which have lately experienced significant growth. In a related story, Conrail Shared Assets will dissolve its police force effective September 1, with its officers becoming members of either the CSX or NS police forces. (ffd: UTU News, NJOLS)

(FRI) Chicago, IL. newspapers noted the retirement of Union Pacific locomotive engineer, Edward Yost, after 53 years' railroad service. Mr. Yost, who was originally with the Chicago & North Western, was believed to be the last locomotive engineer remaining on UP's work roster to have operated steam locomotives in regular service. Mr. Yost's retirement was marked with a special ceremony at Chicago's Ogilvie Transportation Center, which is the former C&NW's North Western station. (ffd: Chicago Sun Times)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending August 17, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 3.8 percent from the comparable week last year, up 4.1 percent in the East and up 3.5 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included nonmetallic ores up 16.6 percent, metallic ores up 12.5 percent, metals and metal products up 12.1 percent and coal up 5.0 percent; notable traffic decreases included primary forest products down 13.7 percent and coke down 13.0 percent. Also for the week ending August 17, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 8.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 1.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 18.4 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 15.5 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 2.9 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through August 17, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.3 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 5.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 3.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 8.6 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 1.3 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 7.4 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Shortline/regional rail conglomerate Genesee & Wyoming acquired the Utah Railway for \$54 million. The UTAH owns 45 miles of track and 378 miles of trackage rights, operates between Ogden, UT. and Grand Junction, CO. and had \$23.7 million in revenues for the year ending June 30. Genesee & Wyoming also appointed James Davis as GM of the UTAH. (ffd: Railway Track and Structures)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

W. Dan Pickett was reelected president of the Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen. The reelection marks the 3rd term for Mr. Pickett as head of the BofRS. (ffd: AAR)

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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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