

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, AUGUST 6, 2005

BY DAVE MEARS

(Note: As happens – usually once during the summer – I was unable to put out WRR in a timely manner. It is here “caught up” and I should be “back on schedule” by tomorrow. Thanks for your patience. Dave M.)

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

(SUN) President Bush signed into law replacement legislation for the expired Transportation Equity Act. The new law is entitled the "Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2005: A Legacy for Users" and is abbreviated SAFETEA-LU. The law provides for \$286.5 billion in federal funding for transportation improvement projects over the next 6 years. Notable projects funded by the law include \$400 million toward extension of Los Angeles, CA's Metro Gold light rail line to East Los Angeles, \$260 million toward extension of Dallas, TX light rail lines, and \$90 toward improving clearances over Norfolk Southern rail lines from Ohio to the Port of Hampton Roads, VA. (ffd: Norfolk Virginia Pilot, Progressive Railroading, Railway Age)

(SUN) An injured CSX track worker was rescued by whitewater rafters. Korey Liston, Age 26, was inspecting track on the CSX main line through Pennsylvania's Ohiopyle State Park when his hi-rail vehicle derailed down an embankment. Rafters spotted Mr. Liston, placed him on an inflatable kayak, carried him back up the embankment, and put him on a CSX freight train that had approached the location. The train then took Mr. Liston to a waiting ambulance. He was then taken to hospital where he was initially reported in fair condition. (ffd: Pittsburgh Post-Gazette)

(MON) The Federal Railroad Administration released preliminary accident statistics for the first 5 months of 2004. During that period, 203 trespassers were killed by trains, up 14 percent from the first 5 months last year. However and during the same period, 146 persons were killed in grade crossing collisions, a decline of 8.8 percent over the previous year's first 5 months. (ffd: Railway Age)

(MON) The national's freight railroads, bargaining as the National Carriers Conference, announced that they had reached tentative agreement with the International Association of Machinists, representing approximately 10,000 North American rail workers. Details of the tentative agreement were not immediately released. If ratified, the agreement will conclude the round of bargaining between the NCC and rail unions begun in 1999. (ffd: AAR)

(MON) A moving BNSF freight train derailed into an adjacent standing freight train near Byers, MO. 16 cars on the first train and 8 cars on the second train were derailed. There were no injuries in the derailment, which closed BNSF's River Subdivision Line until Tuesday. On Thursday, a BNSF freight train collided at slow speed with another freight train taking a siding near West Glacier, MT. 1 locomotive was derailed in that accident, but there were no injuries and the line was reopened later that night. (ffd: St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Trains)

(MON) Union Pacific unveiled the first of several locomotives being repainted in the color schemes of its predecessor railroads. The first 2 locomotives were repainted in the Missouri Pacific and Western Pacific paint schemes, and the next 4 will be repainted in the Katy, Chicago & North Western, Southern Pacific, and Denver & Rio Grande Western paint schemes. "It is time we pay homage to these railroads," said UP Chairman and CEO Dick Davidson. (ffd: Council Bluffs Daily Norpareil)

(MON) CSX announced that it had prepared a packet of information and companion Internet web pages to make it easier for communities to work with CSX related to nearby construction and improvement projects. A CSX spokesman said that "the information...is intended to improve communications and cooperation in construction and improvement projects that may involve CSX property." The web information may be found on CSX's website, csx.com, under "Public Project Internet Toolkit." (ffd: CSX Corp., Railway Age)

(TUE) A Union Pacific freight train derailed 30 cars near Thrall, TX. No one was injured in the derailment. Accidents investigators said that their initial findings suggested a broken wheel may have caused the derailment. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) A Canadian National freight train derailed 43 cars approximately 30 miles west of Edmonton, AB. Several of the cars were loaded with diesel fuel and related oils, which then spilled into Lake Wabamun, a popular recreational site bordering the CN tracks. The spill caused an oil slick on the water surface that coated birds and other wildlife. A CN spokesman said that the line would be out of service until later in the week. (ffd: Trains)

(WED) CSX and Union Pacific announced that they would partner to operate a regularly scheduled produce train from Wallula, WA to Albany, NY starting in the first quarter of 2006. A spokesman for the 2 railroads said that the train would consist of approximately 55 64-foot-long refrigerated boxcars and that its transit time from origin to destination would be approximately 124 hours. CSX and UP partnered a few years' back to operate an expedited produce train, but were forced to discontinue it due to service delays. (ffd: Omaha World-Herald, Union Pacific Corp.)

(THU) BNSF announced that they were backing off a planned increase in grain-shipping rates moving in 52-car allotments. BNSF had earlier announced that it would lower rates for grain moving in 110-car allotments, which the railroad prefers, but would raise rates for the 52-car allotments. "It's better than what we had yesterday, but we still do not have a rate that would help to ensure the viability of the 52-car [grain elevator] facilities," said Richard Owen, executive vice president of the Montana Grain Growers Association. (ffd: Great Falls Tribune)

(THU) The Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District, which operates the South Shore Line between Chicago, IL and South Bend, IN, has asked the St. Joseph County, IN commissioners to petition the federal Department of Transportation to change the county from Eastern to Central Time. The change would allow the South Shore's entire route to be in the Central Time Zone. The South Shore is the only U.S. commuter railroad operating in 2 time zones. A spokesman for the Department of Transportation commented that the proposed change would be made if the county requests it and if there is "compelling evidence" to support the change. (ffd: Trains)

(FRI) New Jersey Transit announced that it would operate 261 additional commuter trains over its Morris & Essex Line the week of August 8 through 14. The additional trains are to accommodate crowds expected for the 87th PGA Championship golf tournament being held at the Baltusrol course in Springfield, NJ. An NJT spokesman said that its

Summit, NJ station on the line is the most convenient way for the approximately 200,000 expected spectators to reach the site, inasmuch as there is no public parking at or near the course. (ffd: Trains)

STATS – TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending July 30, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 33.8 billion ton-miles – a new weekly U.S. record – and up 2.4 percent from the comparable week last year. Also for the week, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.3 percent – down 0.4 percent in the East, but up 2.6 percent in the West – U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 5.9 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 1.2 percent, and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 7.1 percent.

For the month of July, 2005, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 0.1 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 5.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 3.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 1.4 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 2.6 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 4.9 percent.

For the period January 1 through July 31, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 950.8 billion ton-miles, up 2.3 percent from the first 7 months last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.5 percent. Notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 9.3 percent, stone, sand and gravel up 8.3 percent, and coal up 2.5 percent; notable traffic decreases included waste and scrap materials down 6.2 percent and motor vehicles and equipment down 3.3 percent. Also for this period, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 2.3 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 0.3 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 6.9 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – "BIG 7" OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

Not available this week.

STILL MORE STATS – SECOND QUARTER, 2005 RESULTS:

(WED) For the Second Quarter, 2005, Kansas City Southern reported a net loss of \$25.8 million, compared with net income of \$7.0 million in the second quarter last year. Commenting on second quarter results, a KCS spokesman noted that they were "adversely impacted" by one-time charges related to KCS's inclusion of Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana into its system. KCS also reported revenues of \$381.1 million, compared with \$338.8 million in the second quarter last year and on a "same rail system comparative basis." KCS's operating ratio worsened slightly to 85.5 percent, compared with 84.9 percent in the second quarter last year. (ffd: KCS Corp., Railway Age)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(FRI) The Surface Transportation Board granted Florida East Coast's earlier request to abandon approximately 5 miles of its South Little River Branch in Miami-Dade County, FL. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The San Pedro Railroad filed to abandon approximately 76 miles of line as follows: approximately 6 miles between Bisbee Junction, AZ and Bisbee, AZ; approximately 9 miles between Paul Spur, AZ and Douglas, AZ; approximately 42 miles between Charleston, AZ and Paul Spur, AZ; and approximately 20 miles between Curtiss and Charleston, AZ. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

(WED) The Federal Transit Administration announced that its Chief Administrator, Jennifer Dorn, will resign pending the Senate's confirmation of her nomination to serve as U.S. alternate executive director of the International Bank For Reconstruction and Development. No successor was immediately named. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) CSX appointed Coree Cuff Chief Engineer-Maintenance of Way Capital Programs effective August 15. Ms. Cuff was most recently Director-Large Account Services for PECO Energy. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) Union Pacific appointed Ken Hunt AVP-Operations for the territories of Los Angeles and the southwestern part of the Western Region. Mr. Hunt was most recently General Superintendent-Transportation Services-Portland Service Unit. Replacing Mr. Hunt is Todd Wimmer. Mr. Wimmer was most recently UP's Superintendent-Transportation Services in Wichita, KS. (ffd: UP Corp.)

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Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly to those working in, or interested in, rail and transit. Send an e-mail to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,

Dave Mears

Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA