

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, January 18, 2003

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) New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority scheduled public hearings on its plan to raise the New York City bus and subway base fare from \$1.50 to \$2.00 by this coming April. An MTA spokesman said that its plans also included the closing of many more token booths, adding that the percentage of bus and subway riders still using tokens had dropped to 9 percent, with all other riders using farecards. The fare increase and token booth closures are part of the MTA's efforts to close a projected \$1.7 billion budget gap next year. (ffd: New York Daily News)

(MON) CSX became a charter partner in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's new "Smartways Transport" program. An EPA spokesman said that the new program is a voluntary partnership between the EPA and major U.S. corporations that aims to cut by 2012 significant amounts of air pollution and heat-trapping emissions from surface freight carriers. (ffd: CSX Corp., wire services)

(MON) A Boston, MA. area rail commuter was arrested after he stood in front of a commuter train he hadn't been permitted to board. Ruben Guastavino, 20, was told he couldn't board the train at the Ayer, MA. station; he then stood in front of the train, which prevented it from proceeding until police were called. Mr. Guastavino was charged with several offenses, including railroad malicious stopping, railroad obstruction and endangering the public. (ffd: Fitchburg Sentinel and Enterprise)

(MON) The National Holistic Institute of Emeryville, CA. began offering neck and shoulder massages aboard Amtrak Capitol Corridor Train No. 538, operating between Sacramento, CA. and Auburn, CA. The new service, which costs the recipient \$1 per minute, will be available on the train Mondays through Thursdays through February 6. (ffd: NARP)

(TUE) Union Pacific announced that it would seek to reduce company costs by approximately 20 percent, but over this and forthcoming years. "There's no target date as to when there will be that reduction in expenditures of 20 percent", said UP Spokesman John Bromley. The previous day, on Monday, UP abolished 53 positions in its Information Technology Department and said that it expected to make more cuts in that department in the near future. (ffd: Ames Tribune)

(TUE) The U.S. Federal Railroad Administration announced a new Internet-based application and database designed to aid cost-benefit analyses of highway-rail grade crossing investments. An FRA spokesman said that the new application, accessible at GradeDec.Net, may be used to evaluate crossing improvements that include grade separations and crossing closures. (ffd: BofLENews)

(TUE) The Italian Government approved plans to construct a combination road and railway bridge across the Straits of Messina, linking the island of Sicily with mainland Italy. A government spokesman said that the bridge will have 2 railway tracks in the center and a 3 lane highway on each side, and that its suspension span will be the longest in the world. The bridge will require 6 years to construct. (ffd: Iain Frew)

(TUE) The European Union parliament called for EU governments to end national rail monopolies by 2008 and then open up their rail services to competition. However, the EU's call still faces further debate by European transport ministers, including those representing Belgium, France and Luxembourg, who have already gone on record as opposing such plans. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) U.S. Transportation Security Administration Chief James Loy said that the TSA will start turning greater attention to securing railways, buses, ports and pipelines. Mr. Loy said that the agency had been focusing on meeting 36 specific deadlines over the past year to improve airport security and, with those deadlines having been met, the TSA will now commence programs aimed at improving security on these other transport modes. (ffd: Washington Post)

(WED) The Association of American Railroads released its 19th annual edition of "Railroad Ten-Year Trends". The publication, which examines railroad data compiled between 1992 and 2001, is available by mail, fax or via the AAR's website and costs \$50 per copy for non-AAR member companies and \$50 per copy for AAR member companies. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) The full U.S. Senate approved \$1.2 billion in FY2003 funding for Amtrak. The approval rebuffed efforts the previous week in the Senate Appropriations Committee to cut by one-third this funding amount, which Amtrak has said is the minimum amount necessary to sustain all services for the entire fiscal year. Those voting for the \$1.2 billion funding included Senator McCain of Arizona, who has been a longtime critic of Amtrak, especially its long-distance services. The funding still requires approval by the U.S. House of Representatives, as part of an omnibus federal appropriations bill, before becoming law. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials released 2 reports on the state of rail transportation. The first, entitled "Intercity Passenger Rail Transportation", notes that passenger trains serve a basic transportation role in many markets throughout the U.S. and are less susceptible to weather or emergency disruptions than are other modes. The second, entitled "Freight Rail Bottom Line Report", notes that \$175 billion to \$195 billion will ideally be needed over the next 20 years to maintain rail share of total freight and that the industry will be unable to raise an estimated \$53 billion of that total. Both reports are available through the AASHTO's website bookstore. (ffd: NARP)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending January 11, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.7 percent from the comparable week last year, down 0.4 percent in the East and down 1.0 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included non-grain farm products up 61.2 percent, coke up 31.5 percent and metallic ores up 11.3 percent; notable traffic decreases included grain down 6.8 percent, primary forest products down 6.8 percent and coal down 5.3 percent. Also for the week ending January 11, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.4 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 2.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 20.3 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 7.1 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 271.8 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through January 11, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 3.7 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 9.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 2.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 21.2 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 9.8 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 23.8 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe filed to abandon approximately 1 mile of line in Seattle, WA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Canadian Pacific Railway announced that it had sold its Edmunston Spur Line, running between Grand Falls, NB. and St. Leonard, NB and totaling approximately 8 miles in length, to Canadian National Railway. (ffd: BofLE News)

(FRI) Kansas City Southern announced that it had negotiated trackage rights over Canadian National-Illinois Central between Jackson, MS. and Mobile, AL. and, effective immediately, would begin serving traffic to and from the Port of Mobile, AL. (ffd: KCS Corp.)

(FRI) The Wisconsin & Southern Railroad filed to acquire, from Canadian Pacific-Soo Line, the Waterloo Spur Line between Watertown, MI. and Madison, WI., totaling approximately 33 miles. In its filing, WSOR noted that it leased and been operating this line since 1998. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(MON) U.S. Surface Transportation Board Chairman Roger Nober appointed John M. Scheib, Esq., as Chief of Staff and Counsel to the STB Chairman. Mr. Scheib was most recently counsel to the Subcommittee on Railroads of the House of Representatives' Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. (ffd: AAR)

(TUE) The Bush Administration announced the elevation of National Transportation Safety Board member John Hammerschmidt to Vice Chairman of the NTSB. Mr. Hammerschmidt replaces Carol Carmody, whose term as Vice Chairman has expired. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) A. Scheffer Lang died in St. Paul, MO. at Age 77. Mr. Lang was the first U.S. Federal Railroad Administrator and was later Assistant to the President for Staff Studies at the Association of American Railroads. (ffd: Railway Age)

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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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