

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

For the week ending SAT, October 11, 2003

By Dave Mears

(NOTE: A little late this week account out of town until last night, but should be back on schedule next week.)

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

(SUN) The Maryland Transit Administration closed a portion of its Baltimore, MD. light rail line through October 24. Service was temporarily suspended to the line's Patapsco, Cherry Hill, Westport and Camden Yards stops so that work could begin on a 9.4 mile double tracking project, which will double track the remaining single track segments of the line. The project is scheduled for completion by 2005. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(MON) The National Capitol Trolley Museum in Silver Spring, MD. reported that it had sustained significant damage to its streetcar collection in a fire at the museum the previous week. The fire destroyed 8 historic streetcars - 4 Capital Transit cars, 3 Austrian trams and 1 Johnstown Traction car - and the carbarn in which they were housed. Museum officials estimated the loss at between \$8 million and \$10 million in value. (ffd: Museum press release via Railpace)

(TUE) The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board released a summary of its final report on the April 23, 2002 collision between a Burlington Northern Santa Fe freight train and a Metrolink passenger train in Atwood, CA. The NTSB report upheld earlier findings that blamed the collision on the "freight train crew's inattentiveness" to a stop signal indication. The summary further noted that the 2 passenger fatalities were caused by abdominal injuries resulting from impact with tables between facing pairs of seats. (ffd: NARP)

(THU) The U.S. National Railway Labor Conference announced that it had reached a tentative collective bargaining agreement with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. The NRLC bargains on behalf of 32 railroads, including the nation's largest rail freight carriers. Details of the BofLE agreement were not released pending a ratification vote by BofLE members. (ffd: BofLE)

(THU) Chicago Transit Authority President Frank Kruesi formally proposed a raise in its base transit fare from \$1.50 to \$1.75. Mr. Kruesi said that the increase was necessary to close an \$88 million shortfall in the CTA's annual budget. The CTA base transit fare was last raised in 1991. (ffd: Chicago Sun Times)

(THU) Washington, D.C. commuter rail operator Virginia Railway Express released the results of a study undertaken to determine the makeup of its ridership. The study noted that of VRE's approximately 14,000 daily riders, 63 percent were men, 53 percent were 45 or older and 77 percent made more than \$75,000 a year. The study also noted that 80 percent were married, 54 percent no longer have children living at home and 56 percent work for the federal government. (ffd: Washington Post)

(FRI) Amtrak announced several service changes effective with its new national timetable starting October 26. Among the changes are the curtailment of 10 Acela Express trips between New York and Washington during weekends, which an Amtrak spokesman said would give mechanical personnel more time for maintenance and reduce the number of mechanical problems incurred by the trains during the week. Also included in the changes is the extension of Amtrak's tri-weekly "Cardinal" train, which presently operates between Chicago and Washington, such that it will now operate on the same route but beyond Washington and to New York. (ffd: NARP)

(FRI) RailAmerica's San Joaquin Valley Railroad announced completion of its Cross Valley Rail Corridor project. The project upgraded 45 miles of the railroad's line between Huron, CA. and Visalia, CA. to accommodate 286,000 pound capacity freight cars. The project was jointly funded by the railroad and by several public agencies, including the governments of several cities along the route. (ffd: RailAmerica)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending October 4, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.2 percent from the comparable week last year, up 3.6 percent in the East, but down 0.7 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included coke up 36.0 percent, non-grain farm products up 20.0 percent, waste and scrap products up 11.2 percent and primary forest products up 10.0 percent; notable traffic decreases included metallic ores down 19.4 percent. Also for the week ending October 4, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 57.1 percent (reflecting the U.S. West Coast docks strike at this time last year), Canadian carload rail traffic was up 6.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.7 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 5.5 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 October 4, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.2 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 1.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 7.2 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 1.2 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 18.0 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Allegheny & Eastern Railroad filed to abandon approximately 19 miles of line between St. Mary's, PA. and Emporium, PA.

(ffd: STB)

(MON) BG & CM Railroad filed to acquire, from Camas Prairie Railnet, and operate approximately 67 miles of line between Spalding, ID. And Grangeville, ID. (ffd: STB)

(WED) CSX filed to abandon approximately 24 miles of line between Waresboro, GA. and Pearson, GA. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Iowa Northern Railway filed to operate approximately 52 miles of D&W Railroad's Waterloo Industrial Lead in Black Hawk, Buchanan and Fayette Counties, IA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Paducah & Louisville Railway filed to abandon approximately 5 miles of line between Ilesley, KY. and Dawson Springs, KY. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Union Pacific filed to abandon approximately 1 mile of its Columbia Tap Industrial Lead in Houston, TX. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Union Pacific filed to discontinue operation over Monterey County Transportation Agency's Seaside Industrial Lead, representing approximately 13 miles of line between Castroville, CA. and Seaside, CA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway filed to acquire, from CSX, rail freight operating rights over approximately 18 miles of line, owned by Metro Regional Transit Authority, between Canton, OH. and Krumroy, OH. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Wyoming & Colorado Railroad filed to abandon approximately 1 mile of line in Laramie, WY. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

None of note this week.

(CORRECTION: In last week's WRR, I reported that CSX had appointed Jim Fallon SVP-Transportation. This was in error, as Mr. Fallon was already serving in this position. Thanks to WRR Readers Jani Lipps and Joe Seaman for their catch here.)

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Weekly Rail Review 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 weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,
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