

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, November 23, 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) Norfolk Southern suffered an on-duty employee fatality. Dennis Sellers, Age 49, was fatally injured when a hydraulic ramp collapsed on him. The accident occurred at NS's Enola, PA. rail yard. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) A scheduled arbitration hearing concerning locomotive remote control devices commenced in Cleveland, OH. The hearing, which included representatives from rail carriers, the United Transportation Union and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, seeks to determine what craft may operate the remote control devices. Arguments concluded later in the week, with a decision expected by the end of the year. (ffd: BofLE News)

(MON) Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Norfolk Southern jointly introduced a new service assurance program for selected refrigerated carload traffic. The program, which is from selected cities in the Pacific Northwest to the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast, allows shippers to purchase service assurance for a \$500 carload premium. If that carload does not reach its destination on time, BNSF and NS will reimburse the shipper \$1,000. (ffd: BNSF Corp., NS Corp.)

(MON) Dallas Area Rapid Transit opened a new extension of its light rail system. The extension, totaling 4.6 miles in length, is from the LBJ/Skillman Station northeast to Garland, TX. (ffd: NARP)

(MON) Kansas City Southern began a project to install power-assisted switches on its "dark territory" Vicksburg and Meridian Subdivisions lines. While KCS's System Transportation Center will continue to direct train movements on the lines, the switches will allow their remote control by train crews aboard approaching trains instead of their being hand-thrown on the ground. KCS SVP-Operations Jerry Heavin said that the new switches will "allow KCS to further reduce the risk of personal injuries, while at the same time expediting train meets." (ffd: KCS Corp.)

(TUE) Canadian Pacific Railway President Robert Ritchie criticized Canadian provinces for discriminatory policies against Canadian railways. In a speech to the Western Transportation Advisory Council, Mr. Ritchie noted that CPR pays property taxes varying from \$913 per mile in one province to \$8,802 per mile in another province. Mr. Ritchie called this and other related tax levies discriminatory because those who ship by truck do not have to pay, through their truck rates, property taxes for using Canadian highways. (ffd: CPR Corp.)

(TUE) Union Pacific agreed to pay the Arizona Corporation Commission a fine of \$5,500 for having operated trains with only 1 engineer on 4 occasions last summer. The Commission, which polices Arizona's requirement of having 2 engine-qualified employees in an operating locomotive cab, cited UP for having a lone operator on 2 7-mile road runs and another lone operator on 2 20-mile road runs. Arizona does allow a lone operator to move cars for switching, inspection and maintenance purposes. (ffd: Arizona Daily Star)

(WED) Washington, DC.'s Metro subway system began returning newspaper recycling bins to subway stations. The bins, along with all other trash receptacles, had been removed from the stations following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) New York, NY.'s subway system suffered 2 on-duty employee fatalities in 2 successive days. On Thursday, Signal Maintainer Joy Antony was struck by a subway train while inspecting a signal control box. On Friday, Station Maintainer Kurien Baby was struck by a subway train while cleaning and changing lights on a subway system platform. The fatalities led the New York City Transit Authority to temporarily suspend maintenance activity, so that safety procedures could be validated. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Amtrak countersued the Bombardier and Alstom consortium for what it called "extraordinary delays and pervasive failures" in carrying out the contract to build 20 Acela Express trainsets. The countersuit follows a suit launched by Bombardier last November that alleged that actions on the part of Amtrak brought about those trainset delivery and operational failures. The Amtrak countersuit seeks more than \$200 million in damages from Bombardier and Alstom. (ffd:

wire services)

(THU) Great Lakes Transportation LLC announced a restructuring of their Bessemer & Lake Erie and Pittsburgh & Conneaut Dock Railroads. Included in the restructuring is the relocation of key B&LE commercial and operating personnel to Greenville, PA. and the relocation of similar key P&C Dock personnel to Conneaut, OH. (ffd: ASLRRA)

(THU) WMATA, Washington, DC.'s bus and rail transit operating authority, approved future construction of a new Metrorail subway line from the current West Falls Church, VA. to Dulles International Airport via Tysons Corner, VA. A WMATA spokesman said that the new line, which as yet has no funding basis, would likely cost approximately \$3.3 billion and was projected for completion by 2010. (ffd: Washington Post)

(THU) Burlington Northern Santa Fe transported what it said were the largest multiple load shipments ever carried on U.S. and Canadian Railways. A BNSF spokesman said that the loads were aboard a special BNSF train that left the Port of Duluth-Superior, MN. carrying 7 520-ton pieces of equipment on 14 12-axle rail cars and 2 200-ton pieces of equipment on 2 8-axle rail cars. The shipments were delivered to Ft. McMurray, AB., Canada, for use at an oil extraction plant. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(FRI) The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board announced an enhancement to its website. An RRB spokesman said that the enhancement will compute a railroad employee's service and compensation history. Further details are available on the website at www.rrb.gov. (ffd: RRB)

(FRI) Several railroads announced operation of traditional special holiday trains. CSX announced that its "Santa Special" would operate between Shelby, KY. and Kingsport, TN. on Saturday, November 23. Canadian Pacific Railway announced that its U.S. holiday train would start from Scranton, PA. on December 3; CPR is also operating a similar holiday train through Canada. And Kansas City Southern announced that its "Holiday Express" would operate on a to-be-announced schedule through 7 states, stopping in 23 communities. (ffd: CSX Corp., CPR Corp., KCS Corp.)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending November 16, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.2 from the comparable week last year, down 1.8 percent in the East and up 1.1 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 20.7 percent, waste and scrap materials up 9.8 percent and metals and metal products up 7.5 percent; notable traffic decreases included primary forest products down 13.9 percent, crushed stone, sand and gravel down 13.2 percent and grain down 10.6 percent. Also for the week ending November 16, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 5.4 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 1.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 19.2 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 10.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 58.1 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through November 16, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.0 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 2.7 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 10.5 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 2.9 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 8.9 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Burlington Northern Santa Fe granted overhead trackage rights to Union Pacific between Argo, WA. and Black River, WA., totaling approximately 6 miles. Also, UP granted overhead trackage rights to BNSF between Rhodes, WA. and Black River, WA., totaling approximately 3 miles. The purpose of these trackage rights grants is to accommodate planned enhancements to commuter rail service between Seattle, WA. and Tacoma, WA. (ffd: AAR)

(WED) Norfolk Southern received preliminary environmental consideration approval from the U.S. Surface Transportation Board for its proposal to build a new line between Saltsburg, PA. and Clarksburg, PA., totaling approximately 6 miles, to serve a power plant facility. (ffd: STB)

(THU) The Indiana Northeastern Railroad filed to acquire, from the Branch and St. Joseph Counties Rail Users Association, and operate approximately 25 miles of line between Coldwater, MI. and Sturgis, MI. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Union Pacific filed to abandon approximately 77 miles of its Phoenix Subdivision between Roll, AZ. and Arlington, AZ. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

None of note this week.

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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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