

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, DECEMBER 25, 2004

BY DAVE MEARS

(Editor's Note: The expression "ffd" at the end of a news item represents "for further details" and suggests a reference source for further related information.)

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

(MON) New York University released a study indicating that job growth in the New York City metropolitan region would stagnate without a significant increase in commuter rail and subway capacity over the next 20 years. Among other rail and transit initiatives, the study called for adding new rail tunnels under the Hudson River to Pennsylvania Station and under the East River to Lower Manhattan. "We've gone through 40 years where we've really forgotten about the significance of building new capacity," the report concluded. (ffd: New York Times)

(MON) The Canadian government and the Canadian Pacific Railway announced that they would jointly spend more than \$8 million to install a new Vehicle and Cargo Inspection System (VACIS) on CPR's line between Windsor, ON. and Detroit, MI. A railway spokesman said that the system, which is already in place at Rouses Point, NY., Noyes, MN. and Portal, ND., can scan a one-mile-long train's contents in about 10 minutes. The spokesman added that CPR would also install surveillance systems and fencing, reconfigure track and modify signals on the Windsor-Detroit line segment to create a secure zone through which the scanned trains will pass. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell announced that the state would provide \$18.8 million in interim funding to its transit systems. The funding allows Philadelphia, PA.'s SEPTA, Pittsburgh, PA.'s PAT and other state transit agencies to hold off fare increases and service cuts that were to take effect shortly due to projected budget deficits. Mr. Rendell said that the funding, which was gained from a variety of federal and state transportation sources, would give his office and the state legislature more time to work out "a permanent mass-transit funding solution", which Mr. Rendell said must be done in early 2005. (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer)

(WED) Amtrak opened a new temporary station in St. Louis, MO. The new station, located at 551 S. 16th St. in St. Louis, replaces an "Amshack-style" station Amtrak had used since it relocated out of St. Louis Union Station in 1978. The new temporary station was needed due to the planned demolition of the previous station to make way for the new St. Louis Intermodal Transportation Center, which will include rail station facilities and is expected to be complete by late 2006. (ffd: Amtrak, NARP)

(TUE) The Surface Transportation Board dismissed a "petition for adverse abandonment" filed in November, 2001 by the New York City Economic Development Corporation against New York Regional Rail's New York Cross Harbor Railroad. The NYCEDC's filing was aimed at barring NYCR, which floats rail cars in New York Harbor between the New Jersey and New York waterfronts, from using Brooklyn's Bush Terminal related to alleged operational improprieties there. Although the STB earlier granted NYCEDC's request, the U.S. Court of Appeals later overturned the STB's action and NYCEDC recently advised that it would not challenge the court's ruling. "We are extremely happy to have this case

resolved....we can now focus on the future growth of our company," said New York Regional Rail President Ron Bridges. (ffd: AAR)

(WED) New York State's Metropolitan Transportation Authority's 5-year capital plan was rejected by the state's Capital Program Review Board. MTA had proposed \$27.7 billion of capital improvements beginning in 2005. State Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan, who is on the board and voted against the plan, said that "it is prudent to make [state spending] decisions only after reviewing the state's spending plans as a whole." The previous day, MTA Chairman Peter Kalikow indicated that he would be willing to defer more ambitious capital projects, such as the Second Avenue Subway and East Side Access projects in Manhattan, to preserve a \$17.2 billion core capital program to maintain and improve the existing MTA rail and transit system. (ffd: New York Times)

(WED) A contractor overseeing the rebuilding of Iraqi railways announced that they were pulling out of the project. A spokesman for the Department of Defense's Project and Contract Office said that contractor, Contrack International of Arlington, VA., had pulled out due to the present situation in Iraq being too dangerous for its workforce. The spokesman said the general contracting work that the company had been doing would now be done directly by the DOD's PCO. Attacks by Iraqi guerilla forces on contracted workers have been a major reason for the slow pace of rebuilding, with only \$2 billion having been spent to date of the \$18.4 billion in overall reconstruction funding that was earlier appropriated. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) New York City subway officials noted, without observance, the 20th anniversary of the Bernhard Goetz subway shootings. Mr. Goetz shot and wounded 4 young adults whom he believed were about to rob him on the subway's No. 2 Line. The city's subway system has improved notably since the time of the shootings, going from approximately 40 felonies reported daily then to approximately 8 felonies reported daily now, and with subway ridership having increased from approximately 2.7 million daily riders then to approximately 4.5 million daily riders now. Related to the shootings, Mr. Goetz served 8 months in jail on a weapons conviction and one the youths he wounded was later awarded a \$43 million uncollectible civil judgment against Mr. Goetz. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) Coast Guard officials announced that they had reached agreement with Amtrak and New Jersey Transit to limit openings of the Portal Drawbridge on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Line over the Hackensack River. A spokesman said that the drawbridge would not be opened to river traffic during the 4-hour morning and evening rush hour periods, except in case of tide or safety issues. The bridge locates in "the meadows" north of Newark, NJ. and sees a rush hour frequency of approximately 1 train every 2-1/2 minutes. (ffd: NARP)

(FRI) Boston, MA.'s Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority opened its new Silver Line Waterfront bus transit line. The line, which consists of reserved bus right-of-ways, tunnels and stations, runs from South Station to Boston's World Trade Center and its Convention and Exhibition Center, serving the South Boston waterfront. An MBTA spokesman said that another Silver Line segment operating between South Station and Boyleston Station on MBTA's Green Line is currently being planned. (ffd: Progressive Railroading, MBTA)

(FRI) Metro North Rail Road announced that it would build an additional commuter rail car maintenance facility at New Haven, CT. An MNRR spokesman said that the new shop facility, which will cost approximately \$18 million, will have a capacity to hold 12 cars at a time and should be operational by early 2006. Noting that up to 30 percent of MNRR's New Haven Line fleet was out of service last winter, the spokesman added that this would move indoors much maintenance work at New Haven that is currently done outdoors. (ffd: Trains)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending December 18, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.9 percent from the comparable week last year, up 2.9 percent in the East and up 1.1 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included petroleum products up 16.1 percent, metals and metal products up 4.3 percent and coal up 4.1 percent; notable traffic decreases included non-grain farm products down 24.3 percent, primary forest products down 14.9 percent and grain down 7.2 percent. Also for the week ending December 18, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 14.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 0.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 4.1 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 20.0 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 64.5 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the period January 1 through December 18, U.S. rail traffic cumulatively totaled 1.555 trillion ton-miles, setting a new annual U.S. rail record, with 2 reporting weeks still to tally for this year. Also for the period January 1 through December 18, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.8 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 10.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 6.8 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 0.4 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 3.9 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 9.5 percent, all when ranked with the comparable period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Houston, TX. Mayor Bill White announced that Union Pacific would grant Burlington Northern Santa Fe trackage rights to reach and serve several chemical plants in and near Bayport, TX. The mayor added that, as a result of the agreement, BNSF will abandon plans to build its own 13-mile line between Houston and Bayport. The Surface Transportation Board approved construction of the line in 2003, however, community opposition and related litigation had held up the start of construction. (ffd: AAR)

(MON) Canadian National/Soo Line filed to abandon approximately 5 miles of its West Allis Line between Milwaukee, WI. and Wauwatosa, WI. (ffd: STB)

(MON) Canadian National/Wisconsin Central filed to grant trackage rights to the Wisconsin & Southern Railroad between North Milwaukee, WI. and Saukville, WI., totaling approximately 20 miles. The purpose of the trackage rights is to allow WSOR to connect its Kiel-Saukville Line with the rest of its system. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) East Penn Railway filed to operate freight service over SEPTA's dormant Octoraro Branch between Chadds Ford Jct., PA. and the Pennsylvania/Maryland state line near Sylmar, MD. In its filing, the East Penn noted that the agreement for the Morristown & Erie Railway to operate the line had terminated last November 19. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) The Ohio & Pennsylvania Railroad filed to acquire, from the Columbiana County Port Authority, and operate approximately 36 miles of line between Youngstown, OH. and Darlington, PA. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) The Sunset Railway and the San Joaquin Valley Railroad jointly filed for the SRY to abandon and for the SJVR to discontinue service over approximately 17 miles of line between Levee, CA. and Taft, CA. (ffd: STB)

(THU) The Surface Transportation Board granted R.J. Corman Railroad's earlier request to abandon approximately 36 miles of its Dawkins Line between Dawkins, KY. and Evanston, KY. (ffd: STB)

(THU) Sierra Northern Railway filed to abandon approximately 10 miles of line between West Sacramento, CA. and Pumphouse Road Station, CA. (ffd: STB)

(THU) The Surface Transportation Board granted Union Pacific's earlier request to abandon approximately 31 miles of its St. Joseph Industrial Lead, between Elwood, KS. and Robinson, KS. (ffd: STB)

PERSONNEL CHANGES AND ALIKE:

(MON) JAC Holdings International, Inc., formerly operating as Johnstown America, announced that it had changed its name to FreightCar America. A spokesman for the company said that the name was changed in order to better reflect its business of manufacturing railroad freight cars. The company also announced that it had appointed Kevin Bagby as VP, CFO, Treasurer and Secretary. (ffd: FreightCar America Corp.)

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Weekly Rail Review is edited from public news sources and published weekly to those working in, or interested in, the entities of rail and transit. Send an e-mail to <<mailto:weeklyrailreview@aol.com>>weeklyrailreview@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS,

AND BEST WISHES FOR A GREAT 2005,

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