

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, April 6, 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) The U.S. Supreme Court agreed to review a West Virginia court case that awarded \$5.8 million to 6 retired Norfolk & Western Railway employees as compensation for the emotional distress of being exposed to cancer-causing asbestos. The appeal was made by Norfolk Southern, successor company to N&W, and will be heard in the court term beginning this October. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) In a notable rail-highway grade crossing crash, four elderly women, ranging in age from 80 to 95, were killed when their car was struck by a Union Pacific freight train. The crash occurred in Steele City, NE. at a crossing equipped with crossbucks but no mechanical warning devices. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) The Susquehanna Area Regional Authority voted final approval for construction of a rail station on the Amtrak Keystone Line next to the Harrisburg, PA. airport. The new airport station, which will cost \$9 million and include a moving sidewalk connecting the station with the airport's main terminal, is expected to be complete before Summer, 2004. (ffd: NARP)

(MON) The Albany Times Union reported that the New York State Department of Transportation will delay the return to revenue service of the first rebuilt Rohr turbo trainset. The trainset, intended for high speed service between Albany-Rensselaer, NY. and New York, NY., will reportedly be delayed to correct several design flaws, which will include improvement to the control console in the engineer's cab, better wheel slip control and making the air conditioning less noisy. (ffd: Albany Times Union)

(TUE) South Korea's Hyundai Motor Corporation announced that it would build its first manufacturing and assembly plant in the U.S. The new plant, estimated to cost approximately \$1 billion, will be located near Montgomery, AL. and be served by CSX. (ffd: CRTS, wire services)

(TUE) Norfolk Southern suffered a multiple derailment on its three track mainline 3 miles west of Altoona, PA. An embankment gave way next to where a backhoe was working alongside the mainline; the earth and backhoe then slid into the side of a passing train and derailed it, which in turn derailed cars on a train passing on the second track and which in turn derailed cars on a train passing on the third track. The backhoe driver was injured in the accident, which closed the mainline into Wednesday. (ffd: CRTS)

(TUE) The National Transportation Safety Board issued its report on the May

27, 2000 derailment of a Union Pacific freight train near Baton Rouge, LA. The report blamed the accident, in which 33 cars derailed, with some catching fire and then requiring the evacuation of approximately 3,000 persons, on broken rail joint bars. The report also cited Union Pacific for inadequate track inspection procedures, saying that the track had been inspected with a moving inspection vehicle, which did not allow those inspecting the track to adequately detect broken rail joint bars. (ffd: NTSB)

(TUE) Locomotive remanufacturer VMV Enterprises ceased operation due to continued business losses. VMV was located in Paducah, KY., had been in business for more than 70 years and was the largest independently owned locomotive overhaul company in the U.S. (ffd: Paducah Channel 6 News)

(WED) The U.S. Federal Railroad Administration issued new rules for improving sanitary conditions for toilet and washing facilities in locomotive cabs. The rules, which include servicing requirements and provide for exceptions for certain existing equipment and operations, take effective in June, 2002. (ffd: FRA)

(WED) New Jersey Transit announced that its new Executive Director, departing Amtrak President George Warrington, would be paid \$275,000 annually for his services. The new salary for Mr. Warrington, who is remaining with Amtrak until a successor is named, represents an \$82,000 increase over the salary of NJT's previous Executive Director, Jeffrey Warsh. (ffd: Newark Star Ledger)

(WED) The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association named the winners of its Year 2001 safety awards. The top award winners, by category, were: 250K or more employee hours, Florida East Coast Railway; 50K-250K employee hours, Columbus and Ohio River Railroad; 10K-50K, North Shore Railroad; 0-10K, Carolina Rail Services; switch/terminal railroad, Belt Railway of Chicago. The ASLRRA will present these and other awards at its annual meeting in Orlando, FL. April 28 through 30. (ffd: ASLRRA)

(THU) Washington, DC. transit operator Metro approved a draft environmental impact statement for extension of rail service to Tysons Corner, VA. and Dulles International Airport. The new extension, which would be either a subway or light rail line and does not yet have a funding source, would total 24 miles in length and connect with Metro's West Falls Church subway station. (ffd: Washington Post)

(FRI) Citing signs of help from Congress, Amtrak announced that it would not post discontinuance notices for its long distance train services, which it earlier said it would do on or about March 29. However, Amtrak President George Warrington did send letters to the governors of the 46 states Amtrak serves warning that train discontinuances might occur in the next fiscal year if funding falls below Amtrak's proposed budget. (ffd: wire services)

(FRI) The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Museum in Baltimore, MD. announced that it would open its new education and orientation center at the museum on April 20 and 21. The opening of the new center, to be called "Society In Motion", is part the museum's celebration of the 175th anniversary of American railroading going on now through July, 2003. (ffd: B&O Railroad Museum)

(SAT) Denver, CO.'s light rail system opened a 1.8 mile extension of its Central Platte Valley or "C" Line. The "C" Line now totals 13 miles and 12 stations and runs between Mineral, CO. and Denver's Union Station. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending March 30, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 8.2

percent from the comparable week last year, down 9.5 percent in the East and down 7.1 percent in the West. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 0.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 8.5 percent and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 2.3 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the month of March, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 6.5 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 1.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 5.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 4.3 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 9.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 9.6 percent, all when ranked with March, 2001.

For the period January 1 through March 30, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 3.8 percent compared with the same period last year. First quarter this year versus first quarter last year, notable traffic increases included motor vehicles and equipment up 4.9 percent and crushed stone and gravel up 2.8 percent; notable traffic decreases included metallic ores down 19.2 percent, grain down 5.2 percent and coal down 4.7 percent. Also for the period January 1 through March 30, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 0.4 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 5.4 percent, Canadian intermodal traffic was up 2.0 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 5.7 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 4.1 percent, all when ranked with the same period last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(MON) Norfolk Southern appointed Debbie Butler VP-Customer Service and Terry Evans VP-Operations Planning and Budget. (ffd: NS Corp.)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(FRI) Mexrail, the holding company owning the Texas Mexican Railway, was sold to Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana, Mexico's largest railroad. Mexrail and TFM are both jointly controlled by Grupo TMM and Kansas City Southern Industries, the latter owner of Kansas City Southern Railway. (ffd: AAR)

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Weekly Rail Recap is edited from public news sources and published weekly, usually on Monday or Tuesday, 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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