

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, MAY 18, 2012

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(SAT) National Train Day was celebrated at many rail stations and related public facilities in the U.S. At Chicago Union Station, Norfolk Southern displayed one of its new locomotives re-painted in an NS heritage paint scheme and also provided its Exhibit Car with information about the railroad, which is celebrating its thirtieth anniversary this year. In Council Bluffs, IA, the Union Pacific Railroad Museum used the occasion to reopen after having been closed for several weeks for renovation. (Ref: NS RR, KMTV-Omaha)

(MON) Officials marked the completion of new train platforms at stations in Freeport and Brunswick, ME. The new platforms will be used for the extension of Amtrak Downeaster train service from its presently northern terminus in Portland, ME to these two cities, which is scheduled to start this fall. (Ref: FRA, wire services)

(MON) Chinese officials presented a statue to the State of Utah to commemorate the more than 2,600 Chinese involved with the building of the first transcontinental rail line, which was completed at Promontory Point, UT. The statue was presented in Salt Lake City and accepted by representatives of Utah Governor Gary Herbert. (Ref: Salt Lake Tribune)

(TUE) Amtrak announced that it would reorganize its operations management into four business lines: Northeast Corridor services; long-distance services; state-supported services; and commuter services. Each will be headed by a general manager who will report to Amtrak's new VP-Operations D.J. Stadler. Amtrak said that the reorganization would be rolled out in phases during the next 16 months with completion slated for October, 2013. (Ref: Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) Rail Runner Express, New Mexico's commuter rail service operating between Albuquerque and Santa Fe, announced that it was adding a new express train to its weekday schedule. Also announced were a new weekend schedule, an expanded quiet car program, mobile phone ticketing, and a commuter tax benefit. (Ref: Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) Washington, DC's Metrorail subway system opened its first "Bike and Ride" facility. The 2,400 square-foot facility provides secure, enclosed parking for more than 100 bicycles at the subway's College Park, MD station. A Metrorail spokesman said that work is underway to open similar facilities at its Vienna and King Street stations in Virginia. (Ref: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood noted the demise of the ARC Tunnel project to build two new passenger rail tunnels under the Hudson River to a new New Jersey Transit station in Manhattan. The ARC project, largely supported by funding from the State of New Jersey, was canceled by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie in 2010. Later in the day, a U.S. Department of Transportation spokesman clarified Mr. LaHood's remarks, noting that "...while the ARC Tunnel is dead, the alternative Amtrak tunnel, also known as the Gateway Tunnel, still has the department's support...". The Gateway Tunnel, which would access both the existing Pennsylvania Station and the new Moynihan Station, is currently in its initial study phase. (Ref: Forbes)

(THU) In an election of Canadian Pacific Railway board of directors, Pershing Square Capital Management seated its endorsed slate of seven directors. The investment fund, which purchased 20.6 million CPR shares in October, 2011, had been campaigning for management changes and new board members to hasten financial and operational improvements on the railroad. Attendant with the election, CPR President and CEO Fred Green resigned and was replaced in the interim by former Norfolk Southern Vice-Chairman Stephen Tobias, one of the seven new directors. (Ref: Railway Track & Structures, wire services)

(THU) The Federal Railroad Administration proposed regulations that expand their post-accident testing of railroad workers to include prescription and over-the-counter medications. In their proposal, FRA noted that it has conducted post-accident drug and alcohol testing since 1985 and is "...proposing to add certain potentially impairing non-controlled substances...because FRA's research indicates that use of prescription and over-the-counter drugs, most of which are non-controlled substances, is prevalent among railroad employees." The FRA is accepting comment on their proposed regulations through July 16. (Ref: FRA, Bloomberg News)

(THU) Watco Companies' Compliance Services Division announced a partnership with Bourque Logistics. A Bourque spokesman said that the integration would offer rail users railcar repair, maintenance, car mechanical integrity, engineering, and regulatory compliance, which would enhance rail asset management, budgeting and reporting. (Ref: Railway Age)

(FRI) In order to maintain what it said was "orderly travel," the Long Island Rail Road implemented a ban on alcohol on its train on Friday and Saturday nights. Alcoholic beverages, whether in open or closed containers, will not be allowed on overnight trains between midnight at 5:00AM on Friday nights and Saturday nights. (Ref: NYMTA)

(FRI) The East Broad Top Railroad announced that it would not operate during the 2012 summer tourist season. A spokesman for the East Broad Preservation Association said that it had been unable to work out an operating agreement with the narrow gauge railroad's owner. If effected, this would be the first summer in 52 years that the EBT did not operate. (Ref: Trains)

STATS – CLASS 1 RAIL TRAFFIC:

(THU) The Association of American Railroads reported that, for the week ending May 12, 2012 and ranked with the comparable week last year:

- U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 279,063 units, down 5.2 percent
- Notable U.S. carload traffic increases included petroleum products up 49.0 percent, motor vehicles and equipment up 35.7 percent, and lumber and wood products up 20.3 percent; notable traffic decreases included coal down 16.2 percent, nonmetallic minerals down 15.4 percent, and grain down 11.4 percent.
- U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 238,980 units, up 3.1 percent
- Canadian carload rail traffic totaled 79,063 units, up 3.4 percent
- Canadian intermodal rail traffic totaled 52,456 units, up 7.2 percent
- Mexican carload rail traffic totaled 14,510 units, up 6.2 percent
- Mexican intermodal rail traffic totaled 9,666 units, up 16.2 percent

For the period January 1 through May 12, 2012 and ranked with the comparable period last year:

- U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 5,347,394 units, down 3.3 percent
- U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 4,353,407 units, up 2.8 percent
- Canadian carload rail traffic totaled 1,465,905 units, up 4.7 percent

- Canadian intermodal rail traffic totaled 951,318 units, up 7.9 percent
- Mexican carload rail traffic totaled 259,044 units, up 4.1 percent
- Mexican intermodal rail traffic totaled 169,103 units, up 22.1 percent

Note: Canadian traffic totals include that traffic on U.S. operations of the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railways.

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) L.B. Foster announced that it would sell its railway securement business in a transaction to be completed by the end of the second quarter of this year. L.B. Foster acquired this division as part of its acquisition of Portec Rail Products in December, 2010. (Ref: Trains)

(MON) Saratoga & North Creek Railway was reported to have gained Surface Transportation Board approval to operate approximately 30 miles of the line north of North Creek, NY to Newcomb (Tahawus), NY. The S&NC is a member of the Iowa Pacific Holdings' family of railroads and had earlier purchased the North Creek-Newcomb line segment from the National Lead Company. (Ref: Glens Falls Post-Star)

(THU) Alameda Belt Line filed with the Surface Transportation Board to abandon approximately one mile of line in Alameda, CA. (Ref: STB)

(THU) Central Railroad of Indianapolis filed with the Surface Transportation Board to abandon approximately three miles of its Tipton Industrial Lead in Howard County, IN. (Ref: STB)

(THU) Iowa Pacific Holdings was unanimously selected by the Regional Transportation Commission for Santa Cruz County, CA to operate the Santa Cruz Branch Line, which the Commission had earlier purchased. A Commission spokesman said that appropriate parties would file with the Surface Transportation Board for their approval of the operation. (Ref: Santa Cruz Sentinel)

(FRI) Caterparrot Railnet LLC filed with the Surface Transportation Board to lease, from the Georgia & Florida Railway, approximately 43 miles of line between Valdosta and Wilacoochee, GA. (Ref: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(WED) Transportation Technology Center of Pueblo, CO announced the following appointments: Firdausi Irani as VP-Business Development and officer of TTCl; Robert Florum as VP-Engineering & Quality Services and officer of TTCl; and Michael Sherer as VP-Operations and officer of TTCl. (Ref: Progressive Railroading)

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Have a Railroad Safe Day,

Dave Mears