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WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, MAY 21,2005

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(SUN) Utilizing new gamma-imaging technology, agents of the U.S. Border Patrol captured 2 Brazilian nationals trying to enter the U.S. illegally as stowaways aboard a freight train. The 2 illegals were detected hidden in boxcars on a train entering the U.S. via Black Rock Bridge near Buffalo, NY. After being apprehended, the illegals were returned to Canada, where they had temporary visas. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) Speaking in Columbia, SC, Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta unveiled a new "National Rail Safety Action Plan." To be administered through the Federal Railroad Administration, the plan takes what Mr. Mineta termed "an aggressive new approach" toward improving railroad safety that will "target the most frequent, highest-risk causes of accidents, focus federal oversight and inspection resources, and accelerate research into new technologies." Mr. Mineta added that the plan will concentrate on "the fundamental factors that cause rail accidents." On Wednesday, Mr. Mineta visited Baton Rouge, LA where he unveiled FRA's new Class T-18 advanced track inspection vehicle. A DOT spokesman said that, by 2007, when 4 Class T-18 vehicles will be in operation, the FRA will then be able to mechanically inspect more than 100,000 track miles annually. (ffd: USDOT, wire services)

(MON) A bipartisan conclave of congressmen announced the formation of the Rail Passenger Caucus. Said Rep. Mike Castle (R-DE), a caucus member, "The goal of the new caucus in the House is to create a coalition from both parties to ensure the long-term survivability of the national passenger rail network. The caucus does not have the power to shape legislation the way a congressional committee does, but it can provide ideas and build consensus among lawmakers." (ffd: Baltimore Sun)

(MON) BNSF announced that it had begun taking delivery of 100 new locomotives from General Electric whose equipment includes forward facing video cameras. A BNSF spokesman said that an additional 250 existing locomotives will this year also be equipped with video cameras. The spokesman added that the cameras, which will be mounted inside the locomotive cab and synchronized with the locomotive event recorder, will help provide a visual record related to investigations of grade crossing and trespasser accidents and incidents. (ffd: BNSF Corp., Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) The Senate passed its version of Transportation Equity Act renewal legislation. The bill authorizes approximately \$294 billion in federal transportation spending over the next 6 years, including approximately \$54 billion for transit funding. The House's TEA renewal legislation authorizes \$284 billion, aligning with the Bush Administration's earlier statement that it would veto any funding figure above that amount. The Senate and House versions will now go to a joint conference committee for reconciliation. (ffd: NARP, Railway Age)

(TUE) Canadian National announced that it had reached a tentative contract agreement with the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference, representing CN locomotive engineers in Canada. The new agreement averted a strike scheduled for

Wednesday. A CN spokesman said that specific details of the new agreement were being withheld pending ratification, but that it would run for 5 years and be retroactive to January 1, 2004. (ffd: Trains, wire services)

(TUE) The National Mediation Board ordered the National Carriers Conference Committee and the United Transportation Union into mediation related to negotiations involving rates of pay, work rules, and working conditions. The 2 sides mutually broke off negotiations on March 15 after the NCCC asked the UTU to bargain over crew consist counts, which the UTU said were "protected by a moratorium and cannot be handled nationally." A NMB spokesman said that a mediator would be assigned to the dispute. (ffd: Railway Age, wire services)

(TUE) Boston's Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority debuted its new "Charlie Card" fare card at the Logan Airport station on its Blue Subway Line. Automatic fare collection equipment was recently installed at the station and an MBTA spokesman said that it would be installed at 7 other Blue Line stations by the end of the summer. "You won't need a pocket full of tokens [any more] if you're running around the city," the spokeman added. The new fare card is named for the fictional hero of a 1959 folk song who was endlessly riding Boston subway trains. (ffd: MBTA, wire services)

(TUE) Omaha, NE police reported that approximately 300 pounds of copper cabling had been stolen from a Union Pacific Centennial-class locomotive on display at a city park. A Union Pacific spokesman said that there was no other vandalism damage to the locomotive. The spokesman added that that it would cost UP approximately \$200,000 to replace and reinstall the copper cabling in the locomotive, but that this wasn't planned because the locomotive is on permanent display. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta continued his efforts to promote the Department of Transportation's controversial Amtrak reform plan. Speaking at the Mobile, AL train station served by Amtrak's tri-weekly "Sunset Limited" train, Mr. Mineta said, "Across the country, taxpayers are not getting their money's worth when it comes to intercity passenger rail. All 15 of Amtrak's long-distance trains combined lost more than \$908 million in 2004." Mr. Mineta rode a bus to and from his press conference. Local criticism continued of the DOT plan and its lack of federal funding for Amtrak for FY2006, with Todd Stennis, Chairman of the Southern Rapid Rail Transit Commission, stating that the DOT plan "would eliminate passenger rail service in the Southeast U.S. altogether." (ffd: Mobile Register, NARP)

(WED) New Jersey Transit said that it would establish new rules limiting certain areas of train and bus stations to NJT passengers holding tickets. The change follows a lawsuit filed in federal court by a homeless person earlier evicted from a NJT train station. A NJT spokesman said that the rules will establish certain areas as "passenger-only" or "fare-paid" zones, but will allow other station areas, including corridors, shops and restaurants, to be open to anyone. The spokesman added that the rules will likely take effect this summer. (ffd: wire services)

(WED) BNSF filed a lawsuit against one of its longtime shippers, Doe Run Resources of Maryland Heights, MO. The lawsuit alleges that Doe Run, which loaded lead ore and lead ore concentrate, was ultimately responsible for millions of dollars paid out by BNSF in settlement of cases alleging lead poisoning from lead ore dust residual in freight cars or blown off onto BNSF tracks. A lawyer representing Doe Run declined to comment on the lawsuit. (ffd: St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

(THU) The Association of American Railroads presented the E. H. Harriman Memorial Safety Awards for 2004. Norfolk Southern won the gold medal for line-haul railroads with more than 15 million man-hours, its sixteenth consecutive gold award. Chicago commuter rail operator METRA won the gold medal for line-haul railroads with 4 to 15 million man-hours, its second consecutive gold award. Guilford Rail won for line-haul railroads with fewer than 4 million man-hours and the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis won for switching and terminal railroads, the latter railroad winning its third consecutive gold medal. In announcing category winners, AAR President Edward Hamberger noted that the 2004 employee casualty rate was 9 percent lower than it was in 2003, when the previous casualty safety record was set. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) San Francisco commuter rail operator Caltrain announced a new safety campaign called "Railroad Watch." The campaign asks those living near the Caltrain line between San Francisco and San Jose to call Caltrain police if they see dangerous or suspicious activity on or near tracks. A Caltrain spokesman said that brochures about the campaign were being sent to those residents and would also be distributed to Caltrain passengers. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) Norfolk Southern announced the 2005 schedule of its company exhibit car. The car will first be exhibited at the Altoona, PA Railroaders Memorial Museum on May 21 and 22, and then be moved to the Shenandoah, VA Memorial Day Festival and Parade. An NS spokesman said that the car includes interactive displays highlighting the NS transportation network. The spokesman added that the car's 2005 schedule concludes at the Strasburg Railroad December 2 through 4. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(FRI) A Union Pacific freight train derailed 36 cars near Nampa, ID, approximately 20 miles west of Boise. The train, made up exclusively of double-stack cars, was enroute from Rochelle, IL to Seattle, WA when it derailed. A UP spokesman said that no crewpersons were injured in the accident. (ffd: Trains)

(FRI) The Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach announced that they would begin collecting higher fees for cargo loading and unloading during peak daytime hours. A spokesman for the ports, which are the nation's busiest, said that they hoped the new peak period pricing would encourage more port usage at nights and on weekends. The spokesman added that the program was believed to be the first of its kind at a U.S. port. (ffd: wire services)

(SAT) New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced that it would drop its proposed regulations banning subway and related transit photography. The ban, initially proposed as an anti-terrorism measure, had been notably criticized by civil libertarians, photographers and New York City officials, including Mayor Michael Bloomberg. "Our officers will continue to investigate and intercede if necessary, if the activity - photo-related or not - is suspicious," said an MTA spokesman. (ffd: wire services)

STATS - TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending May 14, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 31.8 billion ton-miles, down 1.2 percent from the comparable week last year. Also for the week, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.7 percent, down 0.7 percent in the East and down 2.5 percent in the West. An AAR spokesman noted that "at least part of decline was attributable to derailments that disrupted coal traffic out of the Powder River Basin." Notable traffic increases included coke up 23.5 percent, crushed stone, sand and gravel up 11.5 percent and non-grain farm products up 10.8 percent; notable traffic decreases included nonmetallic minerals down 11.5 percent and coal down 5.5 percent. Also for the week, U.S.

intermodal rail traffic was up 6.3 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.9 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 0.5 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 11.2 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 2.3 percent.

For the period January 1 through May 14, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 604.1 billion ton-miles, up 3.2 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 2.4 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 7.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 0.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.3 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 2.4 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 9.4 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – "BIG 7" OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(FRI) For the week ending May 14, 2005 versus the comparable week last year, average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 23.8 mph versus 25.2 mph; Canadian National, 25.6 mph versus 24.6 mph; Canadian Pacific, 24.5 mph versus 24.3 mph; CSX, 19.0 mph versus 19.2 mph; Kansas City Southern, 22.2 mph versus 25.7 mph; Norfolk Southern, 22.0 mph versus 22.8 mph; and Union Pacific, 21.3 mph versus 21.3 mph.

Also for the week ending May 14, 2005 versus the comparable week last year, average terminal dwell time was as follows: BNSF, 10.2 hrs versus 9.8 hrs; Canadian National, 12.9 hrs versus 14.1 hrs; Canadian Pacific, 29.1 hrs versus 27.4 hrs; CSX, 32.2 hrs versus 29.2 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 25.2 hrs versus 28.8 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 24.3 hrs versus 21.7 hrs; and Union Pacific, 27.5 hrs versus 30.7 hrs.

(Note: Concerning the above statistics, AAR comments that "one railroad's performance metrics cannot meaningfully be compared to another railroad's, due to differences in the carriers' calculation methodologies, operational strategies, network characteristics, terrain, traffic mix and volume, length of haul, extent of passenger operations, and other factors, such as weather.")

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) BNSF granted Union Pacific local trackage rights between UP Junction, WA and Sprague, WA, totaling approximately 25 miles. The purpose of the trackage rights is to permit UP to move loaded and empty ballast trains necessary for its maintenance-of-way projects. (ffd: STB)

(TUE) BNSF granted Union Pacific temporary-only trackage rights between Rockview, MO and Hulbert, AR, totaling approximately 159 miles, and between Grand Ave., St. Louis, MO and Pacific, MO, totaling approximately 32 miles. The purpose of the temporary trackage rights is to allow UP to performance "blitz" maintenance on its nearby lines. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Canadian National/Illinois Central granted CSX overhead trackage rights between Aulon Interlocking near

Memphis, TN and CN's Memphis Intermodal Terminal, totaling approximately 12 miles. The purpose of the trackage rights is to allow CSX to move intermodal rail traffic between Aulon Interlocking and the Memphis Intermodal Terminal. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Georgia Southwestern filed to acquire, from Central of Georgia, approximately 43 miles of line between Florida Rock, GA and Allie, GA. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) RailAmerica announced that its Indiana & Ohio Central Railroad and its Indiana & Ohio Railway would be merged. The Indiana & Ohio Central operates approximately 260 track miles in OH and the Indiana & Ohio operate approximately 500 track miles in IN, MI and OH. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

(WED) BNSF announced the following appointments: Mark Schultz as VP-Safety, Training & Operations Support and effective June 1; Paul Bischler as Controller; Steve Bobb as GM-Texas Division; Dennis Johnson as VP-Business Unit Operations & Support. (ffd: BNSF Corp.)

(WED) Lisa Dickerson was appointed Chief Administrator of the Maryland Transit Administration. Ms. Dickerson, who has been Acting Administrator since last October of the MTA, whose operations include MARC commuter rail serving Washington, DC and Baltimore, MD, as well as the bus, light rail and subway lines serving Baltimore, MD. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(THU) The Association of American Railroads presented Tom Mulligan, a Norfolk Southern train conductor, with the Harold F. Hammond Award for rail safety for 2004. Mr. Mulligan, a 38-year veteran of NS and its predecessor railroads, was cited for accomplishments that include having worked with one of customers he switched to develop safe switching procedures that served as a model for the company's switching operations at its plant in both the U.S. and Europe. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) Washington, DC bus and subway operator METRO appointed Belinda Jones Senior Manager-Red Line. The appointment of Ms. Jones, who will be responsible for the line's on-time performance, safety, customer service, stations, maintenance and cleanliness, stems from a METRO oversight panel's earlier recommendations that managers be appointed and held accountable for each subway line to help improve reliability. A METRO spokesman said that it expects to name senior managers for its Orange/Blue and Yellow/Green Lines later this year. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

CORRECTION:

In the previous week's WRR, I reported on a proposed ordinance being considered by the Cleveland, OH city council to ban hazardous material shipments through the city. However, WRR Reader Sheldon Lustig writes: "This ordinance does

not seek to ban hazardous material shipments through the city. What the ordinance does do is to create a hazardous materials exclusion zone that would ban through shipments of certain hazardous materials from the Norfolk Southern main line, which runs through densely populated areas and skirts the northern edge of downtown...The ordinance does not specify a detour route. However, the White Connection (aka 'Harvard Connection') on the east and the Toledo Connection at Berea are in place and in use to connect NS with the CSX mainline (aka 'the Short Line')...The Short Line route closely parallels the mandatory route for the through shipment of hazardous materials by highway (I-90/I-271/I-480/I-80), which was dictated several years ago by the Public Utilities Commission. This route was established in accordance with federal directives to reduce the population exposure in the event of incident."

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

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,

Dave Mears

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