

## WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, MAY 21, 2010

BY DAVE MEARS

(NOTE: In case it is helpful to anyone who may not have received the previous edition due to it possibly having been caught in or deleted by a spam filter, please know that it was sent on June 21, 2010 for the week ending May 14, 2010.)

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

(MON) U.S. airlines sued the U.S. National Mediation Board to stop enforcement of the rule change that permits union-organizing elections to be decided on the number of yea and nay votes cast. The previous rule, which dated back 75 years, required a majority of an entire work group to approve unionization, effectively counting those who didn't vote as "no" votes. The rule change is applicable to both the air and rail industries. The suit, which was filed by the Air Transport Association, alleges that the new change was unjustified and in violation of existing federal law. (ffd: wire services)

(MON) The Federal Railroad Administration proposed new regulations prohibiting train and engine employees from "improperly" using electronic devices while on duty. The new regulations would make permanent the ban on using cell phones and related devices on the job, as was ordered by FRA Emergency Order No. 26, which was put into effect following evidence that the engineer who collided his train in the Metrolink-Union Pacific crash in Chatsworth, CA in 2008 had been texting with his cell phone. The crash killed 26 persons, including that engineer. The FRA said that it would accept comment on the proposed new regulations by June 17. (ffd: FRA, Progressive Railroading)

(MON) The Long Island Rail Road put into effect the first of a series of service cuts necessitated by the projected several hundred million dollar deficit of its parent organization, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Peak hour trains were cut on the Babylon, Long Beach, Oyster Bay, Port Jefferson, and Port Washington lines, and daily service to Belmont Park was eliminated altogether. Several more service cuts are scheduled to be implemented in September, including the elimination of weekend service to West Hempstead and Greenport and the shift in weekday off-peak service to Port Washington from half-hourly to hourly. (ffd: CBS Radio)

(MON) BNSF debuted its newly redesigned website. Among the new features is a virtual tour, which explains and shows rail equipment and infrastructure. As before, the website may be linked to at <http://www.bnsf.com/> [www.bnsf.com](http://www.bnsf.com). (ffd: BNSF RR, Progressive Railroading)

(TUE) The E.H. Harriman Memorial Awards were presented in Washington, DC to the railroads with the best employee safety records. For the 21st year in a row, Norfolk Southern won the gold award for railroads with 15 million or more annual employee hours; for the fourth year in a row, Kansas City Southern won the gold award for railroads with 4 million to 15 million hours; Genesee & Wyoming's Buffalo & Pittsburgh won the gold award for railroads with 250,000 to 4 million hours; and the Indiana Harbor Belt won the gold award for switching and terminal railroads. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) Amtrak announced on its website that it had been asked by Virginia Railway Express to continue operating VRE commuter trains past the June 28 date that operation was to be taken over by Keolis Rail Services. But a VRE spokesman and the Keolis general manager later denied Amtrak's assertion, saying that it had asked Amtrak for "breathing room." "We still believe we are going to make the transition on the 28th," said the chairman of VRE's Operations Board. (ffd: Amtrak, NARP, Washington Examiner)

(THU) A coalition of 11 Northeastern states has asked the Federal Railroad Administration to develop a plan to dramatically upgrade high-speed passenger service in the Northeast Corridor during the next four decades. In its proposal, the coalition asked that the planning effort be "one of the most comprehensive and inclusive transportation plans ever attempted on a broad,

regionwide basis.” Amtrak has estimated that annual passenger rail ridership on its NEC lines may double to 28 million by 2030, with a four-fold increase to 60 million riders possible by 2050. (ffd: wire services)

#### STATS – CLASS 1 RAIL TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending May 15, 2010, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 16.6 percent from the comparable week last year, up 24.5 percent in the East and up 11.6 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 140.9 percent, metals and metal products up 82.9 percent, and motor vehicles and equipment up 39.0 percent; notable traffic decreases included pulp and paper products up 2.8 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 15.2 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 36.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 20.3 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was up 14.8 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was up 18.9 percent.

For the period January 1 through May 15, 2010, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 585.9 billion ton-miles, up 7.3 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 6.3 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 10.3 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was up 20.1 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 9.7 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was up 23.1 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was up 34.5 percent. (ffd: AAR)

(NOTE: Canadian counts include traffic from the U.S. operations of the two Canadian-based Class I railroads, Canadian National and Canadian Pacific Railway.)

#### EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(MON) NC Railroad, a subsidiary of National Coal Corporation, announced the sale of its 42-mile line between Oneida, TN and Devonia, TN to R. J. Corman Railroad. The line sold for approximately \$3 million. (ffd: Knoxville News-Sentinel, Progressive Railroading)

(MON) The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) announced that the shortline holding company Patriot Rail had been selected as the new operator of the former Piedmont & Northern line between Gastonia, NC and Mount Holly, NC, which is owned by NCDOT. Totalling approximately 12 miles in length, the line has been out of service for about 20 years. (ffd: Gaston Gazette, Trains)

(TUE) The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey announced that it would develop a trash transfer facility at Greenville Yards in Jersey City, NJ. The facility will receive New York City trash moved by barge across New York Harbor and there transfer it in sealed containers for shipment via rail out of the region. A PANYNJ spokesman said the new facility will handle the equivalent of 360,000 truckloads of trash annually by 2013. The spokesman added that New York New Jersey Rail’s car float operation across the harbor will continue to use Greenville Yards as its western terminus. (ffd: PANYNJ, Progressive Railroading)

(THU) The California Transportation Commission gave final approval for use of public funds to help build a flyover at Colton, CA outside Los Angeles. The flyover will grade-separate the junction there of BNSF’s Transcon Line and Union Pacific’s Sunset route, where approximately 100 trains a day presently cross. State and federal funds are anticipated to cover \$125 million of the flyover’s \$202 million expected total cost. (ffd: Trains)

(THU) CSX filed to abandon approximately four miles of its Southern Region-Nashville Division-CE&D line in and near Terre Haute, IN. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The State of Pennsylvania announced a grant of \$4.3 million to the Kiski Junction Railroad to extend a spur nine miles along the Allegheny River to serve an expanding coal mine. The grant will come from PennDOT’s Rail Freight Capital Budget & Transportation Assistance Program. (ffd: Pittsburgh Tribune Review)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(SAT) James Burnett passed away at Age 62 from complications related to diabetes. Mr. Burnett was the chair of the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board in the early 1980s. (ffd: Washington Post)

(SUN) A.W. "Bill" Johnston passed away at Age 85 in Pawleys Island, SC. Mr. Johnston had been the AAR's VP-Operations & Maintenance when he retired in 1988, and was earlier an operating officer with CSX predecessor Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. (ffd: UTU News)

(MON) The Obama Administration nominated John Pistole to be the head of the U.S. Transportation Security Administration. Mr. Pistole is presently the deputy director of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation. (ffd: New York Times)

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Dave Mears

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