

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 2012

BY DAVE MEARS

(NOTE: In case it is helpful to anyone who may not have received the last edition sent due to it possibly having been caught in or deleted by a spam filter, please know that it was sent June 21 for the week ending June 15.)

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

(SAT) Attendant with the modernization of the interlocking it controlled, Norfolk Southern closed Alto Tower in Altoona, PA. The tower was believed to be the last manned interlocking tower on NS's former Pennsylvania Railroad main line between Harrisburg and Pittsburgh, PA. The tower had been in continuous service since 1915. (Ref: Trains)

(MON) BNSF began work to raise the level of its former Great Northern main line through the Devils Fork Basin in North Dakota. Floodwaters from nearby Devils Lake have periodically disrupted service on the line. BNSF said that the track will be raised an average of five feet this year, a project that will include raising two bridges on the line, and that work will continue in 2013, when the track will be raised another five feet. (Ref: NARP)

(MON) The Transportation Safety Board of Canada released its latest "Watchlist" of transportation safety issues. The rail-related items on the 2012 Watchlist include onboard video and voice recorders, following signal indications, and passenger train collisions with vehicles. The last Watchlist was issued in 2010. (Ref: Progressive Railroading)

(MON) The National Railway Historical Society's annual National Convention got underway in Cedar Rapids, IA. Among the events scheduled to take place were five rare-mileage rail excursions over freight-only trackage on the Cedar Rapids & Iowa City Railway, the Iowa Interstate Railroad, and the Iowa Northern Railway. An inbound excursion train was also operated the previous weekend from Chicago, IL to Cedar Rapids. (Ref: NRHS, Quad City Times)

(TUE) The Denton County Transportation Authority noted the one-year anniversary of its A-Train commuter rail line. The line totals 21 miles of route in Texas's Denton and Dallas Counties, utilizes 11 diesel-electric, Stadler-type vehicles, and connects with Dallas Area Rapid Transit light rail lines at the Trinity Mills Station. (Ref: DCTA, Progressive Railroading)

(WED) The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration claimed that Norfolk Southern had violated the whistleblower protection provisions of the Federal Railroad Safety Act. It ordered NS to pay \$808,169 in damages, included \$525,000 in punitive damages and attorneys' fees. OSHA said that the fines result from what it said were wrongful terminations of three employees who reported workplace injuries. (Ref: wire services)

(THU) A U.S. district court judge was reported to have granted class action status to lawsuits alleging that BNSF, CSX, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific conspired to fix fuel surcharges and prices. The lawsuits were first filed in 2007 and apply to the period from mid-2003 until 2008. A UP spokesman said that the railroad continued to deny the lawsuits' allegations and looked forward to vigorously defending against its "unfounded claims." (Ref: Business Week, Progressive Railroading, wire services)

(THU) Union Pacific debuted its new Union Pacific Timeline app, in connection with the railroad's observances this year of its 150th

anniversary. It said that the app "...allows users to easily swipe among timeline entries to view photos, as well as read stories about critical moments during UP's history." The app is available for free in the Apple iTunes Store under Books. (Ref: UP RR)

(FRI) Canadian National began reopening its former Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range and Winnipeg & Pacific lines in Northern Minnesota parts of which were flooded by up to 9 inches of rain in the region during the previous two days. Particularly affected were CN and also BNSF operations in Duluth, whose mayor declared a state of emergency due to serious flooding in the city. (Ref: Trains)

(FRI) The U.S. Department of Transportation announced Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program grants for Fiscal Year 2012. 47 transportation projects in 34 states and the District of Columbia were selected to share up to \$500 million in federal funding, which totaled 35 percent for road and bridge projects; 16 percent for transit projects; 13 percent for passenger rail projects; 12 percent for freight rail projects; 12 percent for multimodal, bicycle and pedestrian projects, and 12 percent for port projects. In announcing the grants, USDOT noted that the four TIGER programs to date have provided \$3.1 billion to 218 projects, but that indicative of demand for needed transportation improvements, it has received during that time a total of 4,050 TIGER grant applications altogether requesting more than \$105.2 billion. (Ref: NARP, USDOT)

(FRI) The New York City Transit Authority debuted a new visual information campaign to remind subway riders to "stay back from the platform edge." The campaign, which will include print materials in five languages, will include mention that standing too close to the platform edge can "...end in disaster if a person loses their footing, faints or simply feels lightheaded and loses balance." NYCTA said that last year 146 people were struck by subway trains and 47 of them were killed after either falling to the tracks or descending to the roadbed by choice. (Ref: NYMTA, RT&S)

(FRI) A jury in Douglas County, NE awarded a Union Pacific employee approximately \$1 million for medical bills, lost wages, and other damages he claimed related to a 2009 on-duty injury. Notable in the case is that the employee was attending a UP safety class at the time his injury was alleged to have occurred, which was the chair he was seated in collapsing beneath him. A UP spokesman said that the training took place at the Mid-Plains Community College in North Platte, and that the college had earlier agreed to "...defend the lawsuit and to indemnify Union Pacific." (Ref: Omaha World-Herald)

STATS – CLASS 1 RAIL TRAFFIC:

(THU) The Association of American Railroads reported that, for the week ending June 16, 2012 and ranked with the comparable week last year:

-U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 287,036 units, down 2.5 percent

-Notable U.S. carload traffic increases included petroleum products up 50.3 percent, motor vehicles and equipment up 22.6 percent, and coke up 11.1 percent; notable traffic decreases included metallic ores down 18.5 percent and nonmetallic minerals down 15.2 percent

-U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 249,975 units, up 5.2 percent

-Canadian carload rail traffic totaled 76,653 units, down 3.0 percent

-Canadian intermodal rail traffic totaled 54,355 units, up 13.0 percent

-Mexican carload rail traffic totaled 15,293 units, down 4.6 percent

-Mexican intermodal rail traffic totaled 9,975 units, up 7.6 percent

For the period January 1 through June 16, 2012 and ranked with the comparable period last year:

- U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 6,757,454 units, down 3.0 percent
- U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 5,550,105 units, up 3.1 percent
- Canadian carload rail traffic totaled 1,841,312 units, up 3.3 percent
- Canadian intermodal rail traffic totaled 1,200,069 units, up 6.9 percent
- Mexican carload rail traffic totaled 333,300 units, down 3.0 percent
- Mexican intermodal rail traffic totaled 219,204 units, up 19.5 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) The Surface Transportation Board said that it was requesting Tongue River Railroad to file a new application for the rail line it has proposed building and operating in Montana. This relates to TRRC's recent announcement that it has revised its plans for the location of the line and that the purpose and need for the proposed line have changed. (Ref: STB)

(THU) The Culver City and Farmdale stations of Los Angeles's new Expo light rail line were officially opened. The stations' opening marks the completion of the first phase of the line, which runs 8.6 miles between Downtown Los Angeles and Culver City and that has been under construction since 2006. Under way is a second phase of construction, which is a \$1.5 billion project to extend the line another 6.6 miles, to Santa Monica, by 2016. (Ref: Progressive Railroading, RT&S)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(WED) Northern Virginia commuter rail operator Virginia Railway Express announced the appointment of Richard Dalton as its Chief Executive Officer. Mr. Dalton will succeed Dale Zehner, who has announced his retirement effective July 1. (Ref: Trains)

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Have a Railroad Safe Day,

Dave Mears