

## WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 10, 2009

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(SUN) Two monorail trains collided at Walt Disney World in Orlando, FL. The accident killed the operator of one of the trains – the first fatality in the 38-year history of the park's monorail system – and injured five passengers on board. The National Transportation Safety Board announced that it would participate in the accident's investigation. (ffd: Naples News, NTSB)

(MON) The U.S. Department of Transportation announced that it had reached agreement with the states of California and Nevada to extend the California High-Speed Rail Corridor from the Los Angeles area to Las Vegas. Also making the announcement was Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), who had recently abandoned his earlier support for a maglev-type line and who now supports the use of conventional railroad technology for a passenger rail link to Las Vegas, which presently has no such service. (ffd: NARP, USDOT)

(MON) The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority reported that its earlier problem-plagued commuter rail services have been performing "at an exceptionally high level of service for several months now." MBTA GM Daniel Grabauskas said that, for the last four months, commuter trains have had on-time performance of 90 percent or higher, and that there have been virtually no reports of any coaches with air conditioning problems. Mr. Grabauskas also noted that defibrillators have now been installed on every train and that it will soon start a pilot program for a new Passenger Train Information System, which will make automated stop announcements and provide for a "next train" countdown on commuter rail platforms. (ffd: MBTA)

(MON) The Association of American Railroads announced that it would relocate its offices effective August 31. AAR's new offices will be in a new building at 425 3rd Street SW, Washington, DC, near the new Surface Transportation Board and U.S. Department of Transportation offices. An AAR spokesman said that existing AAR telephone numbers and email addresses will remain the same. (ffd: AAR)

(MON) The Toronto Transit Commission announced that it had signed a contract with Bombardier Transportation for the manufacture and purchase of 204 streetcars. The first of the new streetcars will be delivered for testing in 2011 and all 204 will be delivered by 2018. The TTC is the third largest public transit system in North America, serving about 1.5 million riders each weekday with subways, streetcars and buses. (ffd: TTC)

(TUE) VIA Rail Canada announced that it had renamed several of its trains in an effort clarify what each train is. Among those name changes is the "Chaleur," which runs from Montreal to Gaspé, QC and will now be called the "Montreal-Gaspé Train," and the "Hudson Bay," which runs from Winnipeg to Churchill, MB and will now be called "the Winnipeg-Churchill Train." VIA Rail said that the flagship "Canadian" and "Ocean" trains will retain their names. (ffd: Trains)

(WED) New Jersey Transit's oversight board approved a \$1.79 billion operating budget and a \$1.39 billion capital program for Fiscal Year 2010, which began July 1. Among NJT's capital acquisitions will be more than 300 bi-level commuter rail cars and more than 50 electric and dual-powered locomotives. The board also approved the restoration of five of six ferry slips at NJT's former Lackawanna Railroad Terminal. Ferry service from the terminal across the Hudson River to Manhattan resumed in 1989 at a temporary dock that has now been used for the past 20 years. The restoration will remodel five out of the six original slips for current and future ferry service, with the sixth slip restored but not remodeled, possibly as a future museum exhibit. (ffd: Jersey Journal, NJ Transit, Progressive Railroading)

(WED) Union Pacific and U.S. Customs and Border Protection opened a new rail inspection building at Eagle Pass, TX. UP funded and built the \$800,000 facility, and then donated it to CBP. The new building provides a one-stop location to process information and inspect incoming cross-border trains. Officers previously traveled from the Eagle Pass-Piedras Negras International Bridge to a 30-foot trailer to inspect trains. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(WED) Amtrak announced that it would add two new Acela Express departures beginning July 19. The new departures will be between New York and Boston, one northbound and one southbound. Later in the week, Amtrak, the state of Washington and the Canada Border Service Agency announced that agreement had been reached for a second daily Amtrak round-trip between Seattle and Vancouver, BC. The new round trip will begin next month and continue through at least the Winter Olympics, which will be hosted by Vancouver in 2010. (ffd: Amtrak, NARP, Vancouver Sun)

(THU) In a notable grade crossing accident, five teenagers were killed when their vehicle was struck by an Amtrak train in Canton, MI. Initial reports indicated that the driver of the vehicle drove it around crossing warning gates that were in the down position and, also, that he had had his driver's license suspended the previous day. (ffd: Detroit Free Press)

(THU) Officials of both the Maryland Transit Administration and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority announced that they were instituting a zero-tolerance policy related to cell phone use, including texting. Officials said that any subway, bus or light rail vehicle operator on its respective systems would be fired if found to be using a cell phone or text-messaging device, even for a first offense. Texting was determined by investigators to have played a part in two notable rail accidents in the past twelve months, the Chatsworth, CA commuter rail crash and the more recent Boston, MA light rail vehicle crash. (ffd: Baltimore Sun)

(FRI) The first of 340 new subway cars was put into service for the Port Authority Trans Hudson line, which operates between Newark, NJ and Manhattan. All 340 are expected to be delivered and in service by 2011. PATH also announced that it had revamped its website and, also, launched a Twitter program called PATH Tweet. Both of these media will provide updates about service, events and related customer service information. (ffd: RT&S, wire services)

(FRI) The National Transportation Safety Board released its annual report to Congress, which summarizes accident investigations and safety recommendations from the previous year. In 2008, the NTSB investigated 19 major accidents, including four rail-related, and reported on 34 other accidents, including ten rail-related. The report is available on the NTSB website at <<http://www.nts.gov>>[www.nts.gov](http://www.nts.gov). (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(FRI) The Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site near Cresson, PA said that it would celebrate the 175th anniversary of the completion of the portage railroad on Saturday, July 11. The railroad, completed in 1834, was a system of tracks on inclined planes that crossed the summit of the Allegheny Mountains. (ffd: Tribune Democrat)

#### STATS:

(THU) For the week ending July 4, 2009, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 25.7 billion ton-miles, down 14.3 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was down 15.6 percent, down 23.0 percent in the East and down 11.1 percent in the West. A notable traffic increase was grain mill products, up 4.3 percent, and a notable decrease was coal, down 3.3 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 12.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 20.5 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was 18.7 percent, Mexican carload rail traffic was down 40.2 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was down 42.0 percent.

For the periods January 1 through July 4, 2009, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 723.7 billion ton-miles, down 18.3 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 19.2 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 16.8 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 24.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 15.7 percent,

Mexican carload rail traffic was down 15.1 percent, and Mexican intermodal rail traffic was down 22.0 percent. (ffd: AAR)

(Note 1: Effective this week, Canadian National (CN) now incorporates traffic of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern Railroad (EJE). All CN 2008 and 2009 data has been restated on a pro-forma basis by the AAR, off of whose weekly press release this information is sourced, to include EJE traffic as if it was part of CN, since January 1, 2008.)

Note 2: Related to the above, and as has been the case, Canadian traffic totals include those of the U.S. operations of Canadian Pacific Railway and Canadian National, the latter now including EJE.)

#### MORE STATS – BTS TRANSPORTATION INDEX:

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Bureau of Transportation Statistics reported that its combined Transportation Services Index (TSI) declined 0.7 percent from April's level to 97.4 – the lowest May index since 1998. May's Freight TSI of 94.0 was its lowest monthly level since June, 1997, when the index was 92.4. The Freight TSI fell 0.6 percent from April's level and 14.8 percent from May, 2008's level – the largest May-over-May decline in 20 years. (ffd: USDOT, Progressive Railroading)

#### EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(THU) The Surface Transportation Board granted CSX's earlier request to abandon one mile of its Brunswick Subdivision near Brunswick, GA. (ffd: CSX RR)

(FRI) Houston, TX officials said that they would formally break ground on Monday, July 13 for new expansions of their light rail system. The groundbreakings are for the new light rail North and Southeast corridors and for ongoing construction of the East End Corridor. (ffd: RT&S)

#### APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(MON) The Obama Administration announced that it would nominate Daniel Elliott as Surface Transportation Board chairman. If confirmed by the Senate, Mr. Elliott would join Acting Chairman Frank Mulvey and Commissioner Charles Nottingham as members of the three-seat board, and fill the vacancy left by the earlier resignation of Douglas Buttrey. Mr. Elliott has been an associate general counsel of the United Transportation Union since 1993. (ffd: STB)

(MON) The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced the election of Ara Najarian as its chairman, succeeding Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, whose term as chair had expired. Of Armenian heritage, Mr. Najarian was elected to Glendale, CA's city council in 2005 and later served as mayor from 2007 to 2008. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(MON) Norfolk Southern appointed David Julian its VP-Safety & Environmental. Mr. Julian, who has been with NS and its predecessor railroads since 1971, most recently headed its automotive and supply chain services subsidiary. He succeeds Chuck Wehrmeister, who retired on June 1. (ffd: NS RR)

(TUE) The Steamtown Historic Site announced that Amtrak President and CEO Joe Boardman would serve as grand marshal for this year's Steamtown Railfest. The event will be held Labor Day Weekend, September 5 and 6. (ffd: Trains)

(TUE) Union Pacific announced the following appointments: Davids Giandinoto as General Superintendent-Transportation Services-Chicago Service Unit, succeeding Rod Richardson (see below); Kurt Zalar as General Superintendent-Transportation Services-Denver Business Unit, succeeding the retiring John Rourke; Ruben Lopez as Superintendent-Transportation Services-Wichita Service Unit, succeeding Kurt Zalar; John Huddleston as Superintendent-Transportation Services-Pocatello Service Unit, succeeding Jeff Moore (see below); Rod Richardson as Superintendent-Intermodal Operations-Oakland, succeeding the retiring Terry Ryan; and Jeff Moore as Superintendent-Harriman Dispatch Center-Omaha. (ffd: UP RR)

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BE SAFE AND PROSPER,

Dave Mears

Cherry Hill, NJ