

WEEKLY RAIL RECAP

For the week ending SAT, July 13, 2002

By Dave Mears

(NOTE: The expression "ffd" at the end of a news item means "for further details" and usually represents what I believe to be the most helpful news resource if a reader wants more information on a particular item.)

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

(SUN) 2 Kansas City Southern trains collided near White Rock Lake, TX. The resulting crash overturned 1 locomotive and injured 2 crewpersons. Investigators said that one of the trains, consisting of 2 locomotives, rolled unattended out of a KCS yard and struck an approaching freight train. (ffd: Dallas Morning News)

(SUN) Caltrain's commuter rail line between San Francisco, CA. and San Jose, CA. began a two year suspension of weekend service. The suspension will allow for construction of \$110 million in improvements to the line, including modernized signals, rebuilding of selected stations and addition of a third track, the latter to allow limited express train services. A Caltrain spokesman said that the improvements would be the most extensive to the line since it opened in 1863. (ffd: NARP)

(MON) In an interview with the Washington Times, Amtrak President David Gunn criticized earlier Amtrak actions taken in response to the federal government's mandate to achieve self-sufficiency. "In order to survive, Amtrak did some very unwise things," Mr. Gunn said. Mr. Gunn added that some of these measures, such as deferring routine maintenance and mortgaging property, caused Amtrak's infrastructure to worsen and its debt to rise. At a U.S. Senate hearing later in the week, Mr. Gunn testified that he expected Amtrak's FY2002 overall loss to again total nearly \$1 billion, approximately its overall loss of the previous fiscal year. (Washington Times, wire services)

(TUE) In a notable rail-highway crossing collision, a woman and 4 children were killed in Mt. Vernon, IL. when their vehicle was struck by a Norfolk Southern freight train. Police said that the woman's husband was the only one of the 6 occupants of the car to survive the crash. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) In response to future uncertainties, officials of transportation authorities who utilize Amtrak to operate their commuter rail services were reported to be considering other operators. "They (Amtrak) have done a very good job for us, but we're very unhappy with the financial problems of their parent group and that's really what's driving our concern," said Peter Sklannik, general manager of Northern Virginia's Virginia Railway Express. Amtrak operates or supports rail services for several transportation authorities serving a total of approximately 250,000 commuters daily. (ffd: Washington Times)

(WED) A U.S. General Accounting Office reported that, inflation adjusted, rail freight rates for major commodities declined slightly between 1997 and 2000. The GAO report went on to state that the decline is "consistent with the pricing freedoms provided by rail deregulation" and mirrored a similar decline for the 1990-1996 period. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) Canada's Canadian Transportation Agency rejected a complaint filed by the Canadian Industrial Transportation Association against accessorial fees charged by Canadian National and Canadian Pacific. The CITA has complained that such fees were excessive, citing instances that included one shipper's charges for holding cars rising to \$75,700 a month from an earlier \$7,600 a year. Representatives of CN and CP commended the ruling, saying that the fees encourage shippers to use cars correctly and return them promptly. (ffd: National Post)

(THU) New Jersey Transit, the nation's third largest transit system, approved a \$1.22 billion operating budget and a \$1.19 billion capital budget for the coming fiscal year. An NJT spokesman said that the budgets will allow it to complete improvement projects that included the Montclair Connection, the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail System, the Secaucus Transfer Station and NJT's new East End Concourse in Manhattan's Pennsylvania Station, all of which are scheduled to open in the next two years. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) The governments of India and Sri Lanka, the latter the former island nation of Ceylon off the coast of India, said that they would shortly sign agreements to begin preliminary engineering studies for a rail and road bridge connecting their 2 countries. A government spokesman said that, if built, the bridge over the shallow waters of the Palk Strait would be one of the longest in the world, totaling approximately 18 miles in length. (ffd: Times of India)

(FRI) The U.S. National Transportation Safety Board reported that U.S. rail related fatalities increased to 795 in 2001 from 770 the previous year, adding that 96 percent of these fatalities were trespasser or rail-highway crossing crash related. At a U.S. Senate hearing later in the week, Association of American Railroads President Edward Hamberger said that trespasser and crossing crash incidents were among the most critical safety issues faced by railroads. Mr. Hamberger also noted that railroad employee fatalities and injuries have decreased 71 percent since 1980 and 57 percent since 1990. (ffd: AAR, wire services)

(FRI) The Library Company of Philadelphia continued its noted exhibit of William Rau's photographs of the Pennsylvania Railroad taken during the 1890s. Mr. Rau, who had been commissioned by the PRR, has been acclaimed as among the first commercial photographers to compose with an artist's eye and sensibility. The exhibition continues at LCP's Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA. gallery through September 20. (ffd: Philadelphia Inquirer)

STATS:

(THU) For the week ending July 6 - which this year and last year included the Fourth of July Holiday - U.S. carload rail traffic was up 4.2 percent from the comparable week last year, up 3.8 percent in the East and up 4.5 percent in the West. This week this year versus this week last year, notable traffic increases included metallic ores up 64.8 percent, non-grain farm products up 43.1 percent and lumber and wood products up 11.7 percent; notable traffic decreases included stone, clay and glass down 8.6 percent, crushed stone, sand and gravel down 14.2 percent and coke down 20.5 percent. Also for the week ending July 6, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 5.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 10.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 12.8 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 5.2 percent and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 11.4 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year.

For the week ending January 1 through July 6, U.S. carload rail traffic was down 2.1 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 3.2 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 7.2 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 2.0 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 5.9 percent, all when ranked with the comparable week last year. (ffd: AAR)

ACQUISITIONS, ABANDONMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Norfolk Southern Granted the Indiana Southern Railroad trackage rights over NS's line between Newburgh, IN. and Lynnvile Mine, IN., totaling approximately 22 miles. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Union Pacific filed to abandon approximately 2 miles of its Eau Claire Industrial Lead in Eau Claire, WI. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Pursuant to a sale agreement with Norfolk Southern, the Central Railroad of Indianapolis filed to acquire and operate NS's line between Kokomo, IN. and West Marion Belt, IN., totaling approximately 32 miles. (ffd: STB)

CHANGING PEOPLE AND PLACES:

(WED) CSX appointed Clarence Gooden SVP-Merchandise Service Group. Mr. Gooden, who was most recently the president of CSX Intermodal, replaces Bill Flynn, who has left CSX to become CEO of a California-based freight logistics company. Replacing Mr. Gooden as president of CSX Intermodal will be Alan Blumenfield.

Also on Wednesday, CSX Transportation President Michael Ward was appointed president of CSX Corporation. CSX's 3 divisions - Transportation, Intermodal and Technology - will now report to Mr. Ward. (ffd: CSX Corp.)

(THU) Kansas City Southern appointed Jerry Heavin SVP-Operations. Mr. Heavin replaces Ab Rees, who has left KCS. (ffd: KCS Corp.)

(FRI) CSX appointed Jeffrey Thordahl Resident VP-State Relations-South Carolina. Mr. Thorndahl was most recently state relations representative for the SCANA Corporation, a South Carolina gas and electric utility. (ffd: CSX Corp.)

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Weekly Rail Recap is edited from public news sources and published weekly, usually on Sunday or Monday, to the rail and transit industries and those interested in them. Send an e-mail to djmservices@aol.com to receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,
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