

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, JULY 16, 2005

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(SUN) 2 Illinois Central freight trains collided head-on near Anding, MS, approximately 29 miles north of Jackson. The resulting crash and fire killed all crewmembers of both trains, totaling 4 persons, and derailed a total of 17 cars. Initial reports indicate that one of the trains may have run through a switch and onto the main line, colliding with a train approaching in the opposite direction. (ffd: Jackson Clarion-Ledger, wire services)

(MON) Amtrak began putting Acela Express trainsets back into revenue service. The trainsets had been out of service since stress cracks were found in many trainset brake rotors in April. The cracked rotors, which were of a modified design, were replaced with original design rotors, which are thicker than the modified design and also use a higher-strength steel. An Amtrak spokesman said that 4 trainsets have now been repaired and that 2 will now go into revenue service, allowing for 2 departures daily between Washington and New York, with 2 in reserve. The spokesman added that the remaining 16 trainsets will be put back into service over the summer. (ffd: Amtrak, New Newsday, New York Times)

(MON) BNSF announced that they would phase out railroad-supplied intermodal trailers after the 2006 fall peak season, instead of by mid-2006 as earlier announced. A BNSF spokesman added that their trailers would be transitioned back to leasing companies and that those transition dates would be announced in early 2006. The spokesman added that the phase out "will allow BNSF to focus on its core line-haul service." Kansas City Southern, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific have also announced that they will phase out railroad-supplied trailers, however, CSX has said that it will continue to manage its fleet of 45 and 48-foot trailer fleet. (ffd: Cinders, Intermodal Insights, JofC)

(MON) Chicago, IL's city council became the latest municipal authority to propose an ordinance banning selected hazmat rail shipments from certain city sections. Introduced by City Alderman Ed Smith, the proposed ordinance calls for banning hazmat rail and truck shipments from Chicago's downtown loop, an area that sees an average of 500 train movements daily. In response, a Union Pacific spokesman said that, "There's no capacity left to reroute...These are mainline routes built specifically for this kind of traffic, with trained emergency responders stationed along the route...It doesn't make any sense to try and move it." Several other U.S. city councils have also proposed similar bans, with the one legislated in Washington, DC having been overturned by a federal court. (ffd: Traffic World)

(MON) The grain and feed associations of 5 different Midwestern states criticized Surface Transportation Board Chairman Roger Nober for his earlier comments that U.S. railroads had handled last year's peak season "without any significant degradation of system fluidity and performance." Mr. Nober's comments were made in a public letter to railroads requesting an overview of their 2005 peak season operating plans. A spokesman for the grain and feed associations noted that rail transport problems last year for their member shippers included 40- to 50-day backlogs for freight cars, incomplete car orders, and delayed shipments of agricultural commodities. In response, Mr. Nober said that he stood by his assessment. "It wasn't intended as praise. It wasn't intended to be criticism. It was just a

statement of fact," said Mr. Nober. (ffd: Omaha World-Herald)

(MON) New York City Police started riding some New Jersey Transit commuter trains into New Jersey as part of a cooperative security effort between the NYPD and NJT. "We recognize that effective security in New York must begin in New Jersey," said NYPD Chief Joseph Bober. An NJT spokesman said that this marked the first time New York City police officers had helped provide security aboard NJT trains. (ffd: NJT)

(MON) Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell signed into law a \$1.3 billion transportation bill. The bill earmarks \$667 million for approximately 340 new New Haven Line commuter rail cars and approximately \$300 million for a new commuter rail car maintenance facility at New Haven, CT. A state spokesman said that funding will come from a \$1 per-ride surcharge for New Haven Line commuters that will be charged once the new cars enter service and, also, from an increase in the gross receipts tax on all petroleum products. The spokesman said that the new cars are expected to be delivered beginning in 2008. (ffd: Railway Age)

(MON) A Senate Committee reported that the Department of Homeland Security had to date spent only \$711,000 of the \$10 million appropriated for Fiscal Year 2005 for inspecting and patrolling of U.S. rail lines. However, a spokesman for USDHS's Transportation Security Administration said that the agency has hired 56 rail security inspectors since May 31 and that the number of inspectors was expected to increase to 100 by the end of August. The spokesman added that the inspectors will be based in 18 cities and that all were either taking or were scheduled for a specialized 5-week training course to learn their work. (ffd: wire services)

(TUE) 2 U.S. senators, Hillary Clinton (D-NY) and Charles Schumer (D-NY) introduced legislation to add \$1 billion for U.S. transit and rail security as part of the Senate's Homeland Security spending bill. However later in the week, the increase failed, even though it was backed by 53 senators, because 60 votes were required to exceed the Senate's self-imposed spending caps. The spending bill passed 96 to 1 and appropriated \$31.86 billion for USDHS for Fiscal Year 2006, although the Senate's bill reduces to \$100 million from \$150 million the amount for transit security and must be reconciled with the House bill, which leaves transit security funding at \$150 million. Also on Thursday, USDHS Secretary Michael Chertoff angered mass transit advocates when he implied that airline security is more pressing than transit security. "The truth of the matter is that a fully loaded airplane with jet fuel, a commercial airliner, has the capacity to kill 3,000 people...A bomb in a subway car may kill 30 people," said Mr. Chertoff. In response, a spokesman for the American Public Transit Association commented, "To say a terrorist attack on a subway is less important than an attack using a commercial airliner is another example of how the federal government treats the million of public transportation riders as second class citizens." (ffd: Newsday, Railway Age, wire services)

(TUE) Amtrak announced that it would give its "Empire Builder" train, operating between Chicago, IL and the Pacific Northwest, a "fresh new look beginning in August, 2005." An Amtrak spokesman said that new services would include rehabilitated cars, wine and cheese tastings for first-class passengers, and at-seat food and beverage service for coach passengers. The spokesman added that "Trails and Rails" onboard narratives about the surrounding countryside would also be expanded. Many of the states through which the "Empire Builder" passes, including those states's elected officials and public interest groups, have been notable supporters for better funding for Amtrak. (ffd: Amtrak, wire services)

(WED) The New York State Capital Program Review Board approved a \$21.1 billion, 5-year capital plan for the state's

Metropolitan Transportation Authority. The budget includes \$14.9 billion for core capital programs for New York City Transit Authority bus and subways, and for commuter rail services of the Long Island Rail Road and Metro North Railroad. An additional \$4.5 billion is targeted for "network expansion", which includes the Second Avenue Subway, LIRR East Side Access, extension of the No. 7 subway line to the Jacob Javits Convention Center, and a link between Lower Manhattan and JFK Airport in Queens. (ffd: New York Post, Railway Age)

(WED) The Federal Railroad Administration issued a report in support of push-pull passenger train operation. The report, entitled "Interim Analysis: Push-Pull and MU Train Operations," states that push-pull mode is safe and that there is no greater derailment risk in push mode than in pull mode. The agency did recommend that certain structural modifications be made to cab cars to make them safer for passengers in the event of an accident. The report stems from the January 26 accident in which a Metrolink commuter train operated in push mode crashed and derailed into an SUV at a crossing and then struck both an adjacent Union Pacific ballast train and another Metrolink train approaching in the opposite direction, after which it was suggested that push mode operation was inherently less safe than pull mode. (ffd: Los Angeles Daily News, Railway Age)

(WED) The Federal Railroad Administration approved 2 more Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) loans. One loan, for \$50 million, went to the Texas-Mexican Railroad, a subsidiary of Kansas City Southern, and will be used to upgrade infrastructure and refinance prior debt. The other, for \$32.7 million, went to the Iowa Interstate Railroad, and will be used for purposes including upgrading approximately 300 miles of track between Atlantic, IA and Bureau, IL, allowing it to handle 286K loads at operating speeds up to 40 mph. (ffd: Railway Age)

(WED) The Chicago Transit Authority reported that its bus and rail transit patronage had notably increased in each of the first 5 months of 2005. A CTA spokesman said that, through May, 2005, ridership is up 3.8 percent compared with the first 5 months of 2004. The spokesman added that there have also been significant gains in weekend patronage, with May, 2005 Saturday ridership up 7.2 percent and Sunday ridership up 8.2 percent, compared with May, 2004. (ffd: CTA)

(WED) 3 passenger trains collided in Pakistan. At least 133 persons were killed in the accident, with scores of others injured. Pakistan Railways General Manager Abdul Wahab Awan said that the engineer of one of the trains misread a signal and rear-ended another passenger train, which in turn derailed 3 cars onto an adjacent track, which were then struck by a third train. The accident occurred near the town of Ghotki in Southern Pakistan. (ffd: wire services)

(THU) The Association of American Railroad and the Railway Supply Institute announced that they would hold a briefing on business opportunities for railway suppliers related to rebuilding the rail infrastructure in Iraq. A spokesman for AAR and RSI said that speakers will include Joel Szabat, Transportation Counselor to the Iraq Reconstruction Management Office at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. The briefing is scheduled for July 25 at the AAR headquarters on F Street in Washington, DC. (ffd: Railway Age)

(FRI) 5 New York City Transit Authority stations agents of the Sikh faith announced that they would file discrimination charges against the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority. A spokesman for the Sikhs said that the filing relates to NYCTA's requirement that their turbans be affixed with the NYCTA logo to indicate to the public that they are subway workers. NYCTA policy originally forbade the turbans, however, the policy was changed last fall to allow them, but with the required logo. "The decision by the MTA to obstruct the religious practices of its Sikh employees is wholly unacceptable," said Rep. Anthony Weiner. "All New Yorkers deserve the dignity of being able to freely

practice their religion in their workplace," he added. (ffd: wire services)

STATS – TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending July 9, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 27.9 billion ton-miles, up 0.4 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was down 1.3 percent, down 4.5 percent in the East, but up 0.9 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included non-grain farm products up 12.5 percent, crushed stone, sand and gravel up 8.4 percent, and coal up 1.4 percent. Notable traffic decreases included coke down 18.3 percent, metals down 16.1 percent, and nonmetallic minerals down 14.5 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 4.3 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 5.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was down 3.4 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was up 4.4 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 2.7 percent.

For the period January 1 through July 9, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 853.3 billion ton-miles, up 2.4 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.6 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.3 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 2.3 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was up 0.8 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 6.8 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – "BIG 7" OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(WED) For the week ending July 9, 2005 and versus the comparable week last year, average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 23.5 mph versus 24.2 mph; Canadian National, 26.7 mph versus 25.2 mph; Canadian Pacific, 25.7 mph versus 24.9 mph; CSX, 19.9 mph versus 18.9 mph; Kansas City Southern, 22.3 mph versus 26.4 mph; Norfolk Southern, 22.5 mph versus 23.4 mph; and Union Pacific, 21.2 mph versus 21.8 mph.

Also for the week ending July 9, 2005 and versus the comparable week last year, average terminal dwell time was as follows: BNSF, 10.0 hrs versus 10.5 hrs; Canadian National, 12.1 hrs versus 14.3 hrs; Canadian Pacific, 23.0 hrs versus 27.1 hrs; CSX, 31.0 hrs versus 32.2 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 25.3 hrs versus 23.2 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 24.2 hrs versus 22.9 hrs; and Union Pacific, 29.5 hrs versus 29.6 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) Ohi-Rail filed to lease, from the Wheeling & Lake Erie Railway, and operate 1) a segment of the Carrollton Branch between Canton, OH and Carrollton, OH, and 2) a 3-mile segment of the nearby Minerva Branch, altogether totaling approximately 31 miles. (ffd: STB)

(THU) The Greenville County Economic Development Corporation filed to 1) abandon approximately 12 miles of line between Greenville, SC and Travelers Rest, SC, and 2) discontinue service over approximately 3 miles of line between Greenville, SC and East Greenville, SC. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) The McCloud Railway filed to abandon approximately 80 miles of line between McCloud, CA and Burney, CA; between Bartle, CA and Hambone, CA; between Berry, CA and Seattle, CA; and between Bear Flat, CA and Pondosa, CA. The MCR also filed to discontinue approximately 31 miles of trackage rights over BNSF between Hambone, CA and Lookout Junction, CA. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Maryland Transit Administration appointed Ralign Wells director of the agency's Baltimore, MD subway system. The system operates over approximately 16 miles of line serving 14 stations between Owings Mills, MD and Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. Mr. Wells started with the MTA in 1989 as a weekend bus driver. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

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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

Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA