

WEEKLY RAIL REVIEW

FOR THE WEEK ENDING SAT, AUGUST 20, 2005

BY DAVE MEARS

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

(MON) A CSX freight train derailed 52 empty coal cars near Alcoa, TN. There were no reported injuries as a result of the accident. The train was enroute from Etowah, KY to Corbin, KY when it derailed. (ffd: Maryville Daily Times)

(MON) Union Pacific announced that it had placed an \$8.2 million order for 10 "Green Goat" hybrid locomotives. The locomotives are powered by a diesel engine and rechargeable battery combination, effecting significant reductions in emissions and fuel usage. A spokesman for the locomotives' manufacturer, RailPower Technologies, noted that Canadian Pacific has recently ordered 35 of the locomotives and that Kansas City Southern has also ordered 2 of them. (ffd: Progressive Railroading)

(MON) New Jersey photographers reacted to a new photo policy being proposed by New Jersey Transit. The new policy would require anyone wanting to photograph NJT buses, trains and facilities to apply, and be photographed for, a permit. "It's a public right to take pictures on public property," commenting Paul Krueger of Warren, NJ. The policy would also require those taking photos to alert NJT police to their intentions 24 hours in advance of taking pictures. An NJT spokesman said that the policy would likely be considered at a fall NJT board of directors meeting. (ffd: Asbury Park Press)

(MON) The Long Island Rail Road announced that it would cancel its ban on passengers carrying surfboards. LIRR crews and police had earlier enforced the ban, relating to concerns of passengers carrying them aboard crowded trains and their not being properly secured in overhead baggage racks. However, an LIRR spokesman said that surfboards would again be permitted, but asked surfers to please sit with their boards in less crowded cars or take less crowded trains. (ffd: Newsday, Trains)

(TUE) A moving BNSF freight train rear-ended a standing freight train near Gillette, WY. There were no injuries in the accident, however, 11 cars were derailed. A BNSF spokesman said that the wreck was being "quickly cleaned up" and that there was no track damage. (ffd: Billings Gazette)

(WED) Norfolk Southern announced that a U.S. district court judge had approved a class action settlement relating to its January 6, 2005 derailment and hazardous material release near Graniteville, SC. A NS spokesman said that the settlement "provides restitution for minor personal injury, property damage, business and wage loss, expenses and inconvenience" resulting from the accident. Larger lawsuits against NS related to the accident, which killed 9 persons and injured scores of others, remain to be settled or adjudicated. (ffd: NS Corp.)

(WED) Boston, MA's Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority announced that it would hold off on completing the

final phase of the city's Silver Line dedicated busways. A MBTA spokesman said that the hold would allow for the building of "more support from neighborhood groups and develop a more specific plan for the bus route." The final phase initially planned was a mile-long underground bus tunnel running from South Station to Boston's Theater District, with connection to MBTA's Orange and Green subway lines. (ffd: Boston Globe)

(WED) The Association of American Railroads announced that the 27th annual edition of its "Analysis of Class 1 Railroads" was now available. An AAR spokesman said that the analysis presented comprehensive 2004 data for each of the 7 Class 1 railroads operating in the U.S. The spokesman added that print copies and electronic copies could be purchased by the general public for \$250 and \$225 respectively, and that AAR members could purchase printed copies for \$100 and electronic copies at no cost. Further details are available at the AAR's website, aar.org. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) The Railroad Retirement Board announced preliminary employment statistics through the first 6 months of 2005. The RRB said that railroad employment at the end of June, 2005 stood at approximately 234,000, up from approximately 223,000 at the end of 2003. The spokesman added that the June, 2005 total represented the highest railroad employment since the end of 2001. (ffd: RRB)

(THU) Canadian National announced that it would implement a new service plan which it said would allow it to accommodate an additional 125,000 intermodal units annually over its system, representing a 15 percent increase over its current intermodal traffic volumes. A CN spokesman said that the new plan would increase capacity for overseas containers moving between the Port of Vancouver, BC and Montreal, PQ and Toronto, ON by more than 20 percent, and also increase capacity for domestic containers moving between Toronto and Montreal and major western Canadian cities by more than 10 percent. The spokesman said that CN would begin implementation of the new plan on August 22. (ffd: CN Corp., Progressive Railroading)

(THU) Officials in Everett, WA announced that they had broken ground for a new rail-barge transfer pier. A city spokesman said that the pier, which will cost approximately \$25 million to complete, would make it possible to ship oversized airplane parts on large rail cars to the Boeing plant at nearby Paine Field. "One of the specific advantages [of the new pier] is to allow us to continue our role as a gateway to Asia," said Washington State Governor Christine Gregoire. (ffd: AAR)

(THU) A council of New York, NY area transit officials released a report concluding that transportation facilities in the region would need at least \$147 billion in funding for maintenance and improvements over the next 25 years. The report, released by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council, said that about 80 percent of that amount would be required to keep the region's transportation infrastructure in a "state of good repair," with the remainder marked for expansion projects such as the Second Avenue Subway and Long Island Rail Road East Side Access. The report also stated that the region's population was expected to grow to 26.1 million in the next 25 years. (ffd: Newsday)

(FRI) The Department of Transportation issued new rules regulating work and rest schedules for commercial truck drivers. The rules were last updated in 2003. As with the 2003 regulations, the new rules prohibit truckers from driving more than 11 hours in a row, working longer than 14 hours in a shift, and driving more than 60 hours over a 7-day period or 70 hours over an 8-day period; but the rules now also require truckers to rest for at least 10 hours between shifts. Also as in 2003, the new rules apply only to commercial truck drivers and not to passenger motor coach operators, who remain governed by 2003 rules covering their work and rest schedules. (ffd: USDOT)

(FRI) Amtrak and Virginia Railway Express resumed normal weekday train service over the CSX line between Washington, DC, Fredericksburg, VA, and Richmond, VA. Service had been disrupted most of the week due to continued work by CSX maintenance-of-way forces rebuilding the interlocking at Arkendale, VA, work that was originally scheduled to conclude by the Monday rush hour. In response to complaints, including those by VRE management and riders, a CSX spokesman said that the company had "erred on the side of safety." (ffd: Free-Lance Star, NARP, wire services)

STATS – TRAFFIC:

(THU) For the week ending August 13, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 33.5 billion ton-miles, up 1.8 percent from the comparable period last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.1 percent, up 3.3 percent in the East, but down 0.8 percent in the West. Notable traffic increases included non-grain farm products up 50.5 percent, nonmetallic minerals up 19.2 percent, and grain mill products up 12.0 percent; notable traffic decreases included primary forest products down 7.2 percent and petroleum products down 5.6 percent. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 7.0 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.7 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 8.1 percent, Mexico's Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana's carload rail traffic was down 9.8 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was down 10.1 percent.

For the period January 1 through August 13, 2005, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 1.02 trillion ton-miles, up 2.3 percent from the comparable period last year. Also for this period, U.S. carload rail traffic was up 1.4 percent, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was up 6.1 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 0.4 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 2.3 percent, TFM's carload rail traffic was down 0.1 percent, and TFM's intermodal rail traffic was up 6.0 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – "BIG 7" OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(MON) For the week ending August 13, 2005 versus the comparable week last year, average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 23.1 mph versus 25.0 mph; Canadian National, 26.3 mph versus 25.4 mph; Canadian Pacific, 24.5 mph versus 25.6 mph; CSX, 19.4 mph versus 20.2 mph; Kansas City Southern, 23.1 mph versus 26.1 mph; Norfolk Southern, 22.4 mph versus 22.6 mph; and Union Pacific, 21.4 mph versus 21.4 mph.

Also for the week ending August 13, 2005 versus the comparable week last year, average terminal dwell time was as follows: BNSF, 10.3 hrs versus 9.9 hrs; Canadian National, 12.8 hrs versus 14.2 hrs; Canadian Pacific, 22.9 hrs versus 26.8 hrs; CSX, 28.9 hrs versus 28.1 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 23.1 hrs versus 23.1 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 21.9 hrs versus 21.5 hrs; and Union Pacific, 28.1 hrs versus 30.5 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) Providence & Worcester filed to abandon approximately 5 miles of line in and near East Providence, RI. (ffd: STB)

(MON) Watco Companies's Yellowstone Valley Railroad commenced operation over 2 lines leased from BNSF. The lines are between Glendive, MT and Snowden, MT, and between Bainville, MT and Scobey, MT. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Union Pacific granted temporary overhead trackage rights to Kansas City Southern over UP's line between Shreveport, LA and Dallas, TX, totaling approximately 192 miles. The purpose of the temporary trackage rights is to allow KCS to bridge its trains while its line is out of service for program maintenance. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Indiana Eastern Railroad filed to lease, from CSX, and operate approximately 43 miles of line between Richmond, IN and Fernald, OH. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND ALIKE:

None of note this week.

CORRECTION:

In the WRR edition for the week ending July 30, I noted that BNSF had announced completion of work to double-track another section of its Transcon Line, in continuation of its long-term effort to double-track nearly all of that line between Chicago, IL and Los Angeles, CA. I mentioned the new double track segment as being between Waynoka, OK and Herman, OK. In fact, it is between Alva, OK and Shattuck, OK. Thanks here to WRR Reader Stace Robinson for his help.

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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 receive it, with my compliments.

HAVE A SAFE AND PROSPEROUS WEEK,

Dave Mears

Cherry Hill, New Jersey, USA