

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

(NOTE: This was the week included the Labor Day Holiday.)

(MON) Hurricane Gustav made landfall on the Louisiana gulf coast as a Category Two hurricane. In the days prior, railroads in the path of the hurricane, large and small alike, made extensive preparations for the storm's arrival, which included curtailing train operations, securing equipment, and moving it and personnel out of harm's way. Amtrak curtailed normal service on its three long-distance routes serving New Orleans and used the trains' consists to evacuate approximately 6,000 residents out of the city to temporary shelter in Memphis, TN. The storm itself caused comparatively minor damage, at least when compared with 2005's Hurricane Katrina, which consisted mainly of downed trees on tracks, washouts due to heavy rain and flooding, and temporarily inoperative signal and grade crossing warning systems. CSX did report track damage across approximately 21 miles of its line between New Orleans, LA and Pascagoula, MS, which it estimated would take at least two weeks to repair. (ffd: Trains, wire services)

(MON) Railroads assisted in the production of the Republican National Convention held in St. Paul MN, which was held in the Xcel Energy Center near St. Paul's Amtrak station. Union Pacific brought in 28 business cars, which had last been at the Democratic National Convention in Denver CO, and BNSF brought in 11 business cars. Due to security restrictions, Amtrak rerouted its daily "Empire Builder" passenger train from its normal route through St. Paul and onto BNSF's Midway Subdivision, which passes just east of downtown St. Paul. Amtrak also kept a special train of two locomotives and six Amfleet cars at Union Pacific's Western Avenue Yard, in case it was needed to assist in the emergency evacuation of the convention site. (ffd: Trains)

(TUE) Planners for Los Angeles's Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced that they now favored two new lines to expand the city's subway system. An MTA spokesman said that one line would run east to west under Wilshire Boulevard and another would run east to west under a portion of Santa Monica Boulevard before turning south to junction with the Wilshire line. The Wilshire line would receive funding and construction priority. In 1998 and related to notable construction problems and cost overruns with the subway line built under a portion of Hollywood Boulevard, LA voters banned MTA from using sales tax money for new subway tunneling. However due to increasing traffic congestion and want for more mass transit, the ban is expected to eventually be rescinded, or a new source to fund construction of these new lines established. (ffd: Los Angeles Times, wire services)

(WED) The joint powers board overseeing the Caltrain commuter rail system serving San Francisco and its southern suburbs was updated by consultants concerning plans to electrify service on the line by 2015. The project is expected to cost approximately \$1.5 billion altogether, which includes \$785 million for the electrification infrastructure and \$422 million for 98 new multiple-unit commuter cars. A Caltrain spokesman said replacing current diesel-powered service with electric will speed service, allowing trains to make all of Caltrain's 21 stops in 70 minutes, and increase frequency, allowing 12 trains to operate on the line in peak hours instead of five. (ffd: San Jose Mercury News)

(THU) Union Pacific said that its planned expansion of its intermodal facility serving the Port of Los Angeles-Long Beach would include a pilot program using electric tractors to move containers around the terminal. UP is looking to double the capacity of its Intermodal Container Transfer Facility (ICTF) in Long Beach, from 725,000 to 1.5 million containers annually. The expansion would include construction of additional tracks, a new gate facility, improvement of existing gate facilities, and additional parking. To address environmental conceptualists wanting impact on the expansion plans, UP said that it would also complete a study on the feasibility of using maglev technology to move containers between the ICTF and the port itself, which is about five miles away. (ffd: wire services)

STATS – "BIG 7" TRAFFIC

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Canadian traffic includes that on the U.S. operations of Canadian National and Canadian Pacific.)

(THU) For the week ending August 30, 2008, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 35.9 billion ton-miles, up 0.6 percent from the comparable week last year. U.S. carload rail traffic was down 0.3 percent, down 3.2 percent in the East, but up 2.9 percent in the West. Also for the week, U.S. intermodal rail traffic was down 1.6 percent, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 1.5 percent, and Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 4.5 percent.

For the month of August, 2008 versus August, 2007, U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 1,340,387 carloads, down 0.5 percent. U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 941,500 units, down 1.7 percent. Also for the month, Canadian carload rail traffic was down 4.0 percent, Canadian intermodal rail traffic was up 3.1 percent, Mexico's Kansas City Southern de Mexico's carload rail traffic was down 8.6 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was up 5.7 percent.

For the period January 1 through August 30, 2008 versus the first eight months of last year, U.S. rail volume grand totaled 1.18 trillion ton-miles, up 1.4 percent. U.S. carload rail traffic totaled 11,399,000 carloads, up 0.3 percent. Notable traffic increases included grain up 13.1 percent, coal up 3.5 percent, and chemicals up 3.3 percent; notable traffic decreases included coke down 31.9 percent, motor vehicles and equipment down 17.6 percent, and crushed stone, sand and gravel down 6.5 percent. U.S. intermodal rail traffic totaled 7,828,312 units, down 2.9 percent, and Canadian carload rail traffic was down 4.1 percent, Canadian

intermodal rail traffic was up 4.1 percent, KCSM's carload rail traffic was down 3.9 percent, and KCSM's intermodal rail traffic was up 8.3 percent. (ffd: AAR)

MORE STATS – "BIG 7" (EXCEPT CN) OPERATING PERFORMANCE:

(NOTE: Earlier this year, Kansas City Southern combined operating performance data for its domestic (Kansas City Southern) and Mexican (Kansas City Southern de Mexico) operations. As a result, relevant comparative data for KCS for last year is not available at this time.)

(WED) For the week ending August 29, 2008 versus the comparable week last year (except for KCS), average total cars on line was as follows: BNSF, 229,524 cars versus 235,217 cars; Canadian Pacific, 86,338 cars versus 81,854 cars; CSX, 227,507 cars versus 219,744 cars; Kansas City Southern, 46,801 cars; Norfolk Southern, 199,340 cars versus 200,599 cars; and Union Pacific, 299,999 cars versus 314,591 cars.

Also for the week ending August 29, 2008 versus the comparable week last year (except for KCS), average train speed was as follows: BNSF, 24.1 mph versus 23.1 mph; Canadian Pacific Railway, 24.6 mph versus 22.6 mph; CSX, 20.1 mph versus 20.6 mph; Kansas City Southern, 25.8 mph; Norfolk Southern, 21.5 mph versus 21.3 mph; and Union Pacific, 23.9 mph versus 21.1 mph.

Finally for the week ending August 29, 2008 versus the comparable week last year (except for KCS), average terminal dwell time was as follows: BNSF, 23.5 hrs versus 24.8 hrs; Canadian Pacific Railway, 21.0 hrs versus 20.5 hrs; CSX, 23.4 hrs versus 22.4 hrs; Kansas City Southern, 17.1 hrs; Norfolk Southern, 21.5 hrs versus 20.9 hrs; and Union Pacific, 23.8 hrs versus 25.8 hrs. (ffd: AAR)

STILL MORE STATS - SAFETY:

(TUE) The Federal Railroad Administration reported railroad accident statistics for the first six months of this year. Most notably, on-duty employee fatalities more than doubled, from 5 last year to 13 this year. Trespasser fatalities rose 15.9 percent, to 241. However, rail-highway crossing fatalities declined 20.5 percent, to 128.

Train accidents declined 6.4 percent, to 1,205. Of these and also compared to last year, those due to track declined 7.5 percent, to 422; those due to equipment were relatively unchanged, at 164; those due to signaling-related causes increased 23.5 percent, to 21; and those due to human factors declined 14.8 percent, to 408. (ffd: FRA)

EXPANSIONS, CONTRACTIONS AND ALIKE:

(TUE) Transit America filed to abandon approximately 2 miles of its Missouri Branch Line, in and near St. Joseph, MO. (ffd: STB)

(WED) Union Pacific announced plans to spend about \$300 million over the next decade to build a new yard, fueling facility and intermodal terminal near Las Cruces, NM. UP announced in 2006 that it would relocate some of its El Paso, TX facilities into New Mexico. (ffd: Las Cruces Sun-News)

(THU) Minnesota Northern filed to abandon approximately 20 miles of its "P" Line between Perley, MN and Shelly, MN. (ffd: STB)

(FRI) Canadian Pacific filed to abandon 61 miles of Soo Line railroad, between Kramer, ND and Bisbee, ND. (ffd: STB)

APPOINTMENTS, ACHIEVEMENTS AND MILESTONES:

(MON) Surface Transportation Board Commissioner Douglas Buttrey announced his intention to leave the STB at the completion of his term. However, Mr. Buttrey's office issued a statement that he "not only plans to complete his term to December 31, but does not intend to leave the Board until the completion of [its] work on several pending matters." In a related story, the Bush Administration's nomination of a replacement board member, Husein Cumber, continues to be stalled in Congress. (ffd: Traffic World)

(THU) Canadian Pacific announced that CPR EVP & Chief Financial Officer Mike Lambert had "left the company to pursue other interests." Succeeding Mr. Lambert will be Kathryn McQuade, who had been CPR's EVP & Chief Operating Officer. Succeeding Ms. McQuade will be Brock Winter, who was earlier head of CPR operations and is now completing a special assignment to determine how best to improve the CPR's efficiency and productivity. (ffd: Canadian Financial Post, CP Corp.)

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Weekly Rail Review (WRR) 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.

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