

THE CROSS-TIE

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Railroad Quick Hits

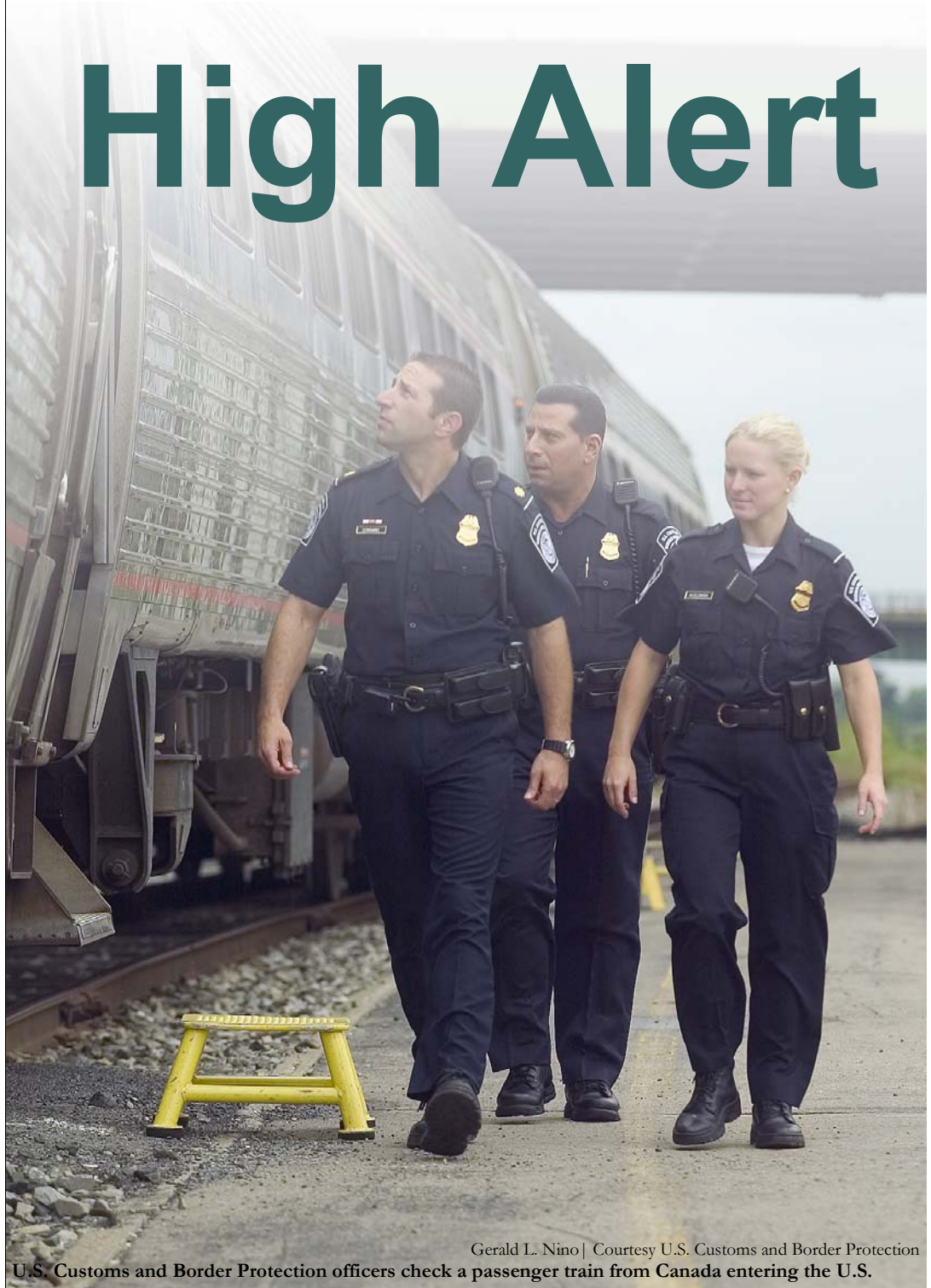
- News updates and special reports are available online at Railfanning.org.
- *The Cross-Tie* has launched an e-mail based subscription. To receive future issues of *The Cross-Tie*, drop a line to subscriptions@thecrosstie.com or log onto <http://www.thecrosstie.com/subscribe>. There is no cost to subscribe and e-mail addresses are not sold to third party vendors.
- Some stories advertised in the July edition have been delayed because of breaking news.
- Coming in September: New legislation has been proposed concerning Amtrak and legislators are expected to have a showdown about how to handle the nation's passenger rail network. We'll take a look at the legislation and what it means to Amtrak.

Inside, Page 2: Transit Systems on High Alert After Blasts
Inside, Page 4: New Inspection Facility Opens in Texas

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August 2005

High Alert



Gerald L. Nino | Courtesy U.S. Customs and Border Protection
U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers check a passenger train from Canada entering the U.S.

NATION'S, WORLD'S TRANSIT SYSTEMS ON HIGH ALERT FOLLOWING LONDON BLASTS; HOUSE OKS NEW RAIL TERROR PENALTIES

WASHINGTON — Transportation systems and railroads throughout the United States — and the world — went on high alert following terrorist attacks in London.

"The war on terror goes on," President Bush said. "...We will not yield ... to the terrorists. We will find them, we will bring them to justice, and at the same time, we will spread an ideology of hope and compassion that will overwhelm their ideology of hate."

N.J. Transit, for example, doubled the number of officers on patrol and tripled the number of K-9 units inspecting the rail network. New Jersey state troopers also helped increase the security.

"Customers will see stepped up patrols at rail, bus and light rail stations statewide, as well as officers riding on trains, buses and light rail vehicles," the railroad said in a statement.

N.J. Transit has operated under a heightened alert since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Similarly, Amtrak increased the railroad's security threat level in response to the terrorist bombings in London.

Amtrak said it would put more resources into its security efforts in stations, aboard trains and along the railroad. The heightened security involves deployment of more officers and K-9 teams as well as briefings to the railroad's employees reminding them to continue to be vigilant and on alert for suspicious activity.

"Amtrak takes the London train bombings very seriously and is taking extra security measures strictly as a precaution. There has been no specific or credible threat made against Amtrak," the railroad said in a statement. "The railroad will continue at this heightened security threat level until we have a better understanding of the events in London."

The moves of N.J. Transit and Amtrak were indicative of transit systems nationwide. In New York City, subway passengers were subjected to random bag

searches.

But, the increased vigilance didn't only extend to the nation's passenger and commuter rail network. Freight lines said they too were increasing their awareness, despite no specific threats.

Like their passenger counterparts, the increased measures on freight railroads include deployment of additional police officers and K-9 teams to key areas, as well as "elevated vigilance" along the U.S. freight rail network, the American Association of Railroads said.

"This is a precautionary step that is part of the industry's security plan," said Ed Hamberger, president and CEO of the Association of American Railroads. "We continue to work closely with all government agencies to ensure that we are receiving and sharing the best possible information about potential threats and prevention measures."

July saw not only heightened alerts on the nation's rail network. It also saw a move to increase penalties for terrorist actions against railroads or mass transit, a move railroads applauded.

Rep. Shelly Moore Capito, R-W.Va., successfully proposed an amendment to the Patriot Act to increase the penalties.

"The recent attacks against the London subway system once again demonstrate the need for Congressional action to protect rail and mass transportation hubs," Capito wrote in a letter to her fellow Congressmen.

"The Rail and Mass Transportation Security Amendment is critical to the war on terrorism as it will reduce our criminal law's vulnerability to bogus legal challenges, bring more consistent and uniform protections to all modes of transportation providers, cover more offenses such as bio-

logical agents and radioactive materials, and toughen criminal penalties for aggravated offenses where death results," she wrote.

Capito's amendment makes a terrorist attack on a railroad or mass transportation system punishable by death and sets uniform penalties for attacks against all rail and mass transit systems on land, on water or through the air.

It includes a sentence of up to 20 years in jail for violence against a rail or mass transportation vehicle; a sentence of at least 30 years imprisonment if the vehicle is carrying spent nuclear fuel or high level radioactive waste; and a mandatory life sentence with death penalty eligibility if the attack results in the death of a person.

"Rep. Capito's legislation ensures that anyone committing an act of terrorism against a railroad would receive just as stiff a penalty as for a terrorist act against aviation," Hamberger said. "We strongly urge the Senate to include similar provisions when it takes up the Patriot Act."

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the amendment July 21 by a vote of 362-66. The legislation is pending Senate approval.

"If you plan or execute a terrorist attack you will face justice and not escape on a technicality," Capito said. "I urge the U.S. Senate to adopt this provision that sets a uniform set of consequences for acts of terrorism on all mass transportation. This standard does not exist today. As we fortify our nations homeland security to deter attacks we must also adjust our legal system to properly deal with terrorists."

Last year, in the wake of the terrorist bombing at a rail station in Madrid, the House adopted Capito's amendment to enhance penalties for attacks against our Rail or Mass Transportation facilities. However, the amendment was stripped during conference with the Senate, the Congresswoman wrote in the letter.

— *Staff and Wire Reports*



Capito

WRECK ROUNDUP

Here is a list of some of the railroad wrecks and derailments reported in the last month:

More than 130 people were killed July 13 when three trains crashed at a railroad station in the Sindh province of Ghotki, *CNN* reported. Officials ruled out sabotage as a cause of the wreck and said human error was to blame. According to *CNN*, the engineer of the Karachi Express misread a signal and rear-ended a parked train — the Quetta Express. Coaches from the trains toppled over and into a third train — the Tezgam Express — that was passing through the station. Country officials said the wreck — which destroyed 17 rail cars — was the worst in the nation's history, according to various media accounts. Pakistan's heavily-used rail system is antiquated and fatal wrecks — which have become more common in recent years — are often blamed on human error.

A woman was killed July 15 when a train collided with an 18-wheeler at a private grade crossing in Medina County, Texas, *KSAT-TV* reported. The 46-year-old woman was in the 18-wheeler when a Union Pacific train crashed into it. A 59-year-old man, also in the truck, was injured in the crash too. Twenty-five cars derailed leading to a small fire.

Two trolleys in Boston collided July 7 injuring three people. One of the trolleys was pulling into the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority's Arlington Street station around 9:30 a.m. when it rear-ended a stopped trolley causing a derailment.

About 50 tank cars from a Canadian National freight train derailed July 4 in the Canadian city of Prescott, between Toronto and Montreal. The tank cars were empty. No injuries were reported because of the derailment, though some passenger train service was disrupted.

Trackside Profile

ELIZABETH, N.J.: A PLACE OF DESTINATION



Todd DeFeo | The Cross-Tie

A southbound N.J. Transit express train passes through Elizabeth, N.J., on Aug. 19, 2003. Railroads in the northern New Jersey city date to 1835.

ELIZABETH, N.J. — Trains first came to this northern New Jersey city in 1835, with rail service connecting the city with Newark on the New Jersey Railroad.

Around that time, the Elizabeth & Somerville Railroad, using horse-drawn trains, began service between Elizabethtown and Elizabeth. The railroad, which was a predecessor of the Central Railroad of New Jersey, turned to steam in 1839, according to *The Historical Guide to North American Railroads*, Second Edition.

Union Station was completed in April 1854, the same year a second track was laid between Elizabeth and Elizabethport.

In 1864, the Central Railroad of New Jersey opened a line to Jersey City. And four years later, construction of a third track between Elizabeth and Jersey City began. Grading for that track was completed in 1866.

During the mid 19th century, both the Central Railroad of New Jersey and the New Jersey Railroad remained competitive, often fighting "price wars."

In 1872, the Central Railroad of New Jersey's Newark and Elizabeth branch opened.

Between 1891 and 1893, the Central Railroad of New Jersey built the main

Elizabeth depot. The station was completed at a cost of \$38,600. It was remodeled in 1920 and in 1953 it was modernized at a cost of more than \$50,000, according to the city.

In 1988, N.J. Transit rehabilitated the station. The depot was placed on the National Register of Historical Places on Sept. 1, 1984.

On Feb. 4, 1987, N.J. Transit opened the North Elizabeth station. The station continues to see light use today.

In April 1987, Conrail removed the former Central Railroad of New Jersey express tracks between Aldene and Elizabeth. The former right of way can still be seen, passing under the current Northeast Corridor mainline.

More recently, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and the city of Elizabeth have identified some projects they say will improve the shipment of goods, including a rail line linking the Staten Island Railroad to Elizabeth.

— Todd DeFeo

Each month, *The Cross-Tie* will feature a trackside location. For more information about these locations, log onto Railfanning.org and click on Trackside.

NEW INSPECTION FACILITY OPENS IN TEXAS

LAREDO, Texas — The U.S. Customs and Border Protection has opened a new rail inspection facility that includes a gamma-ray imaging system for scanning cargo in rail cars.

"This new facility offers the latest in non-intrusive inspections technology and further tightens security against the terrorist threat, while at the same time helping to facilitate movement of legitimate cargo across the U.S.-Mexico border," said Customs and Border Protection Commissioner

Robert C. Bonner.

The \$200,000 facility, built by Tex-Mex Railroad on land owned by Union Pacific, houses offices for CBP inspectors and Border Patrol agents, and a \$1.3 million gamma-ray imaging system that scans railcars as they cross into the U.S. The new two-story structure replaces an outmoded facility at the border rail crossing dating back to 1908.

Construction of the facility began in September 2002 and was completed in

April 2003.

"Co-location of CBP inspectors and Border Patrol agents, along with cutting-edge technology, will enhance both efficiency and effectiveness in combating illegal migrant and drug smuggling on trains, as well as the smuggling of terrorists and weapons of mass destruction," said Jayson Ahern, assistant commissioner of Customs and Border Protection.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

FRA REQUIRES BETTER 'BLACK BOXES,' MORE COLLECTION OF DATA

WASHINGTON — Train "black box" data and information will be better safeguarded for use in accident investigations as a result of a Federal Railroad Administration final rule requiring improvements in the crash survivability of locomotive event recorders.

Under the rule, event recorders will be hardened to prevent the loss of data from exposure to fire, impact shock, fluid immersion, and other potential damage resulting from train accidents. New data required to be captured includes horn activation, cruise control functions and train control operating directives sent to the engineer's onboard display. Currently, locomotive event recorders capture such information as train speed, use of automatic air brakes, throttle position and cab signal indications.

"We are making sure that investigators have more and better information available when working to find the cause of an accident," said FRA Administrator Joseph H. Boardman.

"The more we can learn from train accidents, the more we can prevent them from occurring."

The rule gives railroads four years to replace older-style event recorders that use magnetic tape to store data with new electronic memory modules. The rule also requires railroads to improve inspection, testing and maintenance procedures.

The rule requires railroads to keep data stored on event recorders involved in accidents for one year, up from the current 30-day requirement. This will allow federal accident investigators greater flexibility in reviewing data, even if no immediate accident investigation is undertaken.

The rule directly supports FRA's new National Rail Safety Action Plan to improve safety across the nation's railroad system, and addresses six outstanding rail safety recommendations made by the National Transportation Safety Board resulting from several previous major accident investigations.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

AMTRAK'S GROUNDED ACELA RETURNS TO SERVICE ON N.E. CORRIDOR

WASHINGTON — The first *Acela Express* trains returned to service July 11 with four daily departures from New York and Washington, marking an end to a roughly three-month service disruption, Amtrak announced.

Throughout July, Amtrak announced weekday *Acela Express* service between New York and Washington beginning Monday, as well as weekend service starting July 16 on the Northeast Corridor.

Amtrak suspended the trains' operations after the discovery of cracks on the spokes of brake discs on April 15.

The first trains to return operated Monday-Friday with two morning and two afternoon departures from New York and Washington, and served all regular *Acela* destinations.

To maintain schedule predictability during the transition period, the trainsets will begin to replace the Metroliners Amtrak put in temporary service. Customers are advised to check Amtrak.com

for more news about additional service, including service between New York and Boston.

"*Acela Express* is enormously popular with our passengers, and we're very glad to begin rolling these trains back into service this week," said Amtrak Senior Vice President Bill Crosbie. "Ninety-five percent of our Northeast Corridor passengers stayed with Amtrak while *Acela* was out of service. We appreciate that loyalty and are pleased to return *Acela Express* to service."

Since April 15, when the *Acela* went out of service, the trains' manufacturer produced an all-new design of the disc. A casting and assembly process was begun and the parts were successfully tested and the inventory of parts is now at the stage that can support train operations.

The new discs will continue to be inspected as a regular part of the trains' maintenance cycle.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

TRAFFIC BOOMING ON HISTORIC 'STORMY'

OMAHA, Neb. — Railroaders call it the "Stormy" for its wild summer thunderstorms.

Historians call it the Sunset Route.

It has become a vital link handling booming traffic, and to address this growth, the 760-mile Union Pacific corridor between Los Angeles and El Paso is in the midst of an on-going effort to add capacity.

The route's strategic importance was recognized more than 150 years ago. The treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo that ended the Mexican War in 1848, resulted in Mexico giving up Texas and ceding most of what are now Arizona, California, Colorado, Utah and Nevada to the United States.

James Gadsden, president of South Carolina Railroad Company, dreamed of connecting his railroads to a southern transcontinental railroad to California, linking the West directly with the Southern states. The best route, however, was determined to be south of the new U.S. border. Congress paid Mexico \$10 million in 1852 for the Gadsden Purchase, a strip of land south of the Gila River, for the proposed railroad route.

Gadsden didn't live to see the line built, but Central Pacific pioneer Colis P. Huntington saw the value of the route and ordered his Southern Pacific Railroad to begin building east from Los Angeles in 1877 with rails reaching Tucson in March 1880.

A stub line was extended to Tombstone where the famous gunfight at the O.K.

Corral was fought in 1881.

The railroad reached El Paso in May 1881. It was quickly dubbed the Sunset Route, and the Southern Pacific circular logo showing a setting sun over a railroad track soon became the company's trademark. Southern Pacific's premier passenger train on the route was named the "Sunset Limited."

Copper deposits in Southern Arizona were an initial traffic attraction, but by 1894 winter resorts in Tucson, Phoenix and Pasadena soon filled the passenger trains with affluent vacationers.

Vegetables grown in California's Imperial Valley soon became an important commodity as well with Southern Pacific running the first solid train of refrigerated cars loaded with produce from the valley in 1884.

The valley nearly was lost in 1906 and 1907 when the Colorado River broke out of its banks and began filling the lower-than-sea-level Salton Sea. By then, Union Pacific's E. H. Harriman had control of Southern Pacific, and he launched a massive effort using train loads of rock to contain the river, succeeding in early 1907.

Today, with 24 percent of all the freight cars handled by Union Pacific originating or terminating in Southern California, the Sunset Route is handling its share of the record traffic volumes on North American railroads. Marine containers stacked two high on "double-stack" trains dominate the route, but construction materials including

lumber, plywood, steel and cement, are important to the region's growth.

Gasoline additive ethanol is another important commodity as well as automobiles and automobile parts moving through the Mexico gateways at Nogales, Ariz. and Calexico, Calif. The Sunset Route also is an important transcontinental route for package express business, as well as finished automobiles in addition to Midwest grain for feed lots in Southern California.

Less than one quarter of the Sunset Route had a second double-track when Union Pacific acquired it in 1996 as part of the merger with Southern Pacific.

Since then, Union Pacific has built more than 100 miles of new main line double-track on the Sunset route to handle the nation's growing freight traffic.

Union Pacific currently plans to invest \$105 million this year to complete an additional 69 miles of double-track. The ultimate goal is to double-track the entire route.

"Trade between the United States and Asia is projected to double by 2020, and Union Pacific will strive to meet the demand that growth brings," said Jim Young, UP president. "We will continue to expand and improve our rail infrastructure if we receive appropriate levels of return on our investment. Our nation's highways are becoming more and more congested, and we can help alleviate this problem by increasing our capacity," Young added.

— *PRNewswire-FirstCall*

N.J. TRANSIT APPROVES ALIGNMENT FOR NEW TRANS-HUDSON RAIL TUNNEL

NEWARK, N.J. — The project to double rail capacity between New Jersey and New York took a step forward July 27, when the N.J. Transit Board of Directors approved the locally preferred alignment (LPA) of the Trans-Hudson Express Tunnel.

The Tunnel project consists of two new single-track rail tunnels to supplement the two Amtrak-owned tunnels that currently carry all Northeast Corridor commuter rail traffic from

New Jersey into Midtown Manhattan. The project also includes a new multi-level station under 34th Street in Manhattan, which will connect with the existing New York Penn Station. The original tunnels, built by the Pennsylvania Railroad between 1907 and 1910, were designed to carry a few long-distance trains per day.

The Board's approval of the alignment is the culmination of work that began as the Access to the Region's Core Major In-

vestment Study in 1995. In all, 137 alternatives—involving subway, rail, and ferry—were considered.

The Board-approved LPA outlines that the two, new single-track tunnels will be constructed under the New Jersey Palisades and the Hudson River, south of the alignment for the existing tunnels, deep underground to avoid disturbing the river bottom.

The new track infrastructure will connect with the existing

commuter rail system to provide a one-seat ride into Midtown for thousands of N.J. Transit customers.

During the Major Investment Study process over the last decade, a ballpark cost estimate between \$4 billion and \$5 billion for project was developed.

In 2005 dollars, the project cost is estimated at about \$6 billion because the scope of the work has been refined, N.J. Transit says.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*



CPR, Electrical Union Reach Agreement on Five-Year Contract with Maintainers

CALGARY — Canadian Pacific Railway and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), representing about 450 employees who maintain railway signal systems, on July 14 announced they have reached a tentative five-year collective agreement.

The agreement, which extends through to Dec. 31, 2009, provides for wage, benefits, work rule and productivity improvements. Details are not available pending ratification.

"With this settlement, CPR has successfully negotiated collective agreements with all of its unionized employees in Canada," CPR President and CEO Rob Ritchie said. "CPR and its unions recognize that a stable labor environment enables all stakeholders to benefit from growing demand for rail service."

The settlement is subject to ratification by IBEW members. Results of the ratification vote are expected in September.

— *PRNewswire-FirstCall*

Norfolk Southern Reports Record Coal Volumes in Second Quarter 2005

NORFOLK, Va. — Norfolk Southern Corporation handled a record 45.7 million tons of coal in the second quarter of 2005.

This was the company's highest level of coal volume since the consolidation with Conrail in 1999 and was up 3.9 percent compared with last year. The second-quarter record exceeded

the previous record, set in the first quarter of 2001, by 1.9 percent.

NS also set a new record in the second quarter for total coal, coke and iron ore volume, which reached 47.3 million tons, an increase of 2.6 percent over the previous record, set in last year's fourth quarter.

For all coal, coke and iron ore, NS has set new volume records in two of the last three quarters.

The major contributing factor to the increase in volume was coal moving to utilities, which continued to rebuild stockpiles. Additional growth also came from coal shipments to a new coke plant and strong first-half domestic metallurgical coal markets.

— *PRNewswire-FirstCall*

Regional Railroad Receives Federal Loan to Improve Service and Safety in Rural Communities of Iowa and Illinois

WASHINGTON — The Iowa Interstate Railroad (IIR) will receive a \$32.7 million federal loan to help it improve service to rural areas that rely on trains to ship corn, soybeans, steel, chemicals and other products to market.

The loan from the Federal Railroad Administration will pay for track improvements needed to haul heavier freight cars and get products to key shipping points faster and safer.

Besides helping companies such as Archer Daniels Midland, Maytag, and Midland Iron & Steel already located along its 571-mile line between Coun-

cil Bluffs, Iowa, and Chicago, IL, the loan is expected to help the railroad lure new business and improve economic development in rural communities.

"Companies that ship by rail want to be on lines capable of handling their business," said FRA Administrator Joseph H. Boardman. "This loan is not just an investment in the line itself, but also an investment in the local economy."

Specifically, the funds from the Railroad Rehabilitation Improvement Financing (RRIF) program will improve 266 miles of track, replace 180,000 crossties, lay of thousands of tons of new ballast, and rebuild 95 highway-rail grade crossings between Council Bluffs, Iowa, and Bureau, IL. A portion of the loan also will be used to purchase a rail line that IIR is currently leasing and refinance debt incurred from previous infrastructure improvement projects.

The IIR connects to several railroads including the Union Pacific, Burlington Northern Santa FE, CSX, and the Iowa, Chicago & Eastern lines providing rail freight service to shippers across the Midwest and access to the national and global marketplace.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Loan to Help Short Line Railroad in Texas Improve Safety and Capacity to Handle Increased NAFTA Traffic

WASHINGTON — The Tex-Mex Railroad, a short line connecting the United States to Mexico, has won approval of a

\$50 million loan it will use for major safety and infrastructure projects in the wake of growing cross border trade.

The loan from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will increase efficiency by allowing Tex-Mex to operate at higher track speeds, and increase capacity to accommodate growing freight rail traffic along its busy NAFTA corridor. It will also improve track safety along the railroad's line between Laredo and Corpus Christi, Texas.

The loan will help upgrade 146 miles of track, rehabilitate 26 bridges, construct two new sidings and lengthen one, and replace 75,000 crossties. Two rail yards, at Laredo and Corpus Christi, also will be upgraded. In addition, a portion of the loan will be used to refinance prior debt incurred for previous capital investment projects.

"When you improve the safety of your rails, you end up increasing capacity," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta. "Safety equals more business," he said.

The loan is being made under the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) program administered by the FRA.

The Tex-Mex railroad is now a part of the Kansas City Southern Railway (KCSR) network. It serves mainly as a bridge railroad to move traffic and make connections between KCSR, Union Pacific, BNSF Railway, and Transportacion Ferroviaria Mexicana located in Mexico.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*



NEWS FROM THE RAILS

QUICK HITS FROM AROUND THE PASSENGER RAILROAD INDUSTRY

FRA Grant to Study of 'Sealed Corridor' Concept to Restrict Highway Vehicle Access to Metrolink Tracks

WASHINGTON — The federal government wants to know if it is possible to restrict vehicle access to two Metrolink commuter train lines as a way to improve safety on routes that run from Los Angeles to Symar and Chatsworth.

The Federal Railroad Administration said it would give Metrolink \$250,000 to study a "sealed corridor" concept for its Antelope and Ventura County lines. The study will evaluate whether it is possible to reduce or eliminate the chance of cars crossing into the path of trains.

In a 'sealed corridor' approach, passenger and freight rail operators work with state transportation and local officials to analyze safety at all railroad crossings along a particular rail line. The purpose of the assessment is to decide which grade crossings should receive safety improvements or be permanently closed.

"A sealed rail corridor keeps passengers safe by keeping vehicles out," said FRA Administrator Joseph H. Boardman. "When you reduce the chance of trains and vehicles crossing paths, you increase safety for rail passengers and motorists," he added.

The study will evaluate 49 crossings on Metrolink's 26-mile Antelope Line between Los Angeles and Symar, and the 32-mile Ventura County Line between Los Angeles and Chatsworth. It will consider

current and projected traffic conditions, recommend safety enhancements, create a grade crossing improvement priority list, identify potential closures, and provide cost estimates to accomplish the plan's objective.

Potential improvements may include four-quadrant gates, extended gate arms, grade separations, highway median separators, traffic signal upgrades, and permanent closures.

In addition, Metrolink will develop a program to construct locked gates and other barriers to deny access to its right-of-way at certain locations other than highway-rail crossings, including fencing to deter illegal trespassing, the leading cause of rail-related fatalities in the United States.

The study will be modeled on the successful efforts of the North Carolina Department of Transportation to implement a sealed corridor between Charlotte and Raleigh. To date along that line, safety upgrades have been made at 67 crossings and 64 public and private crossings have been closed, with improvements at over 100 others still in various stages of project development.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

DOT to Study Safer Seats, Tables for Commuter Trains

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) launched a new project to make seats and tables on commuter trains safer.

Working with the Federal

Railroad Administration, RITA's Volpe National Transportation Systems Center has awarded two contracts worth \$850,000 to Massachusetts-based technology firm TIAX to develop a safer passenger seat and worktable that will reduce injuries and improve the ability of passengers to safely exit a train following a collision.

The project supports several other rail safety initiatives being conducted jointly by the FRA and RITA's Volpe Center, including ongoing research in the areas of crashworthiness, emergency evacuation, grade crossing and safety decision-making.

To make passenger trains safer, TIAX will design a worktable that will absorb energy upon impact and reduce the risk of head, chest, abdomen and leg injuries. The table also will be designed to allow passengers to evacuate more easily following a collision. In addition, improved three-person seats will be developed to reduce the risk of head, chest, and leg injuries by safely compartmentalizing passengers and ensuring that the seat remains attached to the floor upon impact.

Since 1992, Volpe Center and FRA have focused on both passenger and freight structural crashworthiness and occupant protection. The research has found that it is possible to make passenger train travel safer using a combination of these two elements.

"We want to do everything we can to make commuter trains safe," said RITA Admin-

istrator Dr. Ashok G. Kaveeshwar. "If there is a way to make seats and tables safer, we will find it," he said.

RITA's Volpe Center is a non-profit, fee-for-service organization that conducts more than \$300 million annually in cutting-edge transportation research and technology development for federal, state and local agencies, as well as for private organizations.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Amtrak Increases Family Minivan and SUV Capacity on the Popular Auto Train

WASHINGTON — Amtrak announced it has increased the vehicle capacity of its *Auto Train* between Northern Virginia and Florida and may now accommodate as many as 120 minivans or SUVs on a single train.

Previously, the maximum number of minivans and SUVs that could be accommodated was 29.

The increased capacity is the result of the purchase of 80 all-new carriers that are equipped to transport either vans or autos.

Amtrak's *Auto Train* offers daily service in both directions between Lorton, Va., and Sanford, Fla. The train carries passengers and their automobiles over the approximately 900-mile stretch on an overnight trip.

Passengers may choose coach accommodations or upgrade to a variety of sleeping accommodations. On-board meals are included in *Auto Train* fares.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

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Questions, comments, concerns, fears, trepidations?

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NTSB: CN FAILED TO BLAME FOR WRECK

WASHINGTON — Canadian National Railway Company failed to properly maintain and inspect its track resulting in a rail shift that derailed an Amtrak train near Flora, Miss., last year, the National Transportation Safety Board said.

On April 6, 2004 Amtrak train No. 58, the *City of New Orleans*, was traveling northbound at approximately 78 mph when it passed over a shift in the rail and the entire train consisting of a locomotive, a baggage car, and eight passenger cars derailed. One person was killed as a result of the derailment.

The Board's July 26 report identified safety concerns with Canadian National's continuous welded rail maintenance and inspection procedures, Amtrak's emergency response training of its employees, and Federal Railroad Administra-

tion oversight of both.

"Rules and regulations exist to promote safety," acting NTSB Chairman Mark Rosenker said. "What we have here is less than adequate work done by both Canadian National and the FRA and sadly it resulted in a fatal accident."

In January 2004 Canadian National welders removed a 12 foot, 11 inch portion of the east rail near the point of derailment. Because of the cold temperatures, when the piece of rail was removed the remaining rail contracted and as a result the replacement plug needed to be 2 inches longer.

A post-accident examination of the rail near the accident site found that about 50 percent of the rail anchors were ineffective. The NTSB concluded the inadequately restrained rail lifted out of the tie plates because of expansion caused by warm temperatures, resulting

in the rail shifting and the gage widening, allowing the wheels of the train to drop between the rails.

During the investigation the Board learned that Canadian National's continuous welded rail policy required the welder to assess the rail anchors for 200 feet on each side of the repair. The work report submitted by the welder for the January 2004 repair did not indicate any problems with the rail anchors at the accident site.

The Board concluded that track employees at multiple levels did not follow or ensure adherence to CN's written instructions for maintaining continuous welded rail.

The Board recommended that Canadian National establish an audit program to verify that employees follow current written track maintenance and inspection procedures.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*