

THE CROSS-TIE

Volume 3, Number 11

November 2005

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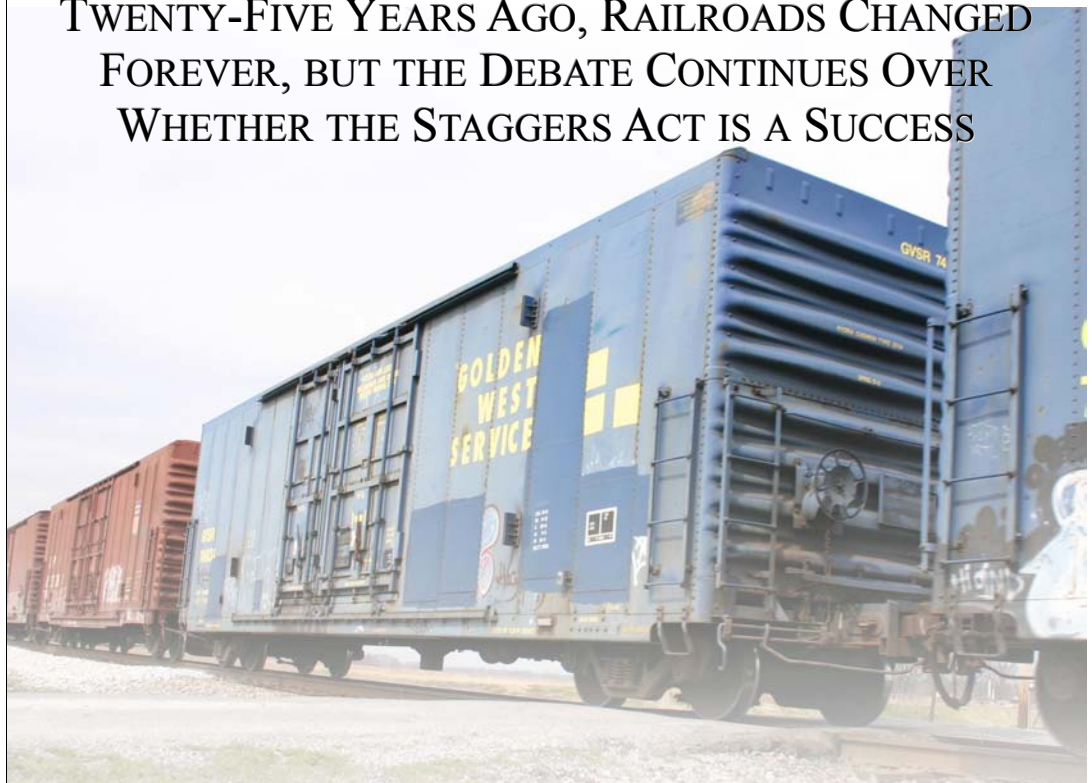
Railroad Quick Hits

- 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.
- For more about the Staggers Act, including testimony before Congress, log onto Railfanning.org or thecrosstie.com
- Railfanning.org is currently in the middle of a redesign. Check out the new look and drop a line to trains@railfanning.org with your thoughts on the new design.

Inside, Page 4: Mineta Demands Quick Switch Fix
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Success Story?

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, RAILROADS CHANGED FOREVER, BUT THE DEBATE CONTINUES OVER WHETHER THE STAGGERS ACT IS A SUCCESS



WASHINGTON — On Oct. 14, 1980, the fate of American railroads changed.

Congress passed the Staggers Act, legislation that deregulated the industry. But a quarter of a century later, the debate over the law rages on.

By 1980, between a fifth and a third of the railroad industry was bankrupt, the by-product of government regulation. An investor could

have made more money putting money into the typical savings account than investing in the railroad industry.

Maintenance was, to say the least, sub par and the rate of wrecks was skyrocketing.

Despite the grim outlook of the railroad industry, it was still vital to the nation's economy. And Congress took action with the Staggers Act.

(Continued on page 2)

'A DRAMATIC CHANGE IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE U.S. RAILROAD INDUSTRY'

(Continued from page 1)

Named for Harley O. Staggers, who chaired the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the Staggers Act addressed the nation's regulatory system — one that made it difficult for railroads to respond to the disciplines and opportunities of the marketplace.

A recent study by Clifford Winston of the AEI-Brookings Joint Center on Regulatory Studies found that “the inefficiencies created by rail regulation put a stranglehold on the industry that prevented it from competing effectively.” The report also called the Staggers Act “a rare win-win for consumers and industry.”

Federal regulation of railroads began in 1887 with the Interstate Commerce Act. The Interstate Commerce Commission was responsible for administering the law.

Over the years, the ICC's scope of regulation was expanded beyond railroad rates and practices to cover line construction, mergers, carrier practices and line abandonments.

Pro Staggers

Since the Staggers Act passed, productivity on the nation's railroads has tripled overall and intermodal traffic has almost quadrupled, according to the Association of American Railroads (AAR).

“Since 1980 our productivity is up nearly 200 percent and yet our rates have dropped 60 percent, saving our customers \$10 billion a year,” Edward R. Hamberger, AAR's president and chief executive office, told a meeting of more than 500 rail customers and business associates during a railroad customer service forum in St. Louis.

“This is largely due to the Staggers Act, which partially deregulated the industry and gives railroads a good foundation for meeting what is expected to be another record fall for rail freight transportation.”

In addition to improved railroad finances, the accident rate on the nation's rail network is also down, according to AAR.

“This Act helped spur the creation of the modern short line industry,” Richard F.

Timmons, president of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association said in 2004 testimony before Congress

“In fact, eighty-one percent of total short line mileage is operated by railroads that were established after 1980 when Staggers went into effect,” Timmons added. “These railroads have survived and prospered because of the provisions of the Staggers Act and the entrepreneurs who own and operate them.”

Anti Staggers

Railroad deregulation is “clearly not working for captive rail customers,” National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) CEO Glenn English testified Oct. 19.

In testimony before the U.S. Department of Transportation, Surface Transportation Board (STB), English defined captive customers as those who, by virtue of physical location, have access to a single rail provider.

Congress had anticipated the plight of such a shipper class when it enacted rail competition 25 years ago, mandating continued regulatory oversight in order to safeguard against market power abuse by monopoly railroads, English contends.

Many cooperatives with only a single rail provider have unreasonably high rates and non-negotiable terms of service dictated to them on a “take-it-or-leave-it” basis, English contends.

“It is our desire to work with the rail industry to ensure better service and greater capacity,” he said. “However, we do not believe this should be accomplished on the backs of captive rail shippers. Such a situation was not the intent of Congress when it passed the Staggers Act in 1980.”

English's testimony also outlined a few of the STB decisions that have contributed to the untenable situation where rail shippers find themselves today, including the 1996 “bottleneck” decision in which the board held that a railroad that could provide service at both the origin and destination of a freight shipment could use that power to deny the customer access to a competing railroad.

The consumer owned utilities also questioned the equity of the STB dispute resolution process, calling into question the prohibitive expense and arbitrary nature of the board's “rate reasonableness” procedure.

“Rate appeal cases can cost in excess of \$3 million and take years to resolve,” English said. “All burdens of proof are on the petitioner; and the rate standard is so vague that its interpretation can shift from case to case. Indeed, over the last three years, the acceptable rate allowed to be charged to captive rail customers has increased 50 percent without any change in the rate standard.”

What's Next?

In early May, U.S. Rep. Richard Baker, R-La., introduced into Congress a bill he says will enhance competition in the nation's freight rail marketplace.

AAR opposes the bill, saying in a position paper the legislation would stifle railroads' ability to make capital improvements.

The “Railroad Competition Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005,” would require carriers to provide service at “reasonable rates to captive shippers,” Baker contends. It would provide Class II and Class III railroads with greater ability to interchange freight with Class I carriers, and directs the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to take steps to address areas of the country that are found to have inadequate rail competition, according to Baker.

“Since 1980, more than 40 Class I railroads have consolidated into just seven serving the entire North American continent. Four of them — two in the West (Union Pacific and BNSF Railway) and two in the East (CSX and Norfolk Southern) — control over 95 percent of the railroad business,” said Rep. James Oberstar, D-Minn. “Because of this consolidation, entire states, regions, and industries are now captive to a single Class I railroad. This, in turn, has led to complaints from shippers over high costs and poor service by the railroads.”

— Staff and Wire Reports

WRECK ROUNDUP

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

At least 100 people were killed Oct. 29 when an Indian passenger train crashed into stream. According to railroad officials, a bridge was washed out before the wreck. The train's engine and seven of the train's 14 cars crashed into the stream, according to a *Sky News* report. Two of the coaches may have been completely submerged after the crash. As many as 500 people were on board the train at the time of the wreck. At least 150 other passengers were injured in the wreck, which occurred in India's Andhra Pradesh state. Heavy rains were blamed for washing out the bridge.

One person was killed and two homes destroyed Oct. 15 when eight cars — including one carrying propane gas — derailed in Texarkana, Ark. According to an *Associated Press* report, a Union Pacific freight train rear-ended another train in a rail yard, leading to the derailment. After the wreck, the propane gas ignited and a fire burned for some time. Thinking the gas was something other than propane, authorities went to nearby residents asking them to leave the area, according to the report. At least a half-dozen people were sent to a nearby emergency rooms. A lawsuit filed days after the wreck alleges the train's engineer fell asleep before the wreck, according to an *Associated Press* report.

At least 16 people were killed and dozens more injured in a train wreck near the town of Datia in central India, according to published reports. The train was traveling six times faster than the speed limit when its engine and six cars jumped the tracks near the station in Datia. A New Delhi television station reported that the train's brakes failed, causing the wreck.

Trackside Profile

HOPKINSVILLE, KY.: PEARL CITY OF THE PENNYROYAL



Todd DeFeo | The Cross-Tie

A northbound CSX freight train passes through Hopkinsville, Ky., in early 2002. Trains came to the southern Kentucky region after the Civil War.

HOPKINSVILLE, Ky. — CSX freight trains regularly pass through this southern Kentucky town known as the “Pearl City of the Pennyroyal.”

As early as 1832 investors hoped to build a railroad from Hopkinsville to Eddyville, Ky., about 30 miles to the northwest. That effort ultimately failed and the leaders could not organize the railroad's construction.

It wasn't until the 1860s that railroads finally made it to the area. After the Civil War, railroads helped the tobacco industry grow in northern Middle Tennessee and southern Kentucky, including the Hopkinsville area.

Service on the Evansville, Henderson, & Nashville Railroad began in Hopkinsville on April 8, 1868, almost 30 years after the railroad's predecessor was formed. The line, which was extended north to Henderson, Ky., was acquired by the Louisville & Nashville Railroad in 1879.

A second line, the Ohio Valley Railroad, built in 1892, served Hopkinsville, running between Gracey, Ky., and Hopkinsville. The Illinois Central Railroad purchased that road in 1897.

The Illinois Central became the Illinois Central Gulf in 1972 after it merged with

the Gulf Mobile & Ohio Railroad.

The Tennessee Central Railway's Western Division connected Hopkinsville and Clarksville, Tenn., in 1903 or 1904, marking the third line serving Hopkinsville.

In 1968, when the Tennessee Central went under, Illinois Central purchased for \$600,000 the portion of the road between Hopkinsville and Nashville, Tenn.

The Illinois Central abandoned its line in the 1980s. Well after 2000, portions of the railroad's right of way were still visible around Hopkinsville.

The Department of Defense took over a portion of that road in 1990, which ran from Hopkinsville to nearby Fort Campbell, Ky. Today, the military installation uses the train tracks to help deploy troops stationed at Fort Campbell.

The former Louisville & Nashville Railroad depot still stands in downtown Hopkinsville. In 1975, the building was added to the National Register of Historical Places.

— 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.

MINETA: RAILROADS HAVE 30 DAYS TO FIX PROBLEM OF MISALIGNED TRACK SWITCHES

WASHINGTON — The nation's railroads have 30 days to fix a growing safety problem with an increasing number of train crashes due to track switches left in the wrong position, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta said Oct. 19.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) set a Nov. 22 deadline in an emergency order mandating all railroads take specific and immediate steps to end the problem, which has led to nine serious train crashes, 10 deaths and more than 600 people since January.

The accidents have occurred when employees working in areas not equipped with remote electronic signal monitors failed to follow track-switching procedures, Mineta said. In every case, the fail-

ure to reset the hand-operated switches has led to trains running onto the wrong tracks and derailling or colliding with locomotives or rail cars or both, he added.

"Railroads must put an end to these avoidable and deadly mistakes," Mineta said.

Any railroad company, supervisor or employee who violates this emergency order may be liable for a civil penalty of up to \$27,000, according to the order.

"There is absolutely no excuse for a switch to be left in the wrong position," said FRA Administrator Joseph H. Boardman. "This dangerous, preventable and increasingly frequent situation must stop, starting now."

The emergency order mandates that rail-

roads retrain and periodically test employees on switch operating procedures.

Also, railroads must increase communication among crewmembers regarding the position of the switch. Specifically, employees must be briefed on the use of switches and provide written documentation every time a switch is moved. In addition, locomotive engineers must acknowledge that switches are properly set before trains can be operated.

The nine switch-related crashes in 2005 occurred in Graniteville, SC; Bieber, Calif.; Banks, Ala.; Mt. Juliet, Tenn.; Sheridan, Ore.; Florence, Minn.; Nickerson, Kan.; Heber, Calif.; and Shepard, Texas.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION URGES SAFER SHIPMENTS OF TIME-SENSITIVE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

WASHINGTON — Railroads, manufacturers, refiners, and businesses that ship or receive hazardous materials by rail should immediately improve procedures for tracking the movement of time-sensitive shipments, according to a Safety Advisory distributed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on Oct. 5.

"Anyone involved in shipping hazardous materials must take the necessary steps to ensure that time-sensitive products are properly tracked from origin to final destination," said FRA Administrator Joseph H. Boardman.

"There is no margin for error when it comes to shipping hazardous materials. Everyone involved in this process has to get it right."

The Safety Advisory requests that all railroads conform to a recently updated railroad indus-

try standard that identifies a list of 20-day and 30-day time-sensitive hazardous materials, and requires specific actions to speed up movement of such cars if they are delayed in transit. The advisory also emphasizes that all railroad employees who handle such shipments be aware of, and clearly understand, the procedures.

In addition, hazardous materials shippers and end users should closely monitor the products they order and/or transport by increasing communication between one another and the railroad as shipments are in-transit to ensure all parties are aware of their location and expected delivery date, the FRA said.

The Safety Advisory is a direct result of an incident that occurred in Cincinnati, Ohio this August, Boardman said. A tank car carrying the time-

sensitive chemical styrene was not delivered to its final destination, and instead apparently sat on the same railroad for seven months. As a result, the stabilizing agent in the styrene expired causing a reaction that ultimately led to an unintended release of the product and a precautionary evacuation of the surrounding area. The FRA's investigation of this incident is ongoing, Boardman added.

There are more than 1.7 million shipments of hazardous materials by rail each year, and almost all arrive at their destination safely and without incident.

FRA said the Safety Advisory will further reduce the likelihood of an event similar to the Cincinnati incident.

"It is deeply troubling that a hazardous materials shipment, according to initial accounts, was left for months in a Cincin-

nati rail yard," Boardman said. "We are going to get to the bottom of this incident, thoroughly investigate any and all violations of federal hazardous materials regulations, and punish those who are responsible. The release of a chemical product in the environment and the safety risk to the people of Cincinnati is disheartening and should not have occurred.

"We will use the full extent of our regulatory authority to obtain the information we need from the railroads, the shipper of the tank car, and other parties involved," Boardman said.

"Where the evidence leads, we will follow. If we find that one or more parties violated federal hazardous materials regulations, we will take all appropriate enforcement actions, including imposing the strictest penalties permitted by law."

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

FIRMS FINED NEARLY \$25 MILLION FOR INFLATING CLAIMS MADE TO AMTRAK

WASHINGTON — A joint venture of engineering and construction companies has agreed to pay the United States \$24.75 million to settle allegations that the firms violated the False Claims Act, the Justice Department announced Oct. 11.

The government asserts the companies violated the False Claims Act by knowingly submitting inflated claims on Amtrak's project to electrify the rail corridor between New Haven and Boston.

Balfour Beatty Construction; Massachusetts Electric Construction Company; their joint venture BBC-MEC; J.F. White Contracting Company; and Northeast Corridor Foundations, a joint venture between J.F. White and BBC-MEC, are alleged to have overcharged Amtrak for the installation of an overhead system used to deliver electricity to locomotives.

The allegations are that the parties inflated claims regarding the foundations for the poles, the electrical power system, and for delay and disruption of the overall project. The overcharges were paid with grant funds provided to Amtrak by the federal government.

"This settlement sends a clear message that the Justice Department will investigate and resolve financial fraud perpetrated by contractors of federal grantees," said Peter Keisler, assistant attorney general for the Civil Division.

BBC-MEC was the prime contractor on the project and J.F. White was a partner in the subcontractor whose responsibility was to install the foundations for the poles. BBC is a subsidiary of London-based Balfour Beatty PLC, and MEC is a subsidiary of Peter Keiwit & Sons, Inc. BBC's pri-

mary U.S. office is in Atlanta. MEC and J.F. White are based in Boston.

This case was originally filed under the qui tam or whistleblower provisions of the False Claims Act by Ian Cartwright, a former Balfour Beatty employee. As a result of the settlement, Cartwright will receive \$3,898,125 of the total recovery.

Under the whistleblower provisions of the False Claims Act, private parties can file an action on behalf of the United States and receive a portion of the proceeds of a settlement or judgment awarded against a defendant.

The settlement resulted after a lengthy investigation by the Justice Department made in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Amtrak's Office of Inspector General.

— U.S. Newswire

AAR: FREIGHT TRAFFIC UP IN SEPTEMBER

WASHINGTON — Despite hurricane-related disruptions to their operations, U.S. freight railroad carload traffic rose 2.5 percent (32,733 carloads) and U.S. intermodal traffic rose 6.9 percent (60,413 trailers and containers) in September 2005 compared to September 2004, the Association of American Railroads (AAR) said.

In September 2005, U.S. freight railroads reporting to the AAR originated 1,351,237 carloads — up from 1,318,504 in September 2004 — and 937,360 intermodal units — up from 876,947 in September 2004.

"U.S. freight railroads have done a tremendous job getting most of their operations back on line following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita," AAR Vice President Craig F. Rockey said.

"As the affected regions re-

build, railroads will be a critical part of the reconstruction and relief efforts, and they will be up to the task," Rockey added. "Intermodal is the other big story. The top three highest-volume intermodal weeks in history for U.S. railroads occurred in September."

For the third quarter of 2005, U.S. rail carloadings of 4,309,292 were 1 percent higher than the third quarter of 2004, while intermodal traffic was 6.5 percent higher than the same period in 2004.

For the first nine months of 2005, U.S. railroads originated 12,996,735 carloads, up 1.4 percent from 2004, and 8,657,536 intermodal units, up 6.3 percent from 2004.

Total volume was estimated at 1.25 trillion ton-miles, up 2.3 percent from the first 39 weeks of 2004.

In September 2005, 13 of the 19 major commodity categories tracked by the AAR saw carload increases on U.S. railroads, including coal (up 3.2 percent), crushed stone, sand, and gravel (up 15.2 percent), and nonmetallic minerals (up 30.0 percent).

Commodities seeing carload declines on U.S. railroads in September included metallic ores (down 15.3 percent) and chemicals (down 3.4 percent). Grain carloadings were up 1.6 percent in September 2005 compared with September 2004.

In the third quarter of 2005, 10 of the 19 major commodity categories saw U.S. carload increases, including crushed stone and gravel (up 10.9 percent), grain (up 5.0 percent), and coal (up 0.7 percent).

For the year to date, 13 of the

19 major commodity categories saw carload increases on U.S. railroads, including coal (up 2.0 percent), crushed stone and gravel (up 9.0 percent), and grain mill products (up 5.6 percent).

Carloads of motor vehicles and equipment were down 2.8 percent (24,762 carloads) in 2005 through September, while carloads of waste and scrap materials were down 5.5 percent (22,255 carloads).

Canadian railroads originated 306,992 carloads in September 2005, down 0.9 percent from September 2004.

Carloads originated on Transportación Ferroviaria Mexicana (TFM), a major Mexican railroad, were down 14.6 percent in September, down 9.3 percent in the third quarter, and down 2.7 percent for the year to date.

— Special to The Cross-Tie



NEWS FROM THE RAILS

QUICK HITS FROM AROUND THE FREIGHT RAILROAD INDUSTRY

AAR: U.S. Freight Railroads Set an Intermodal Traffic Record During October

WASHINGTON — Intermodal traffic on U.S. railroads set a weekly record during the week ending Oct. 15, the Association of American Railroads (AAR) reported.

Intermodal volume of 249,664 trailers or containers, was up 8.0 percent from last year with container volume increasing by 9.4 percent and trailer volume gaining by 3.9 percent. The total broke the record of 246,530 trailers or containers that was set just two weeks earlier.

However, carload freight, which doesn't include the intermodal data, was down for the week. Carload volume of 325,549 units was off 5.5 percent from the corresponding week last year.

Loadings were down 8.2 percent in the West and 2.2 percent in the East.

Total volume was estimated at 33.4 billion ton-miles, down 4.0 percent from last year. Both the current week and the comparison week from last year included the Columbus Day holiday.

Fifteen of 19 commodity groups were down from last year, with farm products other than grain down 27.8 percent; metallic ores off 22.6 percent; and coal down 7.5 percent. Commodities showing increases included grain mill products, up 2.1 percent; food products, up 1.4 percent; and crushed stone, sand and gravel, up 1.1 percent.

Cumulative volume for the first 41 weeks of 2005 totaled 13,647,176 carloads, up 1.1 percent from 2004; 9,152,035 trailers or containers, up 6.3 percent; and total volume of an estimated 1.33 trillion ton-miles, up 2.6 percent from last year.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Union Pacific Railroad Honors President Bush 41 With Custom-Painted Locomotive

OMAHA, Neb. — Union Pacific is paying tribute to President George Herbert Walker Bush with a custom-painted locomotive.

Incorporating colors and elements of the Air Force One used during Bush's presidency, the new Union Pacific locomotive bears the number 4141, in honor of the 41st president.

The special locomotive, which replicates Air Force One's design was revealed to the former president during a ceremony near the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum on the Texas A&M University campus in College Station, Texas.

The unveiling ceremony coincides with the grand opening of "Trains: Tracks of the Iron Horse," on Nov. 7, 2005, at the Bush Library. The exhibit covers the rich technological, social and economic history of the railroad industry.

"When we set out to design the Bush Library and Museum, I did not want it to be about just one person — rather, we wanted to touch a broader cross-section of American life,

encompassing an eventful period of our history," President Bush said. "

The 'Tracks of the Iron Horse' and the unveiling of UP 4141 is the latest example of our commitment to attracting the most unique, educational, and entertaining exhibits we can — and I am deeply grateful to Dick Davidson and Union Pacific for their friendship and support. If we had the UP 4141 back when I was still in Office, I might have left Air Force One behind more often."

UP 4141 marks only the sixth time that Union Pacific has painted a locomotive in colors other than the traditional UP "Armour Yellow" paint.

The design team carefully studied photos of President Bush's Air Force One, with the goal of recreating the scheme for UP 4141. Elements from Air Force One's wings and tail, including an American flag, were placed on No. 4141's rear panel, with the sweeping lines of forward motion representing progress.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

After Hurricanes, Norfolk Southern Reopens New Orleans Intermodal Terminal

NEW ORLEANS — Norfolk Southern Corporation on Oct. 3 reopened its intermodal terminal in New Orleans.

The facility had been closed since Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast Aug. 29. The terminal is now accepting inbound and outbound shipments at the gate.

"The restoration of intermo-

dal service will assist with the transportation of reconstruction and relief materials to the Gulf Coast region," said Bob Huffman, vice president intermodal operations. "We are working closely with our customers to coordinate our start-up plans with the goal of resuming regular service quickly and safely."

On Oct. 3, Norfolk Southern also reopened its Oliver Yard Terminal, located at 2101 Ferdinand St., New Orleans. The yard serves local industrial customers and interchanges freight with the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad, which serves the Port of New Orleans.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Kansas City Southern Railway Company to Pre-Pay Property Tax in La., Texas

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Kansas City Southern Railway Company will pre-pay its 2005 property and real estate taxes to Beauregard and Calcasieu parishes in Louisiana and Jefferson, Newton and Orange counties in Texas, totaling approximately \$645,550 to aid in recovery efforts following Hurricane Rita.

After Hurricane Katrina, KCS pre-paid its property and real estate taxes to eleven parishes in Louisiana and three counties in Mississippi, totaling approximately \$655,000.

In addition to pre-payment of taxes, the KCS Charitable Fund has contributed \$30,000 to various organizations. These charitable contributions are helping local relief efforts.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*



NEWS FROM THE RAILS

QUICK HITS FROM AROUND THE PASSENGER RAILROAD INDUSTRY

SEPTA Working to Combat 'Slippery Rail' Syndrome

PHILADELPHIA — With an increase of new riders turning to its system of trains and trolleys, SEPTA is reminding all passengers that this is the time of year known in the industry as slippery rail season.

As a result, SEPTA is using an assortment of scrubbers, cleaners, and power washers to remove from its tracks the decaying leaves that produce slippery rail conditions.

Slippery rail season occurs in the fall when leaves are crushed against the rails by passing trains.

The crushed leaves create a slick coating on the rails particularly when moistened by dew or light rain. This leads to reduced friction between the rail and train wheels; with less friction it takes longer distances to brake and accelerate trains.

SEPTA experienced a dramatic reduction in the amount of trains delayed by slippery rail last year by relying heavily on a trio of high-pressure washers. The efforts to combat the problem resulted in a reduction of service delays by more than 930 trains when compared to data from 2003.

Slippery rail conditions stalled a total of 657 SEPTA trains in 2004. By comparison, the number of trains delayed by the annual problems in 2003 amounted to 1,589.

SEPTA attributes the success of its slippery rail program to the three high-pressure washers built in-house by its own employees, including one with the

ability to discharge water onto the tracks at 10,000 pounds per square inch.

SEPTA is optimistic about achieving similar results this slippery rail season and will reinforce its track-cleaning efforts by using a vehicle outfitted with rotating brushes. The brushes act to scrub away any remaining leaves and oily deposits.

As SEPTA continues its nightly maintenance efforts to reduce delays to its Regional Rail, Norristown High Speed and trolley lines, passengers are advised to listen to radio and television reports for SEPTA updates or delays.

— *PRNewswire*

N.J. Transit Names Master Planner and Developer for 65-Acre Hoboken Property

NEWARK, N.J. — N.J. Transit Board of Directors on Oct. 12 selected LCOR to produce a master plan that will serve as a blueprint for transit-oriented development at its 65-acre Hoboken Terminal and Yard complex.

The selection of LCOR signals N.J. Transit's intention to create a facility that can both serve as an integrated multimodal transit center and a gateway befitting the Hudson waterfront for more than 50,000 commuters and residents who use the complex daily, transit officials say.

"A master plan for this site that fully integrates the needs of the commuters and the community is long overdue," said N.J. Transit Board Chairman and

DOT Commissioner Jack Lettiere. "We look forward to working with Hoboken and Jersey City to design a blueprint that will optimize the potential of this asset while reinforcing local commerce."

LCOR will develop a master plan at its own expense and will serve as master planner and developer for the site. For the master planning process, LCOR has assembled a well-known team that has unique experience in transit-oriented development including projects such as JFK International Arrivals Terminal, Grand Central Terminal and Washington Union Station. The team includes the firm of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP, Williams Jackson Ewing, Inc., DMJM + Harris and Langan Engineering.

"We look forward to working with N.J. Transit and LCOR to achieve a transit-oriented development plan that will complement the character of our community and deliver the mixed-use opportunities that enhance the quality of life for residents," City of Hoboken Mayor David Roberts said.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Increased Ridership Leads BART to Lengthen Trains

SAN FRANCISCO — On Oct. 10, BART began adding more cars onto morning and evening commuter trains.

The combination of gas prices, Bay Bridge construction, gridlock and games at the Oakland Coliseum and SBC Park has spurred ridership beyond what BART analysts had pro-

jected.

In September 2005, ridership was up 3 to 4 percent compared with September 2004. That means an average of about 15,000 more people took BART each weekday this September than last September.

The ridership increase has prompted BART officials to lengthen trains to ensure more room for passengers. Many trains now have one or two additional cars. On average, each train car can comfortably hold around 100 passengers.

During the rush period, trains vary in length from six to ten cars with the longer trains serving the highest demand areas and times.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

'Quiet Car' Service Starts Aboard Hiawatha Trains

CHICAGO — In response to their popularity, Amtrak is designating a single Quiet Car on each of its 14 daily Hiawatha Service trains between Chicago and Milwaukee.

The change is effective Oct. 31, the railroad said.

While riding in the Quiet Cars, passengers are asked to refrain from using cell phones, pagers and loud computer programs or engaging in loud conversation.

Amtrak is placing signs on the Quiet Cars and will put notices on the trains to help inform passengers. Seats in the Quiet Cars do not require a special reservation — they are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

THE CROSS-TIE

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY
RAILFANNING.ORG

Publisher & Editor:
Todd DeFeo

The Cross-Tie is a monthly e-zine dedicated to railroad news, general features and railfanning information.

Questions, comments, concerns, fears, trepidations?

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GRADE CROSSING FATALITIES, TRAIN ACCIDENTS DECLINE IN FIRST HALF OF 2005

WASHINGTON — The safety performance of the nation's railroads improved during the first half of 2005 as the overall number of rail-related accidents and incidents declined by 12 percent, according to preliminary data issued by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

Statistics compiled over the first six months of 2005 show that when compared to the first half of 2004 train accidents declined by 10.1 percent, highway-rail grade crossing incidents are down 9.1 percent and the number of people killed as a result of train-vehicle collisions at grade crossings has dropped by 11.7 percent.

Also, railroad employee injuries fell by 16.3 percent. However, the number of trespassers struck and killed by trains in-

creased by 13 percent during the same six-month comparison period.

"We are moving in the right direction," FRA Administrator Joseph H. Boardman said. "The trend is positive and encouraging, but will require continued vigilance by railroads, motorists, pedestrians and government at every level to maintain this momentum the rest of the year."

Meanwhile, the FRA is aggressively implementing the new National Rail Safety Action Plan to improve rail safety now and in the future, Boardman said. The Action Plan unveiled earlier this year targets the most frequent, highest-risk causes of accidents; increases the use of data to focus the agency's inspection and enforcement resources; and accel-

erates research and development activities that have the potential to mitigate the largest risks.

Many items have already been acted upon and incorporated into FRA's safety program.

The Action Plan includes specific actions to address events caused by human factors and defective track that together comprise 70 percent of all accidents.

The plan also addresses the safe transport of hazardous materials by rail and local emergency responder preparedness; and strengthens partnerships among federal, state and local officials, railroads and rail safety organizations to further improve highway-rail grade crossing safety.

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