

THE CROSS-TIE

NATIONAL EDITION

DECEMBER 2007

VOLUME V • ISSUE III

New York, Amtrak Resolve Empire Corridor High-Speed Rail Project Dispute

NEW YORK

Amtrak and the state of New York have agreed to settle a federal lawsuit over their plan to run high-speed trains between New York City and Albany, the state's capitol.

Under the terms of the settlement, Amtrak will pay New York state \$20 million. In addition, New York and Amtrak will jointly invest \$10 million in infrastructure improvement projects on the so-called Albany to New York City Empire Corridor, which was approved by the New York State Senate High-Speed Rail Task Force.

"This settlement now allows both Amtrak and the State of New York to concentrate on the improvements to rail service that I know our Board and (New York Gov. Eliot) Spitzer desire to achieve in New York," Amtrak President and Chief Executive Officer Alexander K. Kummant said in a news release.

One of the track improvements is planned near the George Washington Bridge and will improve service and enhance safety in this rail corridor. The work also will reduce travel times and should save New York rail passengers 2.6 million passenger-minutes per year.

Currently, Amtrak operates weekday and weekend service on the Empire Corridor, with up to 13 departures per day, using predominantly Amfleet passenger rail equipment. Now, Amtrak and New York State plan to develop line using RTL Turboliner trains from Amtrak.

"A reliable, efficient passenger rail system is critical to tourism and robust economic development across New York State," Spitzer said in a news release. "This agreement puts to rest a long-standing dispute and enables the State and Amtrak to move forward cooperatively to improve passenger rail service and the state's rail infrastructure."

The state filed the lawsuit in August 2004, alleging Amtrak fell short of its promise to develop the high-speed rail line.

— Special to The Cross-Tie

The Intermodal Factor



Todd DeFeo/The Cross-Tie

WASHINGTON

Intermodal traffic on America's railroads is expected to top 12 million containers and trailers this year, the American Association of Railroads reported. That would mark only the second time in history the mark has been reached, according to the AAR.

What's more? "Intermodal tonnage" is expected to increase 73 percent by 2018.

The number of intermodal containers and trailers on America's railroads has increased from 3.1 million in 1980 to nearly 12.3 million, according to AAR statistics.

Intermodal trains will also play a role in shipping this Christmas.

"Whether you're shopping online or at your local department store, the presents you buy take several journeys — from manufacturers to retailers to consumers — before they're placed under the tree. The most popular toys and high-tech electronics wouldn't make it to their lucky recipients without the reliability and safety of intermodal containers via train."

— *Edward R. Hamberger, President and CEO of the Association of American Railroads, said in a news release*

Railfanning Roundup

Rail Service Between Two Koreas Reopens

SEOUL — Regular train service between North and South Korea began Dec. 11, marking the first rail link in more than a half century.

A 12-car freight train carrying raw materials left South Korea and passed through the Demilitarized Zone en route to North Korea. The train was expected to return to South Korea the same day.

The new service follows an October summit between South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and Kim Jong Il, the leader of communist North Korea.

The two leaders agreed to promote peace and prosperity on the Korean peninsula. The agreement included the return of rail service.

In a joint declaration, the two Korean leaders also agreed to push for a peace treaty to replace the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War. The leaders also agreed to cooperate on ending "military hostility" and "ease tensions."

Amtrak Train Speeding at Time of Wreck With Freight

CHICAGO — An Amtrak train that crashed into the rear end of a Norfolk Southern freight train on Nov. 30 was speeding, the NTSB said.

Amtrak's Pere Marquette was traveling 40 mph when it should have been traveling 15 mph. Though the speed limit is usually 79 mph along that stretch of track, the Amtrak should have slowed to 15 mph because of a signal.

"Part of our investigation is to figure out why that signal was not obeyed," *The Associated Press* quoted NTSB Vice Chairman Robert Sumwalt as saying.

The Pere Marquette was traveling from Grand Rapids, Mich., to Chicago when it struck a Norfolk Southern freight train in south Chicago at about 11:30 a.m. local time. The Amtrak train's locomotive derailed, while the rest of the train remained upright and on the rails.

There were 187 passengers and six crew members on board the train. Thirty injuries were reported, including five serious injuries to Amtrak crew members.

— *Wire Reports*

First Freight Train Equipped with Safer Brake Technology Begins Operations

WASHINGTON

The first train fully equipped with electronically controlled pneumatic (ECP) brake technology has started hauling coal in southwestern Pennsylvania under a waiver approved by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA).

Norfolk Southern Railway is the first railroad to operate revenue service trains equipped with ECP brakes under the waiver, Boardman said. BNSF Railway also received waiver approval and is expected to operate trains with the new, safer brake technology before the end of 2007.

"These railroads understand using ECP brake technology can bring significant safety and business benefits, and I encourage other railroads to follow their lead," Administrator Joseph H. Boardman said.

In contrast to conventional air brake systems, which operate sequentially from one rail car to the next, ECP technology applies the brakes uniformly and instantaneously on every rail car in a train, Boardman explained. ECP brakes lead to

better train control, shorter stopping distances and a lower risk of derailments.

The FRA waiver allows NS and BNSF trains equipped with ECP brakes to safely travel up to 3,500 miles—more than double the current maximum distance—with fewer stops for routine brake inspections than currently required by federal regulations, Boardman stated.

Since ECP brake technology provides continual electronic self-diagnostic system checks that inform train crews when maintenance is required, the need to stop for routine brake tests becomes unnecessary, he said. And, in September, FRA issued a proposed rule based on the provisions of the waiver designed to further promote the deployment of ECP brakes on more trains.

An intermodal container train equipped with ECP brakes originating from a West Coast port could operate all the way to Chicago without stopping, except for refueling and crew changes.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

Great Western Railway Benefits from FRA RRIF Grant

The Great Western Railway (GWR) is receiving a \$4 million loan from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) under the Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing (RRIF) Program.

The GWR, a subsidiary of Omnitrax, is a short line carrier that primarily provides freight service for eleven shippers to and from a 700-acre Industrial Park located between Windsor, Colo., and Greeley, Colo.

The loan funding will be used to construct a new track connecting to the Front Range Ethanol Plant, create a new interchange with the Union Pacific Railroad at Greeley, rebuild 2 ½ miles of track allowing the railroad to safely accommodate more and longer unit trains, and rehabilitate track between Fort Collins and the facility.

Sand, lumber, and grain are the three largest commodities transported by the railroad.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*

NS: Federal Board's Decision Shortchanges Michigan Rail Shippers and Passengers

The Surface Transportation Board's denial of regulatory approval for an innovative joint venture involving freight and passenger rail service over 384 route miles in Michigan and Indiana represents a lost opportunity for the region's shippers, passengers and communities, according to Norfolk Southern Railway Co.

Norfolk Southern and Watco Companies had planned jointly to form a new regional railroad, Michigan Central Railway, to preserve and grow freight service in the region. Amtrak passenger lines would have benefited from an extended agreement ensuring continued maintenance and investment levels on the rail lines between Ypsilanti and Kalamazoo, Mich., Norfolk Southern said in a news release.

The transaction was supported by rail freight customers, Amtrak, short line railroads and a number of state and local officials.

— *Special to The Cross-Tie*