

# highlights

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6 WHEEL TRUCK ACTION TAKEN...A recommended action regarding inspection of all 6 wheel trucks for cracking was sent out January 22 to all tank car industry owners and builders. This is the third problem to be uncovered with these cars since last year when it was discovered that the air brakes were not holding. Subsequently, there were problems with derailments at low speeds in yards and cracking in the truck bolsters. In a telegram, FRA Associate Administrator Rogers requested owners and builders to take the following action: 1. If the cars are out of service, no action is required except that before the cars can be put back in service, each car must be detrucked and inspected. Each car detrucked and inspected shall be stencilled in yellow on each side frame in 1" letters the date of inspection; 2. All cars must be detrucked and inspected by March 15, 1973; A. The truck bolsters that show no cracks from this inspection must have the bearing blocks at the center axle (articulated truck side frame joint) modified as shown in ASF recommendations; B. Truck bolsters that show small cracks in the truck center bowl can continue in service provided the blocks at the center axle are modified as shown in ASF recommendations; C. Bolsters that show cracks outside the bowl area must be removed from service for part replacement; 3. All other component parts must be inspected and maintained; 4. Report on all detrucking and trip inspection and repairs made must be filed on the first of each month with FRA. There are some 280 of these tank cars although all are not presently in service.

VOLPE PAYS FAREWELL VISIT...Former Transportation Secretary Volpe paid a farewell visit to FRA on January 19 to thank Administrator Ingram and all employees for their support during his four years in office. He said that he was "very proud" of the excellent work that has been accomplished during his tenure and said he had a special feeling for the FRA as it was the youngest and smallest of the various components of the Department. Volpe is still awaiting Senate confirmation of his appointment as Ambassador to Italy. Claude Brinegar and Egil Krogh took charge of the Department as Acting Secretary and Acting Under Secretary, respectively, on January 22 pending their swearing in by President Nixon.

EMERGENCY ORDER TWO CARS DISCUSSED...Members of the AAR Tank Car Committee and representatives of the Union Tank Car Company met January 18 with OS personnel to discuss proposed repairs on the

272 thirty-thousand gallon pressure tank cars which were ordered out of service last December 20 due to tank shell cracking and possible leakage. Union Tank Car is preparing a formal proposal for submission to both the AAR Committee and FRA which will give them tentative approval to go ahead with the repairs. However, the cars will have to be rigorously tested before a final okay is given for their return to service. The problem is widespread as has been discovered recently in Canada where they have 24 similar cars in limited service. Recently, one of the cars was found to have developed the same type stub sill fracture which caused the U.S. cars to be taken out of service.

TURBOTRAIN CONTRACT EXPIRED...The FRA's lease and maintenance contract with United Aircraft Corporation for the Boston-New York portion of the Northeast Corridor Demonstration Project expired January 22. AMTRAK is expected to acquire the two articulated trainsets and continue to provide the service established under the demonstration program some four years ago as part of its nationwide intercity rail service.

TRAIN VISIBILITY CONFERENCE HELD...The Office of Safety held a conference January 17 to discuss with interested parties formulation of a proposed regulation designed to enhance the visibility of trailing ends of passenger trains. This comes as a result of the commuter train collision in Chicago last October 30 in which investigation disclosed that a significant causal factor in the accident was the inability of the engineer of the following train to see the preceding train soon enough to either prevent the accident or minimize the consequences. Recommended action is to require all passenger trains to be equipped with fluorescent panels, retroreflectors and strobe lights on the rear of the last car.

TRAFFIC RECORD ESTABLISHED...The AAR reports that railroad freight traffic has reached an all-time high for a single year, with only the final week of December 1972 not included in the figures. The AAR statistics show that the cumulative total for the first 51 weeks of 1972 came to an estimated 769 billion ton-miles, topping the previous record of 767.8 billion ton-miles for the full year of 1969. The 51-week total was 5.6 percent higher than the comparable period in 1971. The figures also showed piggyback revenue freight traffic for the first 50 weeks of 1972 up 10.6 percent over the previous year with 1,282,725 cars, and 2,170,655 trailers or containers, up 14.1 percent over 1971.

REPORTS AVAILABLE...A DOT report documenting progress in the project to establish a standard transportation commodity description and code system for use in domestic and international commerce has recently been released. It is entitled "A Standard Transportation Commodity Description and Code System--Phase II Report," and is available from the Office of Facilitation. A second report, "Summary of National Transportation Statistics," has also recently been made available. Inventory, cost and system performance data for all modes of travel are included in the summary. Supplementary data has been added relating transportation to the overall economy, energy consumption and the environment. The report is available in the Office of Systems Analysis and Information.