Freight Trains on Passenger Railroads - A Role-Reversal that Works

October 25, 2011
David Dieck – NJ TRANSIT
Tim Tierney - Conrail
Then

Freight And Passenger

Now

Exclusively Freight

Exclusively Passenger
Then

Now
Today’s Realities

• Relationships governed by prior agreements
• Operating imperatives have diverged
• Institutional knowledge retiring
• Physical barriers exist
  – Weight and clearance restrictions
• Resources are constrained
• Bottom line:
  – Operating freight on passenger lines is not easy
  – On-line freight traffic base is shrinking
Freight on NJ TRANSIT

- **Conrail**: (RVL, North Jersey Coast Line, River Line, ACRL) (8-10 local trains/day)
- **Norfolk Southern**: (Morris & Essex, Main/Bergen/Pascack Valley Line, Raritan Valley Line, Atlantic City Rail Line) (8-10 local trains/day)
- **Shortlines**: (Morristown & Erie, Cape May Seashore Line, Southern Railroad of New Jersey)
- Relationships governed by Operating and/or Trackage Rights Agreements
Conrail and NJ TRANSIT Partnership History

• Thirty-five years working together
  – Orderly transfer of rights and responsibilities
  – Building new services (HBLR, RiverLINE)
  – Enabling service growth (Morrisville Yard)
  – Protecting vital assets (Meeker Avenue)
  – Coordinating operations (TMAC Data Exchange)
  – Planning for the future (Pennsauken Transfer Station, NEC and Lehigh Line improvements, PTC)
Meeker Avenue Solution

- Vital bridge on Lehigh Line used by both freight and passenger
- Bridge strikes compromised integrity
- CR, NJT and NJDOT collaborated to finance and execute a permanent solution
- Emblematic of CR-NJT working relationship
Key Issues on Passenger Railroads Impacting Freight Railroads

- Weight and Clearance Restrictions
- Positive Train Control
- Operating Windows
The 286K problem

• Freight cars bigger and heavier than 35 years ago
• Passenger equipment lighter
• Hardening passenger lines for 286K freight expensive
• No one entity can justify the upfront expense
• However, solution results in overall system benefits
NJT 286 Hot Spots

- River Drawbridge
  - Vital link to NJCL
  - Gateway to Central NJ freight market
- Route to Pemberton
  - Vital link to ACRL
  - Gateway to key South Jersey freight market
Conrail and NJ TRANSIT 286K Partnership

• River Draw Solution
  – Conducting finite element test of bridge in conjunction with NJDOT and Rutgers University
  – Tests will provide data driving engineering remedies
  – Cooperative emphasis raising visibility of issue and need for action

• Route to Pemberton
  – NJ TRANSIT capital project is catalyst for infrastructure review
  – Project agreements enable mutually beneficial investments now and in the future
Positive Train Control

• FRA has established ambitious timetable for implementing PTC
• Interoperability of freight I-ETMS and passenger ASES-II systems a particular challenge
• Conrail and NJT actively collaborating on implementation plan and common-sense solutions to technical challenges
Operating Windows

• Peak-hour passenger service presents imperative restrictions to freight operating windows

• Shared understanding of freight business requirements helps to understand impacts to on-line freight service

• Shared future planning initiatives will enable mutual benefit investments in the public interest
Tomorrow’s Opportunities

• Strengthen business partnership
• Know one another’s businesses
• Capitalize on interdependencies
• Factor in public impacts of initiatives
• Leverage available resources
• Create opportunities for mutual benefit
• Keep working together