

CSL Intermodal to add domestic container trains

CSL Intermodal plans major expansions this year to its truck-competitive, transcontinental Frequent Flyer domestic container service. Last month, CSL introduced service between Southern California and Baltimore/Philadelphia via Chicago. Later this year CSL plans to add New York, Boston, Orlando, Tampa, and Miami to the markets served by Frequent Flyer. CSL offers a single bill of lading with in-house drayage capability at origin and destination.

TT climbs aboard the "pup" trailer bandwagon

For United Parcel Service and some major less-than-truck-load carriers, it appears that smaller (not bigger) is better—with obvious implications for rail intermodal operations. UPS, for example, now has only about 3,000 40- and 45-foot trailers in its fleet. But at the end of last year, it had approximately 25,000 28-foot "pup" trailers and it's been adding these shorter units at a rate of about 4,000 per year. Recognizing what has been happening, Trailer Train has modified more than 5,300 89-foot RTTX cars to handle three pup trailers. It has a four-unit drawbar-connected RTTX car ready for test. And it will be developing a prototype articulated car for testing in a 28-foot-trailer service.

Santa Fe, Conrail offer fast boxcar service

Beverages and food products will be getting a faster ride from California to the Midwest and East Coast consumer markets, thanks to a five-day-a-week expedited boxcar service developed by Santa Fe, Conrail and Modesto & Empire Traction. This "Coast Connection" service is designed to provide consistent and reliable as well as faster service, with up to two days shaved off previous transit times.

BN locomotives getting AVI tags and readers

With the rail industry's most comprehensive testing of Automatic Vehicle Identification systems completed, Burlington Northern is moving ahead. By midyear, it's expected that BN will have its locomotive fleet equipped with AVI tags, along with rear-end monitoring devices and its remaining cabooses and fuel tenders. Tag readers will be installed at 15 to 18 terminal locations. Use of AVI should solve data-integrity problems associated with reporting on locomotives and thus improve power distribution; use of AVI should also help BN in tracking and controlling use of rear-end devices.

Video connection for acoustic detectors?

"Significant progress" is being made in development and refinement of acoustic devices for detection of failing bearings. Working with Servo, Burlington Northern has installed acoustic detectors at six locations, and it's now believed likely that an additional four to six locations will get the devices in order to maximize bearing-data-capture over the system. Servo and BN are also working on tying video into the detection system in order to get a positive identification on car and bearing location when a detector sounds an alarm.