

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Docket No. EP 724

UNITED STATES RAIL SERVICE ISSUES

Decided: October 24, 2014

On October 22, 2014, the Western Coal Traffic League (WCTL) petitioned the Board to require BNSF Railway Company (BNSF) to submit to the Board a coal-specific service recovery plan, and for the Board to review, approve or revise, and enforce the recovery plan. In support of its petition, WCTL states that its members who are served by BNSF continue to experience severe service difficulties.¹ WCTL explains that one of its members has shuttered four electric generating units to preserve coal stockpiles for the winter.² Others have filed emergency notices of coal shortages with the U.S. Department of Energy.³ WCTL argues that service disruptions have prevented its BNSF-served members from rebuilding coal stockpiles during the fall in preparation for the winter season, leaving many utilities with less coal in storage than they had at the end of last year.⁴ WCTL claims that, despite these service difficulties, WCTL “has just been informed that BNSF intends to remove approximately 60 coal train sets from service.”⁵

Given the severity of the concerns raised by WCTL’s petition and the approach of winter weather conditions, the Board will direct BNSF to file a reply to the petition sooner than the Board’s typical timeframe of 20 days. See 49 C.F.R. § 1104.13(a). BNSF shall reply no later than November 3, 2014. Other interested persons are invited to comment on WCTL’s petition no later than November 3, 2014.

This decision will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

It is ordered:

1. BNSF shall file a reply to WCTL’s petition no later than November 3, 2014.

¹ Pet. 1.

² Id.

³ Id. at 1-2.

⁴ Id. at 2-3.

⁵ Id. at 3 (emphasis omitted).

2. Other interested persons may file comments on WCTL's petition no later than November 3, 2014.

3. This decision is effective on its service date.

By the Board, Rachel D. Campbell, Director, Office of Proceedings.