

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Decision

STB Ex Parte No. 290 (Sub-No. 5) (97-1)

QUARTERLY RAIL COST ADJUSTMENT FACTOR

Decided: December 19, 1997

In Railroad Cost Recovery Procedures, 1 I.C.C.2d 207 (1984), the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) outlined the procedures for calculating the all-inclusive index of railroad input prices and the method for computation of the rail cost adjustment factor (RCAF). Under the procedures, the Association of American Railroads (AAR) is required to calculate the index on a quarterly basis and submit it on the fifth day of the last month of each calendar quarter. In Railroad Cost Recovery Procedures, 5 I.C.C.2d 434 (1989), aff'd sub nom. Edison Electric Institute, et al. v. ICC, 969 F.2d 1221 (D.C. Cir. 1992), the ICC adopted procedures that require the adjustment of the quarterly index for a measure of productivity.

The provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10708, which were recently revised by the ICC Termination Act of 1995, Pub. L. No. 104-88, 109 Stat. 803, direct the surface Transportation Board (Board) to continue to publish both an unadjusted RCAF and a productivity-adjusted RCAF¹. In Productivity Adjustment-Implementation, Ex Parte No. 290 (Sub-No. 7) (STB served Oct. 3, 1996) the Board decided to publish a second productivity-adjusted RCAF called the RCAF-5. Consequently, three indices are now filed with the Board: the RCAF (Unadjusted), the RCAF (Adjusted), and the RCAF-5. The RCAF (Adjusted), which reflects national average productivity changes as originally developed and applied by the ICC is currently based on a 5-year moving average. The RCAF-5 reflects national average productivity changes as if a 5-year moving average had been applied consistently from the productivity adjustment's inception in 1989.

The index of railroad input prices, RCAF (Unadjusted), RCAF (Adjusted), and RCAF-5 for the first quarter 1997 are shown in Table A of the Appendix to this decision. Table B shows the third quarter 1996 index and the RCAF calculated on both an actual and a forecasted basis. The difference between the actual calculation and the forecasted calculation is the forecast error adjustment.

Both the RCAF (Adjusted) and the RCAF-5 are currently calculated using a moving 5-year average of productivity change for U.S. class I railroads. An average productivity change rate of 1.059 (5.9% per year) for the period 1990-1994 is currently used for both the RCAF (Adjusted) and the RCAF-5.

We have examined AAR's calculations for compliance with our procedures and find that the first quarter 1997 RCAF (Unadjusted) is 1.116. The RCAF (Adjusted) is 0.774, an increase of 0.8% from the fourth quarter 1996 RCAF (Adjusted) of 0.768. The RCAF-5 is 0.757, an increase of 0.7% from the fourth quarter 1996 RCAF-5 of 0.752.

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

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 605(b), we conclude that our action will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities within the meaning of the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

AUTHORITY: 49 U.S.C. 10708.

It is ordered:

¹ The RCAF provisions of former section 10707a were revised and redesignated as 49 U.S.C. 10708.

1. The Board has approved the first quarter 1997 Rail Cost Adjustment Factor (Unadjusted) of 1.116, RCAF (Adjusted) of 0.774, and RCAF-5 of 0.757.
2. Notice of this decision will be published in the Federal Register.
3. The effective date of this decision is January 1, 1997.

By the Board, Chairman Morgan, Vice Chairman Simmons, and Commissioner Owen.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

TABLE A

**Ex Parte No. 290 (Sub-No. 5) (97-1)
All Inclusive Index of Railroad Input Costs**

LINE NO.	INDEX COMPONENT	1995 WEIGHTS	FOURTH QUARTER 1996 FORECAST	FIRST QUARTER 1997 FORECAST
1	LABOR	38.6%	219.5	228.0
2	FUEL	7.3%	84.3	96.5
3	MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	5.7%	145.0	144.8
4	EQUIPMENT RENTS	10.5%	172.5	173.1
5	DEPRECIATION	11.4%	152.1	151.5
6	INTEREST	3.5%	121.0	121.0
7	OTHER ITEMS ¹	23.0%	154.6	155.6
8	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	100.0%	174.4	178.8
9	LINKED INDEX ²		170.4	174.7
10	PRELIMINARY RAIL COST ADJUSTMENT FACTOR ³ (10/1/92 = 1.0)		1.086	1.113
11	FORECAST ERROR ADJUSTMENT ⁴		+0.006	+0.003
12	RCAF (UNADJUSTED) (LINE 10 + LINE 11)		1.092	1.116
13	RCAF (ADJUSTED) ⁵		0.768	0.774
14	RCAF-5 ⁶		0.752	0.757

¹ "Other Items" is a combination of Purchased Services, Casualties and Insurance, General and Administrative, Other Taxes, Loss and Damage, and Special Charges, price changes for all of which are measured by the Producer Price Index for Industrial Commodities Less Fuel and Related Products and Power.

² Linking is necessitated by a change to the 1995 weights beginning with the fourth quarter 1996. The following formula was used for the current quarter's (fourth quarter 1996) index:

$$\frac{\text{1st. Qtr. 1997 Index (1995 Weights)}}{\text{4th. Qtr. 1996 Index (1995 Weights)}} \times \text{Times 4th. Qtr. 1996 Index (Linked Index)} = \text{Equals Linked Index (1980-95 Weights)}$$

Or

$$\frac{178.8}{174.4} \times 170.4 = 174.7$$

³ The denominator of the RCAF fraction for the first quarter 1996 RCAF was rebased using the October 1, 1992 level of 156.9 in accordance with the requirements of the Staggers Rail Act of 1980. (10/1/92 = 1.00).

⁴ The first quarter 1997 forecast error adjustment was calculated as follows: a. Third quarter 1996 RCAF calculated using forecasted data equals 107.7. Third quarter 1996 RCAF calculated using actual data equals 108.0. c. The difference equals the forecast error (b-a) of +0.003. Since the actual third quarter value is greater than the forecast, the difference will be added to the preliminary RCAF.

⁵ First quarter 1997 RCAF Adjusted (0.774) is calculated by dividing the first quarter 1997 RCAF Unadjusted (1.116) by the first quarter productivity adjustment factor of 1.4426. The first quarter 1997 productivity adjustment factor is calculated by multiplying the fourth quarter 1996 productivity adjustment factor of 1.4221 by the fourth root [1.0144] of the 1990-1994 annual average productivity growth rate of 1.059%.

⁶ First quarter 1997 RCAF-5 (0.757) is calculated by dividing the first quarter 1997 RCAF Unadjusted (1.116) by the first quarter productivity adjustment factor-5 (PAF-5) of 1.4733. The first quarter 1997 productivity adjustment factor is calculated by multiplying the fourth quarter 1996 PAF-5 of 1.4524 by the fourth root [1.0144] of the 1990-1994 annual average productivity growth rate of 1.059%.

TABLE B

Ex Parte No. 290 (Sub-No. 5) (97-1)
Comparison of Third Quarter 1996 Index
Calculated on Both a Forecasted and an Actual Basis

Line No.	INDEX COMPONENT	1994 WEIGHT	THIRD QUARTER 1996 FORECAST	THIRD QUARTER 1996 ACTUAL
1	LABOR	41.0%	216.6	216.6
2	FUEL	7.6%	75.3	79.7
3	MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	6.9%	144.6	144.6
4	EQUIPMENT RENTS	10.9%	172.4	172.9
5	DEPRECIATION	9.3%	153.0	151.8
6	INTEREST	3.5%	125.6	125.6
7	OTHER ITEMS	20.8%	155.2	155.0
8	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	100%	174.2	174.4
9	LINKED INDEX		169.0	169.4
10	RAIL COST ADJUSTMENT FACTOR		107.7	108.0