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MSC

SERVICE DATE – APRIL 1, 2002

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

DECISION

STB Ex Parte No. 587

INFORMATION QUALITY GUIDELINES

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of guidelines and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Surface Transportation Board (Board) is seeking comments on its draft Information Quality Guidelines (I.Q. Guidelines). The I.Q. Guidelines contain the Board's information resource management procedures for reviewing and substantiating the quality of information before it is disseminated to the public, and the procedures by which an affected person may obtain correction of information disseminated by the Board that does not comply with the I.Q. Guidelines. The Board will consider comments in developing its final I.Q. Guidelines.

DATES: Comments are due May 1, 2002.

ADDRESSES: Send comments (an original plus 10 copies) referring to Ex Parte No. 587 to: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Branch, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20423-0001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: John M. Atkisson (202) 565-1710. [TDD for hearing impaired: 1-800-877-8339.]

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Board's draft I.Q. Guidelines are attached as an appendix to this decision and also are posted on the Board's website, www.stb.dot.gov. In addition, copies of the I.Q. Guidelines may be purchased from Da-2-Da Legal Copy Service by calling 202-293-7776 (assistance for the hearing impaired is available through TDD services at 1-800-877-8339) or visiting Suite 405, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006.

Decided: March 27, 2002.

By the Board, John M. Atkisson, Designated Official.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

Appendix

Surface Transportation Board

DRAFT REPORT

SUBJECT: INFORMATION QUALITY GUIDELINES

1. Purpose. The Surface Transportation Board (Board or STB) is committed to ensuring and maximizing the quality, utility, objectivity, and integrity of all information it disseminates to the public. To accomplish this objective, the Board has developed information resource management procedures and guidelines for reviewing and substantiating the quality of information before it is disseminated. In addition, the Board has established a procedure by which an affected person may obtain correction of information disseminated by the agency that does not comply with these guidelines.
2. Authority. Section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2001 (Pub. L. No. 106-554; 114 Stat. 2763) directs each agency subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35) to issue customized Information Quality Guidelines (I.Q. Guidelines) conforming to the general guidelines issued by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on October 1, 2001. The goal of these I.Q. Guidelines is to ensure that information disseminated by the Board will be:
 - a. Useful to the intended users of the information;
 - b. Presented in an accurate, clear, complete, and unbiased manner; and
 - c. Protected from unauthorized access or revision.
3. Designated Official. John M. Atkisson, Executive Counsel.
4. Effective Date. October 1, 2002.
5. Definitions.
 - a. **Information**. Any communication or representation of knowledge such as facts or data, conveyed in any form or medium, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual, whether on paper, film, or electronic media, and whether disseminated via fax, recording, machine-readable data, or website. Information does not include hyperlinks provided to information originated by or in the custody of someone other than the Board. It also does not include opinion, unless that opinion is the Board's official point of view.
 - b. **Dissemination**. Affirmative distribution to the public initiated or sponsored by the Board acting as a publisher, rather than release of information in response to a request from the public. The Board "sponsors" distribution of information if it collects it,

causes another agency to collect it, contracts or enters into a cooperative agreement with a person to collect it, or requires a person to provide information to someone else. It also sponsors information if it causes someone else to obtain, solicit, or require disclosure of information by or for the Board to third parties or the public.

Dissemination does NOT include:

- a. release of information to government employees, agency contractors, or grantees;
- b. intra- or inter-agency use or sharing of government information;
- c. information released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Privacy Act, the Federal Advisory Committee Act, or similar law;
- d. correspondence;
- e. press releases;
- f. archival records;
- g. public filings;
- h. subpoenas; and
- i. decisions in adjudicative processes.

- c. **Quality.** For purposes of these I.Q. Guidelines, the three main aspects of information quality are utility, objectivity, and integrity, as described below.
- d. **Utility.** Usefulness to its intended users of disseminated information, measured by reference to established criteria, such as accessibility or timeliness.
- e. **Objectivity.** Accuracy, completeness, reliability, clarity, and lack of bias in the collection, manipulation, and contextual presentation of information, with appropriate levels of statistical or scientific objectivity for the type and importance of the information disseminated.
 1. Scientific or statistical information should be presented with supporting data and models to allow intended users to assess the objectivity of information sources, without revealing trade secrets or violating confidentiality and privacy.
 2. Disseminated analytical results that will probably have an important effect on development of governmental or private-sector policies, or have important consequences for specific technologies, substances, products, or firms, must be capable of being substantially reproduced. This means that independent re-analysis of original or supporting data using the same methods would generate similar analytical results, within an acceptable range of error or imprecision.
 3. Results already subjected to formal, independent, external peer review before dissemination are considered to be acceptably objective.
- f. **Integrity.** Refers to protection of information from corruption or falsification by unauthorized access or revision.

- g. **Affected Persons.** Persons who may benefit or be harmed by information disseminated by the Board.
6. Correction of Errors in Information Disseminated by the Board. Persons affected by information disseminated by the Board that does not conform with these I.Q. Guidelines or those issued by the OMB may contact:
- John M. Atkisson
Phone: 202-565-1710
Fax: 202-565-9021
E-mail: atkissonj@stb.dot.gov
7. Annual Reporting. The Board will prepare an annual fiscal-year report to OMB providing information, both quantitative and qualitative, where appropriate, on the numbers, nature, and resolution of complaints received by the agency regarding its perceived or confirmed failure to comply with these I.Q. Guidelines. As part of these reports, the Board will describe to OMB its chosen response mechanism. The first report, for fiscal year 2003, will be submitted by January 1, 2004.
8. Quality Standards by Information Type
- a. **STB Organization and Personnel**
(E.g., Mission Statement, Organizational Chart, Meet the Commissioners, STB Key Contacts List, Section of Environmental Analysis page, Office of Publications page, Office of Congressional and Public Services page, Rail Consumer Assistance Program, Vacancy Announcements, Education, “Who’s Who and What Does It Do?”)
- *Utility*
 - Availability: Web posting w/in 20 work days of changes
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 2 clicks of home page
 - Internally Hyperlinked: Preferred
 - Page Layout: 8-1/2 x 11 format, portrait orientation
 - Display Last Update or Document’s Date: Yes
 - Accessibility: Printable directly from web page
 - *Objectivity* Review quarterly for continuing relevance, accuracy
 - *Integrity* Website integrity protected by fire wall
- b. **STB Policy Statements**
(E.g., “Policy Statement on Use of Third-Party Contracting in Preparation of Environmental Documentation”)
- *Utility*
 - Availability: Web posting w/in 10 work days of publication
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 3 clicks of home page
 - Internally Hyperlinked: Links from TOC to headings required

- Page Layout: Mimic 8-1/2 x 11 format
- Display Last Update or Document's Date: Yes
- Clarity of Expression: Highest
- Typographical Accuracy: 100%
- Accessibility: Downloadable in word-processing format; printable directly from web page
- *Objectivity* N/A
- *Integrity* Website integrity protected by fire wall

c. **STB Annual Reports**

- *Utility*
 - Availability: Web posting on publication date
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 3 clicks of home page
 - Internally Hyperlinked: Links from TOC to headings required
 - Page Layout: Mimic 8-1/2 x 11 format
 - Clarity of Expression: Highest
 - Typographical Accuracy: 100%
 - Accessibility: Downloadable in Corel Envoy; printable directly from web page
 - If/When Archived: Last five years on main page; hyperlink to archive for earlier reports
- *Objectivity* Written by expert staff and reviewed for accuracy prior to web posting
- *Integrity* Website integrity protected by fire wall

d. **STB Fee Regulations**

(Description of services and fees selected from 49 CFR Part 1002 - FEES).

- *Utility*
 - Intended Consumer(s): The public
 - Availability: Web posting of update w/in 10 work days of effective date of changes
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 4 screens of home page
 - Page Layout: 8-1/2 x 11 format
 - Typographical Accuracy: 100%
 - Accessibility: Printable directly from web page
 - If/When Archived: No archive; post only current fee regulations
- *Objectivity* Expert staff manually enters amended fees, updated pursuant to formula, into template for posting by webmaster
- *Integrity* Website integrity protected by fire wall

- e. **STB Reports Mandated by Statute or STB Policy**
 (E.g., STB Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Report)
- *Utility*
 - Intended Consumer(s): Department of Justice, other agencies, the public
 - Availability: Web posting on due date of report
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 4 screens of home page
 - Internally Hyperlinked: Not required
 - Page Layout: Mimic 8-1/2 x 11 format
 - Display Last Update or Document's Date: Yes
 - Accessibility: Printable directly from web page
 - Contacts for Add'l Info: Listed in the report
 - If/When Archived: Last five years on main page; hyperlink to archive for earlier reports
 - *Objectivity* Automatic count of FOIA requests by category made by database software, confirmed by hand count; fees gathered from Fees and Billing (FAB) database; data posted by webmaster
 - *Integrity* Website integrity protected by fire wall
- f. **Information/Instructions**
 (E.g., "So You Want to Start a Small Railroad," "Overview: Abandonments & Alternatives to Abandonments," "Guide to the STB's Environmental Rules," "User Guide to the 1999 Surface Transportation Board Carload Waybill Sample," "1996 Surface Transportation Board Public Waybill")
- *Utility*
 - Availability: Web posting w/in 10 work days of changes
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 4 clicks of home page
 - Clarity of Expression: Highest
 - Internally Hyperlinked: Required if TOC is used
 - Page Layout: Mimic 8-1/2 x 11 format
 - Display Last Update or Document's Date: Yes
 - Contacts for Add'l Info: Listed in the text
 - Accessibility: Downloadable in Adobe Acrobat or Corel Envoy, or printable directly from web page
 - *Objectivity* Written by expert staff and reviewed annually for accuracy
 - *Integrity* Website integrity protected by fire wall
- g. **Aids to Understanding**
 (E.g., Glossary, Docket Prefix Chart, BEA Definitions Conversion Table)
- *Utility*

- Availability: Web posting w/in 20 work days of changes
- Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 5 clicks of home page
- Internally Hyperlinked: Preferred where useful but not required
- Page Layout: Mimic 8-1/2 x 11 format
- Display Last Update or Document's Date: Yes
- Accessibility: Printable directly from web page
- *Objectivity*: Written by expert staff and reviewed annually for accuracy
- *Integrity*: Website integrity protected by fire wall

h. **Monitoring Reports**

(Periodic reports required as a condition of merger or acquisition, prepared for STB's use in monitoring railroad's progress. E.g., CN/WC Operational Monitoring Reports, Conrail Weekly Data Reports)

- *Utility*
 - Intended Consumer(s): STB, for monitoring purposes
 - Availability: Web posting w/in 3 work days of receipt
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 4 screens of home page; hyperlinked to/from related web pages
 - Currency Evaluation: When formal oversight ends
 - Contacts for Add'l Info: Hyperlink preferred
 - Accessibility: Downloadable in word-processing format and/or Adobe Acrobat; printable directly from web page
 - If/When Archived: When formal oversight ends
- *Objectivity*: Expert staff reviews for credibility and, if appropriate, requests revision by data originator prior to posting
- *Integrity*: Website integrity protected by fire wall

i. **STB Proceeding-Related Publications**

(E.g., Abstracts of Key Cases)

- *Utility*
 - Availability: Web posting w/in 20 work days of receipt
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 5 screens of home page
 - Internally Hyperlinked: Not required
 - Page Layout: Mimic 8-1/2 x 11 format
 - Accessibility: Printable directly from web page
 - Timeliness Evaluation: Annually
 - If/When Archived: Archive with related materials (e.g., decisions, Environmental Impact Statements) for proceeding

1. **Non-STB Contact Lists**
 (E.g.: List of Third-Party Contractors for Environmental Studies; Useful Federal Agencies and Their Websites, Environmental Contact List; Rails-to-Trails Site Links)
- *Utility*
 - Intended Consumer(s): The public
 - Availability: Web posting w/in 20 work days of learning of changes
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 5 clicks of home page
 - Display Doc’s Date: Yes
 - Accessibility: Downloadable in word-processing or Adobe Acrobat format; printable directly from web page
 - If/When Archived: No archive; post only current information
 - *Objectivity* Annually update lists and confirm hyperlinks to other websites
 - *Integrity* Website integrity protected by fire wall
- m. **Joint Publications with Other Entities**
 (E.g., USDA/STB Grain Logistics Task Force “Grain Transportation Prospects”)
- *Utility*
 - Ease of Location: Hyperlink to other agency’s website from w/in 5 clicks of STB home page
 - Continuing Relevance Evaluation Frequency: Test and re-evaluate hyperlinks annually
 - *Objectivity* N/A: STB neither originator nor custodian
 - *Integrity* Website integrity protected by fire wall
- n. **Public or Party Comment**
 (E.g., public meeting transcripts, comments in response to Draft EIS, topical responses to STB actions or proposed actions)
- *Utility*
 - Intended Consumer(s): STB and the public
 - Availability: Web posting w/in 10 work days of receipt
 - Ease of Location: Web posting w/in 4 clicks of home page; hyperlinked to/from related web pages
 - Display Doc’s Date: Yes
 - Currency Evaluation: After service of STB decision
 - Accessibility: Downloadable in Adobe Acrobat
 - If/When Archived: Last five years on main page; hyperlink to archive for earlier comments
 - *Objectivity* N/A: comments or opinions of third parties
 - *Integrity* Website integrity protected by fire wall