

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

Decision

STB Ex Parte No. 290 (Sub-No. 5) (97-4)

QUARTERLY RAIL COST ADJUSTMENT FACTOR

Decided: 18, 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 computing 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 RCAF.¹ 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 fourth quarter 1997 are shown in Table A of the Appendix to this decision. Table B shows the second quarter 1997 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.

The Board's rules mandate that the weights for each major cost component of the all-inclusive cost index, on which the RCAF is based, be updated annually in order to reflect the changing mix of index components. The procedure also requires the wages and supplement rates used in the labor index be rebenchmarked in the fourth quarter of each year. See Railroad Cost Recovery Procedures, 364 I.C.C. 841 (1981). The weights used by AAR are based on the distribution of railway expenses for the year 1996. Similarly, AAR has used wage and supplement data for the year 1996 to calculate hourly labor rates that reflect the changing mix of employees. We have reviewed the reweighting and rebenchmarking calculations performed by AAR, and we find that they comply with the prescribed method.

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 1.050 (5.0% per year) for the period 1991-1995 is currently used for the RCAF (Adjusted). In accordance with Ex Parte No. 290 (Sub-No. 7), supra, the RCAF-5 will continue to use the 1990-1994 average productivity change rate of 1.059 (5.9%) until January 1, 1998.

We have examined AAR's calculations for compliance with our procedures and find that the fourth quarter 1997 RCAF (Unadjusted) is 1.104, a decrease of 0.7% from the third quarter 1997 RCAF of 1.112. The RCAF (Adjusted) is 0.738, a decrease of 1.9% from the third quarter 1997 RCAF (Adjusted) of 0.752. The RCAF-5 is 0.718, a decrease of 2.2% from the third quarter 1997 RCAF-5 of 0.734.

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

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 Board has approved the fourth quarter 1997 Rail Cost Adjustment Factor (Unadjusted) of 1.104, RCAF (Adjusted) of 0.738, and RCAF-5 of 0.718.
2. Notice of this decision will be published in the Federal Register.
3. The effective date of this decision is October 1, 1997.

By the Board, Chairman Morgan and Vice Chairman Owen.

Vernon A. Williams
Secretary

APPENDIX

TABLE A
Ex Parte No. 290 (Sub-No. 5) (97-4)
All Inclusive Index of Railroad Input Costs

LINE NO.	INDEX COMPONENT	1996 WEIGHTS	THIRD QUARTER 1997 FORECAST	FOURTH QUARTER 1997 FORECAST
1	LABOR	39.6%	231.5	230.0
2	FUEL	8.9%	83.1	80.7
3	MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	5.9%	147.8	148.5
4	EQUIPMENT RENTS	11.1%	173.8	172.4
5	DEPRECIATION	10.0%	145.7	146.2
6	INTEREST	4.1%	121.0	110.2
7	OTHER ITEMS ¹	20.4%	155.6	155.5
8	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	100.0%	178.4	177.0
9	LINKED INDEX ²		174.6	173.2
10	PRELIMINARY RAIL COST ADJUSTMENT FACTOR ³ (10/1/92 = 1.0)		111.3	110.4
11	FORECAST ERROR ADJUSTMENT ⁴		-.001	.000
12	RCAF(UNADJUSTED) (LINE 10 + LINE 11)		1.112	1.104
13	RCAF (ADJUSTED) ⁵		0.752	0.738
14	RCAF-5 ⁶		0.734	0.718

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 1996 weights beginning with the fourth quarter 1997. The following formula was used for the current quarter's index:

$$\frac{\text{4th. Qr. 1997 Index}}{\text{3rd. Qr. 1997 Index}} \times \frac{\text{(1996 Weights)}}{\text{(1996 Weights)}} \text{ Times } \frac{\text{3rd. Qr. 1997 Index}}{\text{(Linked Index)}} \text{ Equals } \frac{\text{Linked Index}}{\text{(1980-96 Weights)}}$$

Or

$$\frac{177.0}{178.4} \times 174.6 = 173.2$$

³ The fourth quarter 1997 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 fourth quarter 1997 forecast error adjustment was calculated as follows: a. Second quarter 1997 RCAF calculated using forecasted data equals 110.7; b. Second quarter 1997 RCAF calculated using actual data equals 110.7; c. The difference equals the forecast error (b-a) of 0.0. Since the actual second quarter value is equal to the forecast, no adjustment will be made to the preliminary RCAF.

⁵ Fourth quarter 1997 RCAF Adjusted (0.738) is calculated by dividing the fourth quarter 1997 RCAF Unadjusted (1.104) by the fourth quarter productivity adjustment factor of 1.4965. The fourth quarter 1997 productivity adjustment factor is calculated by multiplying the third quarter 1997 productivity adjustment factor of 1.4783 by the fourth root (1.0123) of the 1991-1995 annual average productivity growth rate of 1.050%.

⁶ Fourth quarter 1997 RCAF-5 (0.718) is calculated by dividing the fourth quarter 1997 RCAF Unadjusted (1.104) by the fourth quarter productivity adjustment factor-5 (PAF-5) of 1.5378. The fourth quarter 1997 productivity adjustment factor is calculated by multiplying the third quarter 1997 PAF-5 of 1.5160 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) (97-4)
Comparison of Second Quarter 1997 Index
Calculated on Both a Forecasted and an Actual Basis

Line No.	INDEX COMPONENT	1995 WEIGHT	SECOND QUARTER 1997 FORECAST	SECOND QUARTER 1997 ACTUAL
1	LABOR	38.6%	228.7	228.7
2	FUEL	7.3%	78.8	83.0
3	MATERIALS AND SUPPLIES	5.7%	146.2	146.2
4	EQUIPMENT RENTS	10.5%	173.2	173.2
5	DEPRECIATION	11.4%	150.7	145.8
6	INTEREST	3.5%	121.0	121.0
7	OTHER ITEMS	23.0%	155.6	155.9
8	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	100%	177.8	177.6
9	LINKED INDEX		173.7	173.7
10	RAIL COST ADJUSTMENT FACTOR		110.7	110.7