

28943

SERVICE DATE - FEBRUARY 20, 1998

EB

FR-4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Ex Parte No. 575]

Review of Rail Access and Competition Issues

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board.

ACTION: Request for Comments.

SUMMARY: At the request of Congress, the Surface Transportation Board (Board) is commencing a review of access and competition issues in the rail industry. The Board is requesting comments on these matters. One or more oral hearings will also be held.

DATES: An oral hearing will be held beginning on April 2, 1998. Written notices of intent to participate as parties of record and requests to speak at the oral hearing are due by March 3, 1998. Shortly thereafter, we will issue a preliminary service list and will request written corrections to the list by letter or FAX. We will issue a corrected service list if necessary. Written comments are due by March 26, 1998. By March 27, 1998, a scheduling order for the hearing will be served and published on our web page (www.stb.dot.gov). To facilitate our communication with the parties, we encourage everyone to submit FAX and E-mail addresses in their notices of intent to participate.

ADDRESSES: Send an original and 10 copies of notices of intent to participate and comments, referring to "STB Ex Parte No. 575," to: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20423. The comments must be served on the persons identified as "parties of record" on the service list.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT: Joseph H. Dettmar, (202) 565-1600.

[TDD for the hearing impaired: (202) 565-1695.]

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce and the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine have requested that the Board hold hearings and develop a record on access and competition issues in the rail industry, stating in their request that, “[t]he information obtained through a Board inquiry on rail access and competition could be very useful as Congress conducts proper oversight of the rail industry and works to address rail service issues.” See the attached copy of their February 12, 1998 letter to Board Chairman Linda Morgan. Accordingly, we are commencing this examination of rail access and competition and other proposals related to those issues.

We will hold a public hearing beginning at 10:00 A.M. on April 2, 1998, at the Board’s offices at 1925 K Street N.W., Washington, D.C., to provide interested persons an opportunity to testify on these issues. The hearing may be continued on April 3, 1998, if necessary. We encourage parties with similar interests or positions to file joint statements and to designate a single spokesperson to provide oral testimony. The Board will group speakers and allocate times as necessary to expedite the hearing. To meet the responsibility entrusted to us by Congress, we invite comments, data, studies, and proposals for legislative action.¹ Following the initial hearing, and any subsequent hearings we may decide to hold,

¹ As noted in the letter from Senators McCain and Hutchison, the Board has ongoing proceedings specifically addressing the rail service problems in the western United States. Thus, parties are urged to focus their submissions in the proceeding we are initiating here on
(continued...)

we will take further action based upon the record made in the comments and at the hearing(s).

Decided: February 19, 1998

By the Board, Chairman Morgan and Vice Chairman Owen.

Vernon A. Williams

Secretary

THE REFERENCED LETTER IS IN DOWNLOAD FILE 28943APP.WPD.

¹(...continued)
the broader issues of rail access and competition generally, rather than on the specific existing service problems in the West.