

JUN 07 2011

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Public Record

Ms. Cynthia T. Brown
Chief, Section of Administration
Office of Proceedings
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Dear Ms. Brown:

I am writing to urge the Surface Transportation Board to make a finding that there is a profound lack of rail-to-rail competition in the national rail system. The STB should change its policies to enable increased rail-to-rail competition.

Currently, anti-competitive practices within the railroad industry have driven costs up on my monthly electric bill. That's not right and the STB can help fix it. I work for an electric cooperative and at the beginning of every month (about the time the Social Security check comes) I have customers call to check the amount of their electric bill so they know how much they have to spend on groceries. Increasing electric rates, due to increased rail costs, may mean that that customer will not be able to afford a box of mac & cheese or a package of hot dogs and will have to go hungry for a meal or two. This unethical practice of holding the electric companies hostage because there is no competition, affects everyone and every business. If we are to recover in this country from years of recession, let it begin here--now.

Rural-based business and agriculture rely on affordable electricity. Increased rail competition will help maintain affordable electric rates in rural America and will improve economic opportunities for rural communities like mine.

Increased rail competition will also increase the revenues of American agriculture by improving the ability of producers and manufacturers to ship their products affordably, thus improving exports, creating jobs and improving the standard of living in rural communities.

The Surface Transportation Board has an opportunity to make a positive difference and help improve our economy. The comments that the STB has received include numerous examples of the lack of adequate competition in the railroad industry. I hope the STB will find that there is inadequate competition in the railroad industry and will then revise their policies to enhance rail-to-rail competition in order to help preserve affordable electricity and good jobs throughout America.

Thank you.

Mary Duitsman
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