



SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act, Public Law 115-336

December 2023 Report

21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act

Report on Modernizing Agency Websites and Digital Services

As required by sections 3(b)(2) and 3(d) of Public Law 115-336,¹ the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (21st Century IDEA), this report provides information with respect to the websites and digital services operated by the Surface Transportation Board (STB or Board) that have been prioritized for modernization, as well as a targeted completion schedule and associated cost estimates.

The STB's primary website, www.stb.gov, is where most of the STB's digital information and services are made available. When necessary, in support of the Board's environmental review process, a third-party contractor may create a Board-sponsored website for a particular project requiring review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Currently the Board has two such websites, www.uintabasinrailwayeis.com and <https://cp-kcsmergereis.com/>. The contractor-maintained websites are accessible during a project's NEPA review process.

In 2023, the Board continued work on its 2022 contract award, which supports additional website modernization efforts. This contract allows the STB to enhance the user experience and improve website accessibility for all Board stakeholders. Additionally, modernization efforts continued with a focus on shifting to a managed hosting environment, reducing backend resources needed to manage STB websites. Moving the website to a managed hosting environment is scheduled for completion at the end of January 2024. The Board is redesigning its website to increase accessibility and ensure the overall site design integrates with the Board's Case Management System. Site design changes are based on US Web Design System (USWDS) guidelines. The Board is targeting April 2024 for User Acceptance Testing of the new site. These changes will further enhance the user experience for all Board stakeholders.

Additional ongoing modernization efforts include:

- Building a data management framework that follows the guidance of the Federal Data Strategy and creates a foundation for improved data storytelling on the Board's website.
- Expanding the use of managed data services over a secure, highly redundant, and high-capacity fiber optic telecommunications platform to support disaster recovery and contingency planning, as well as increased traffic resulting from modernization efforts and increased telework.
- Ensuring website accessibility to individuals with disabilities, in accordance with section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (section 508).
- Increased mobility by ensuring the site is viewable on any device type and is seamless, easily navigable, and section 508 compliant.

¹ 132 Stat. 5025-5028

- Migrating STB sites hosted on Contractor sites to the STB site by establishing an architecture that allows for the integration of the existing 3rd party sites and establishes a foundation for future sub-sites. Establishing a platform for managing future environmental reviews. The target completion date to integrate third-party managed environmental websites is December 2024. The cost of this action item is included in the 2022 award.
- Website user analysis to understand user needs and/or pain points when using the STB website. The analysis has been used for User-Centered Design that should enhance the ability of external users to easily navigate the system, search for, select, and view content, with appropriate user authentication and security controls.

The Board's website modernization and improvement efforts align with the goals of the 21st Century IDEA. The Board's progress in meeting those goals is outlined below:

Section 3(a)(1)

The Board's website team identified certain accessibility issues and has completed work to remediate the bulk of these issues. In addition, the Board is working to complete further section 508 website-related enhancements in Fiscal Year 2024 as well as in the 2022 website award, which requires the contractor to check the website for 508 compliance and implement necessary changes to keep site compliant going forward.

Section 3(a)(2)

The STB's website is consistent in appearance across pages. The Board has created a design standard to ensure that any future changes to the website continue to be consistent in appearance and meet the guidelines provided in USWDS.

Section 3(a)(3)

The STB's current website does not overlap with its legacy website. The legacy STB website has been taken offline and all functionality from it is available on the current site.

Section 3(a)(4)

The STB's website contains two search features; one searches the website, and one searches STB records. These search functions are more robust than what had been available on the Board's legacy website, and the Board is continuing to refine and improve these search tools. The STB's 2022 website award will continue improvements to advanced search capabilities, including linking to the Board's case management system by creating a unified search approach.

Section 3(a)(5)

Access to the STB's website is provided through an industry standard secure connection. The Board has completed the process of migrating to cloud-based services.

Section 3(a)(6)

The STB's website is designed around user needs, seeking to make Board decisions, filings,

reports, data, and other information accessible and easy to find. Feedback is logged and is used to continuously improve website functionality. The Board relies on Google Analytics to track items such as traffic to pages, browsers used, and paths used to access website content, so that the STB can perform data-driven analysis to guide development decisions.

Section 3(a)(7)

The Board strives to provide users an enhanced digital experience through an improved electronic filing process, payments through Pay.gov, and electronic service of documents.

Section 3(a)(8)

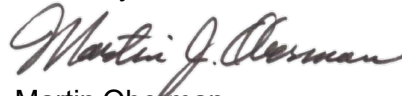
As noted above, the website is accessible on common mobile devices, and the Board intends to continue to improve its mobile compatibility going forward.

Section 4(d)

The Board provides forms related to serving the public in a digital format.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this status report. If you have any questions, please contact me or Rachel Campbell, the Board's Managing Director, at 202-245-0357.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin J. Oberman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "M".

Martin Oberman
Chairman