

**STB VOTING CONFERENCE
January 30, 2003
10:00 a.m., Board Hearing Room**

CHAIRMAN:

The meeting will come to order.

I want to thank you all for coming.

Today, the Surface Transportation Board is holding its first regular public voting conference since 1996. This is a significant occasion for me, as it is the first public event since I became the Chairman of the STB.

While this is my first official event as Chairman of the agency, it has given me pause to reflect on my tenure to date. And even considering the two months I have been Chairman, I can conclusively say that Linda has been the finest Chairman in the history of the STB. Even more importantly, she has greatly eased my transition, and I consider it an honor to serve with her and hope to do so for a long time.

I also want to thank Vice-Chairman Burkes for his cooperation in setting up this conference, and his leadership in this area. I apologize for the need to move this conference by one day, but it was necessary to permit the Vice-Chairman to attend a family funeral back in Mississippi.

I am holding this voting conference because I believe that our agency, like government agencies, should do its business in public if possible. For the first time in many years, the Board has a full complement of Commissioners, which gives us the opportunity to return to this agency tradition. While today is the first, it is my intention that not be our last. We will hold them periodically, when circumstances, schedule and business warrant.

At today's meeting, we will consider 7 matters. Before turning to the business at hand, let me briefly explain the procedure we will follow today. During the meeting, we will consider each case in turn. We will first hear a brief oral summary of the matter from the staff member principally responsible for the matter. Commissioners will then have an opportunity to ask any questions they may have of staff. Once we have exhausted our questions, we will proceed to consider,

comment on and vote on the draft decision.

As a preliminary matter, let me say how much I and the other Commissioners appreciate the efforts of staff to make this voting conference a reality. They have done hard and thoughtful work on the cases that are before us today.

A final reminder, please turn off all cell phones.