

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD CUTS FILING FEES FOR CERTAIN RATE AND UNREASONABLE PRACTICE COMPLAINTS

In an action that will provide greater public access to its processes, the Surface Transportation Board today announced that it is reducing the fee charged shippers to file a railroad rate or unreasonable practice complaint from \$20,000 to \$350, and is maintaining the \$150 fee to file an expedited small rate case.

The Board based its decision on three policy considerations justifying relatively low complaint-filing fees. The filing of a complaint is often the Board's only mechanism for investigating and addressing potential rate violations or other unlawful practices. High fees for the filing of formal complaints may discourage shippers and others from bringing complaints before the Board. The changes to the Board's regulations reducing such fees should improve the agency's management of its docket and resources.

Today's action follows the Board's February 15, 2011 notice of proposed rulemaking in which the agency proposed reducing some fees. At that time, Chairman Daniel R. Elliott III stated that "Charging a small business more than \$20,000 to bring a complaint is not right," and expressed concern that that the some meritorious cases may not have been filed with the agency because of high filing fees.

While Chairman Elliott believes the new fee structure will make it easier for shippers to file formal cases with the Board, he invites them first to avail themselves of the free, informal mediation service offered through the agency's Rail Customer and Public Assistance Program. He added that the agency also offers a successful program of formal mediation.

Today's decision, [Regulations Governing Fees for Services, Docket No. EP 542 \(Sub-No. 18\)](#), can be found on www.stb.dot.gov.