

**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD ASKS SHIPPER GROUPS TO FILE
INFORMATION ON PERFORMANCE BY UP/SP, BNSF**

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Surface Transportation Board (Board) Chairman Linda J. Morgan and Vice Chairman Gus A. Owen announced today that the Board has issued an order requesting shipper groups to file information on the performance of the Union Pacific Railroad Company/Southern Pacific Transportation Company (UP/SP) and the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF).

The Board has taken a variety of steps to mitigate the rail service problems in the western United States (see "Surface Transportation Board News" release No. 97-92, issued October 31, 1997, and No. 97-102, issued December 5, 1997). Among other things, the Board has issued a service order that, unless extended, will expire on March 15, 1998, and it has required UP/SP and, to a lesser extent, BNSF, to file extensive reports demonstrating the levels of service they are providing.

In its decision issued today, the Board noted that those reports are intended to give the Board an overall picture of the extent of the service recovery, and that the more specific reports it has required for coal and agricultural movements have given it substantial insight into the levels of service being provided for those commodities. However, the Board noted that, since its December 3, 1997, public hearing on this matter, it has not had input directly from shipper groups representing a broad spectrum of commodities as to the level of service that their members are currently receiving.

Accordingly, the Board asked shipper groups to provide benchmark information, from the shipper perspective, to supplement the data being submitted by UP/SP and BNSF, that is as current as possible, so that the Board can determine, sufficiently in advance of the March 15th expiration date, what further Board action may be appropriate. In particular, the Board requested reports, by February 13, 1998, covering the four-month period ending February 6, 1998, containing information on how the railroads' performance during the above period compares with their performance during the comparable period for the prior year. Specifically, the Board stated, such information should address requests for service and the extent to which those service requests were met (e.g., the timeliness with which cars were placed for loading and the timeliness with which transportation was completed). To ensure that the data is useful, the Board encouraged parties to aggregate their data to the maximum extent possible. The Board indicated that it is particularly interested in performance

information concerning UP/SP, but stated that comments may also be submitted relative to BNSF service, particularly as it relates to the movements for which BNSF must file weekly reports with the Board.

In a separate order, in response to a letter filed by the Western Coal Traffic League, the Board found that UP/SP's weekly coal reports, which provide sensitive commercial data only to parties willing to sign a confidentiality agreement, are adequate to help the Board, and users of UP/SP's service, to determine the current status of the transportation emergency. The Board stated: **"Our goal here is to resolve the crisis, but requiring the public dissemination of confidential information would be an unnecessary intrusion that would not facilitate resolution of the emergency, that could damage UP/SP commercially, and that would not be in the public interest."**

The Board's decisions were issued today in the cases entitled *Joint Petition For Service Order*, Supplemental Order No. 1 to STB Service Order No. 1518, and *Rail Service in the Western United States*, STB Ex Parte No. 573.

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