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**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD PROPOSES RULES FOR ARBITRATION OF
CERTAIN RAIL DISPUTES AS RECOMMENDED BY RAILROAD SHIPPER
TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

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**SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
PROPOSES RULES FOR ARBITRATION OF CERTAIN RAIL DISPUTES
AS RECOMMENDED BY
RAILROAD SHIPPER TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COUNCIL**

Surface Transportation Board (Board) Chairman Linda J. Morgan announced today that the Board is seeking public comments on proposed rules recommended by the Railroad Shipper Transportation Advisory Council (RSTAC) that would provide means for the binding, voluntary arbitration of certain disputes subject to the Board's statutory jurisdiction. This procedure is intended to reduce formal litigation burdens on parties.

The RSTAC was established by section 726 of the ICC Termination Act of 1995, Pub. L. No. 104-88, 109 Stat. 803, to advise the Board's Chairman, the Secretary of Transportation, and Congressional oversight committees relative to railroad transportation policy issues of particular importance to small shippers and small railroads. On February 20, 1997, the RSTAC recommended that the Board adopt rules providing for informal dispute resolution through arbitration. The Board agrees with this recommendation and proposes to adopt formal rules along the lines of those recommended to it by the RSTAC.

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The proposed rules will provide for the alternative of binding, voluntary arbitration between and among specific parties to resolve specific disputes involving the payment of money or involving rates or practices related to rail transportation or service subject to the Board's jurisdiction. The Board is proposing the rules in the expectation that their adoption will enable parties informally--and with limited Board involvement--to resolve disputes that otherwise might have to be brought before the Board for formal resolution. The Board is proposing nominal filing fees of \$75 for each complaint and answer filed under the proposed arbitration procedure, and a filing fee of \$150 for appeals to the Board of arbitration decisions. The proposed filing fee for appeals would be the same as the fee for labor arbitration appeals, appeals of Board decisions, and petitions to revoke exemptions from regulation granted by the Board.

The Board invites comments on all aspects of the regulations proposed in the proceeding entitled Arbitration of Certain Disputes Subject to the Statutory Jurisdiction of the Surface Transportation Board, STB Ex Parte No. 560, on March 26, 1997.

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