

Surface Transportation Board Adds "Congressional & Public Services" Link to Its Internet Website

Surface Transportation Board (Board) Chairman Linda J. Morgan announced today another enhancement to the Board's Internet website designed to provide a more readily accessible link to the agency's Office of Congressional and Public Services (OCPS). The new button on the Board's home page labeled "Public Info/Media" will link to a page providing information about the OCPS.

The OCPS is the Board office whose mission is uniquely focused on assisting Members of Congress, the general public, and the media relative to the agency's work. More specifically, the office informs and provides guidance to the public concerning the scope of the Board's jurisdiction with respect to the Nation's surface transportation industry, the status of cases pending at the agency, and the procedures for initiating or participating in matters before the agency. In this regard, many of the cases that come before the Board are of regional or local importance, and the persons affected by the agency's decisions in those cases, and the media that cover the progress of those cases, may have never before dealt with the agency on any level. The OCPS is the important point of contact for those individuals or entities. In particular, during fiscal year 2001, the Office, with a staff of five, responded to more than 7,000 public inquiries on a wide range of issues, most of which related to rail matters within the jurisdiction of the Board.

The legal and media affairs staff of the OCPS is able to provide information on an expeditious basis through electronic news alerts and electronically available case decisions, "plain English" explanations of Board decisions, descriptions of agency practices and procedures, and searches of agency archival material from the public records developed in matters before the Board. In addition to providing factual information, the OCPS staff has developed an in-depth knowledge of surface transportation industry issues and cases pending before the Board, and thus is able to provide needed assistance to the public on such matters. The new computer link should facilitate access to this important Board service.

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