

Surface Transportation Board Reports on First Year of Its Rail Consumer Assistance Program

Surface Transportation Board (Board) Chairman Linda J. Morgan announced today that the Board's Rail Consumer Assistance Program, initiated one year ago on November 2, 2000 (see Surface Transportation Board "News" release No. 00-42), continues to be effective in providing a valuable problem-solving service to the rail consumer public. The program was established to enhance the Board's ability to assist rail consumers informally with disputes or problems that they are unable to resolve directly with railroads. During the first year of the Rail Consumer Assistance Program, Board staff expeditiously handled and brought to a successful conclusion 110 rail consumer inquiries and complaints concerning such matters as rates and other charges, car supply and other service issues, claims for damages and service-related problems, employee concerns, and community issues.

The Board's program, which is managed by the agency's Office of Compliance and Enforcement (OCE), includes a toll-free telephone number, **(866) 254-1792**; an e-mail address, RailConsumer@stb.dot.gov; and a **Rail Consumer** button on the Board's home page, <http://www.stb.dot.gov>, through which individual rail customers and other interested parties may provide information and seek help on an informal basis from the Board on rail-related issues. OCE, with its special expertise in railroad operations, has been assisting rail consumers informally for some time with service-related difficulties associated with merger integration and other industry circumstances. This program more formally enhances that effort by providing additional, no-cost communications options by which individual parties may contact Board staff. In addition to the toll-free telephone number, e-mail address and Website contact options, interested parties may request assistance with rail issues by faxing [(202) 565-9011] or writing to:

Rail Consumer Assistance
c/o Office of Compliance and Enforcement
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K St., NW, Suite 780
Washington, DC 20423-0001

The Board continues to believe that private-sector resolution of disputes is best, and it has found that its informal involvement through its Rail Consumer Assistance Program can assist parties in resolving issues privately. This program also has helped to enhance the Board's identification of rail consumer issues and of possible actions to further facilitate problem solving, improve communications among the various segments of the rail sector, and promote further improvement in rail service.

The Board has other avenues for public assistance in addition to the Rail Consumer Assistance Program. Environmental issues involving railroads and stemming from cases pending at the Board continue to be handled by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis, which can be reached at **(202) 565-1552**. General inquiries about the Board's jurisdiction, pending cases, and how to participate in a Board proceeding are handled by the Board's Office of Congressional and Public Services (see Surface Transportation Board "News" release No. 01-49 issued October 16, 2001).

Information about the Rail Consumer Assistance Program and ways to contact Board staff for assistance are shown on the Board's Website, <http://www.stb.dot.gov>. Such information may be accessed by clicking the **Rail Consumer** button on the Board's home page.

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