

MEDIA & PUBLIC ADVISORY: SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD EXPANDS PUBLIC HEARING ON MAJOR RAIL MERGERS & STRUCTURE OF N. AMERICAN RAIL INDUSTRY TO 4 DAYS, FROM MARCH 7-10 ; REQUIRES MEDIA SEATING RESERVATIONS FOR "DIRECT" OBSERVATION OF HEARING

The Surface Transportation Board (Board) today announced that its public hearing[FOOTNOTE 1: Announced in the Board's decision issued January 24, 2000 in the case entitled *Public Views on Major Rail Consolidations*, STB Ex Parte No. 582, and in Surface Transportation Board "News" release No. 00-5, also issued on January 24.] on the subject of major railroad consolidations and the present and future structure of the North American railroad industry has been expanded from two to four days. The hearing will now begin at **10:00 a.m. each day from Tuesday, March 7 through Friday, March 10, 2000**. The hearings will be held **in the Board's Hearing Room, Room 760, on the 7th Floor of its offices in the Mercury Building, 1925 K Street, N.W. (at the corner of 20th and K Streets), in Washington, DC**. The Board expanded the hearing schedule in response to, and to accommodate, the large number of persons and parties who have expressed their interest in the matters at issue. Interested members of the media are advised that requests for reserved seating for each of the days of the Board's **March 7-10, 2000** public hearings must be received, **by fax only, on or before the close of business (COB) on Wednesday, February 23, 2000**.

Media Attendance

Because of the anticipated interest in the hearing, only 15 seats will be reserved in the Hearing Room for members of the media to observe the hearings directly. The Board is requiring that those media members wanting Hearing Room seating must submit their requests, **by fax only**, to the Board by **COB February 23, 2000**, supplying the following information:

- 1. Name of seating requestor.**
- 2. Organization requestor represents.**
- 3. Requestor's phone number.**
- 4. Requestor's fax number.**

This information must be faxed to:

**"PUBLIC VIEWS"--MEDIA
Office of Congressional & Public Services
Surface Transportation Board
Fax number (202) 565-9016**

Hearing Room seating reservations will be limited to only one representative per news medium or news organization. All seating reservations will be accepted in the order in which they are received by fax. The 15 requestors for Hearing Room seating whose reservations are received first will be contacted to confirm receipt and to relay specific instructions for the issuance of media passes **in advance** of the hearings. Members of the media not admitted to the Hearing Room will be allowed to view the hearings via TV monitor in the Brick Room in the same manner as the general public, that is, on a "first-come, first-admitted" basis.

Without exception, media members holding "Hearing Room" passes must be seated by **9:45 a.m.** each morning of the hearings in the section reserved for them. Any seat reserved for a media member that is unoccupied at that time will be given to the media member who is next in order for a seat, according to a list the Board will compile based on its chronological receipt of media seating reservation requests. Hearing Room passes will be checked at the door and are non-transferable to media organizations other than those to which they are originally issued. Hearing room passes for media members may, however, be transferred among different people within the same news organization to which they are originally issued, provided notice of such changes is given to the Board's media officer, Dennis Watson, at telephone number **(202) 565-1596**.

For those media members unable to gain admission to the Hearing Room, a second room, the Brick Room on the 1st Floor of the Mercury Building (accessible via the Board's 20th Street, east-side entrance, between K and L Streets), will be open and linked to the Hearing Room to provide a live, closed-circuit telecast of the entire hearings. **In the interest of fairness, at 9:00 a.m. on each day of the hearing, the Board will issue Brick Room passes to the general public at its 20th Street entrance that will be good only for use that day. This will ensure that those first in line at the 20th Street entrance to see each day's hearing will be the first admitted.**

Video/Audio Feeds.

Skehan Televideo will provide audio and video "feeds" to members of the broadcast media wanting to broadcast the hearings in their entirety or portions thereof. Media members must make such arrangements **in advance** with--and must direct all technical questions to--**Ms. Sylvia Skinner, Skehan Televideo, at telephone number (202) 833-3310, extension 123**. In addition, members of the media and the general public may listen to the hearing via telephone, **for a fee**, from the **National Narrowcast Network, telephone (202) 966-2211 of fax (202) 966-1770**.

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