

## **ASSESSMENT OF THE BOARD'S INTERNAL RATE CASE PROCESSING PROCEDURES RELEASED**

The Surface Transportation Board announced today that a June 2015 report on improving the Board's internal rate case processing procedures is available for viewing on the agency's website.

One of the STB's more complex responsibilities is the evaluation of rate reasonableness for rail shippers in adjudications under the Board's stand-alone cost (SAC) rate reasonableness methodology. The Board handles these cases using interdisciplinary teams composed of staff from at least three STB offices (the Offices of Economics, Proceedings, and General Counsel). These cases involve voluminous evidentiary submissions and complex economic, legal, and policy analyses by both the parties to the case and the Board.

In order to ensure the delivery of high-quality and timely decisions in SAC cases, it is crucial that the STB's rate case teams function efficiently. To improve efficiency, Chairman Elliott convened a study team consisting of members of each of these offices, along with resources provided by an outside contractor. The report released today analyzes the agency's internal procedures at the time of the study and provides a number of recommendations on how to improve the quality of the Board's internal processes. The report provides immediate implementation recommendations (e.g., holding early technical conferences), near-term recommendations to be considered over 3-12 months (e.g., formalizing the prioritization of the many "calls" that need to be made in rate cases), and longer-term recommendations (e.g., formalizing the rate case staff training program).

The agency expects to release SAC processing guidelines in the near term that implement many of the June 2015 report's recommendations. The goal of both the June 2015 report and the forthcoming guidelines is to ensure that the Board, through efficient decision-making processes, continues to produce quality rate decisions in a timely fashion.

"I am pleased that we are able to share this report with our stakeholders," said Chairman Elliott. "Although our rate decisions have been well-reasoned and fully defensible, I am committed to further improving the Board's ability to deliver rate case decisions in an efficient manner. The June 2015 report and the forthcoming processing guidelines are one part of a larger effort to meet the challenge of complex cases and provide value to the Board's stakeholders. While the agency has treated this report as confidential to date, I have decided to release it in the interest of transparency as the Board continues its evaluation of other SAC-related issues, including the recently released InterVISTAS report and the upcoming economic roundtable and public hearing. I will also post the processing guidelines as soon as they are ready to be issued."

To view the rate case processing report, please click [here](#).

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