

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD ANNOUNCES ENHANCED RAIL CONSUMER ASSISTANCE OUTREACH PROGRAM

Surface Transportation Board (Board) Chairman Linda Morgan announced today that the Board has begun a new program to enhance its capability to assist rail consumers informally with disputes or problems that they are unable to resolve satisfactorily with railroads. The Board's new Rail Consumer Assistance Program includes a toll-free telephone number, **(866) 254-1792**; an e-mail address, RailConsumer@stb.dot.gov; and a **Rail Consumer** page on the Board's Website, <http://www.stb.dot.gov>, through which individual rail customers and other interested parties may provide information to the Board on rail-related issues. While affected parties should always attempt first to resolve their issues with the railroads, the Board's program is intended to strengthen the capability of the Board to informally address those issues that cannot be satisfactorily resolved through private-sector discussions.

The Board's Office of Compliance and Enforcement has been assisting rail consumers informally for some time with rail service difficulties associated with merger integration problems and service emergencies. The new program more formally reinforces that initiative 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:

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 will carefully monitor the issues presented through this more expansive and more formalized program to enhance its awareness of rail consumer issues and to assist its identification of possible actions to further facilitate problem solving, improve railroad-customer communications, and promote improvement in rail service. While the Board anticipates that most issues brought to it will involve rail service problems, the Rail Consumer Assistance Program will attempt to address other relevant issues as well. Should issues be presented to the Board that do not fall within its jurisdiction, the Board will facilitate resolution by directing concerned parties to the appropriate forum.

This Rail Consumer Assistance Program is not intended to serve those with case-specific environmental concerns. The Board's Section of Environmental Analysis has instituted separate mechanisms to deal with environmental matters related to transactions subject to the Board's jurisdiction.

Information about the Rail Consumer Assistance Program and ways to contact Board staff for assistance is 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.

###