

Arlington, VA 22230. Telephone: (703) 306-1339.

Purpose of Meeting: To provide advice and recommendations concerning proposals submitted to NSF for financial support.

Agenda: To review and evaluate unsolicited proposals submitted in response to the program announcement (NSF 99-2).

Reason for Closing: The proposals being reviewed include information of a proprietary or confidential nature, including technical information; financial data, such as salaries; and personal information concerning individuals associated with the proposals. These matters are exempt under 5 U.S.C. 552b(c), (4) and (6) of the Government in the Sunshine Act.

Dated: January 24, 2000.

Karen J. York,

Committee Management Officer.

[FR Doc. 00-1994 Filed 1-27-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7555-01-M

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Special Emphasis Panel in Electrical and Communications System; Notice of Meeting

In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92-463; as amended), the National Science Foundation announces the following meeting:

Name: Special Emphasis panel in Electrical and Communications System (1196).

Date and Time: February 7-8, 2000—8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Place: National Science Foundation, Room 365, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22230.

Type of Meeting: Closed.

Contact Persons: Dr. Kishan Baheti, Program Director, Control, Networks, and Computational Intelligence (CNCI), Division of Electrical and Communications Systems, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Room 675, Arlington, VA 22230 Telephone: (703) 306-1339.

Purpose: To provide advice and recommendation concerning proposals submitted to NSF for financial support.

Agenda: To review and evaluate research proposals in the CNCI program as part of the selection process for award.

Reason for Closing: The proposals being reviewed include information of a proprietary or confidential nature, including technical information; financial data, such as salaries; and personal information concerning individuals associated with the proposals. These matters are within exemptions 4 and 6 of 5 U.S.C. 552b. (c)(4) and (6) the Government in the Sunshine Act.

Dated: January 24, 2000.

Karen J. York,

Committee Management Officer.

[FR Doc. 00-1995 Filed 1-27-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 7555-01-M

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Notice of Meeting

In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 9463, as amended), the National Science Foundation announces the following meeting:

Name: Committee of Visitors for the Division of Physics, Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee for Mathematical and Physical Sciences

Date and Time:

Wednesday, February 9, 2000, 8:30 a.m.—6 p.m.

Thursday, February 10, 2000, 8:30 a.m.—5 p.m.

Friday, February 11, 2000, 8:30 a.m.—3 p.m.

Place: Room 1235, NSF, 4201 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA.

Type of Meeting: Part-Open—(see Agenda, below).

Contact Person: Dr. Joseph L. Dehmer, Director, Division of Physics, National Science Foundation, 4201 Wilson Boulevard, Room 1015.37, Arlington, VA 22230

Purpose of Meeting: To carry out Committee of Visitors (COV) review, including program evaluation, GPRA assessments, and access to privileged materials.

Agenda

Closed: February 9, 10, and 11 from 8:30—6:00 each day—To review the merit review processes covering funding decisions made during the immediately preceding three fiscal years of the Division of Physics programs.

Open: February 11 from 10:30—11:30—To assess the results of NSF program investments in the Division of Physics. This shall involve a discussion and review of results focused on NSF and grantee outputs and related outcomes achieved or realized during the preceding three fiscal years. These results may be based on NSF grants or other investments made in earlier years.

Reason for Closing: During the closed session, the COV will be reviewing proposal actions that will include privileged intellectual property and personal information that could harm individuals if they are disclosed. Such deliberations are exempt under 5 U.S.C. 552B9c)(4) and (6) of the Government in the Sunshine Act.

Karen York,

Committee Management Officer.

[FR Doc. 00-1996 Filed 1-27-00; 8:45am]

BILLING CODE 7555-01-M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Ex Parte No. 290 (Sub No. 4)]

Railroad Cost Recovery Procedures-Productivity Adjustment

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board.

ACTION: Proposed adoption of a Railroad Cost Recovery Procedures productivity adjustment.

SUMMARY: The Surface Transportation Board proposes to adopt 1.035 (3.5%) as the measure of average growth in railroad productivity for the 1994-1998 (5-year) period. The current value of 5.7% was developed for the 1993 to 1997 period.

DATES: Comments are due by February 11, 2000.

EFFECTIVE DATE: The proposed productivity adjustment is effective 30 days after the date of service.

ADDRESSES: Send comments (an original and 10 copies) referring to STB Ex Parte No. 290 (Sub-No. 4) to: Office of the Secretary, Case Control Branch, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423-0001. Parties should submit all pleading and attachments on a 3.5-inch diskette in WordPerfect 6.0 or 6.1 compatible format.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: H. Jeff Warren, (202) 565-1533. TDD for the hearing impaired: (202) 565-1695.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Additional information is contained in the Board's decision. To purchase a copy of the full decision write to, call, or pick up in person from: DA•TO•DA OFFICE SOLUTIONS, Suite 210, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423-0001, telephone (202) 289-4357. [Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through TDD services (202) 565-1695.]

This action will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or energy conservation.

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 605(b), we conclude that our action will not have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities within the meaning of the Regulatory Flexibility Act.

Decided: January 21, 2000.

By the Board, Chairman Morgan, Vice Chairman Burkes, and Commissioner Clyburn.

Vernon A. Williams,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 00-1998 Filed 1-27-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Ex Parte No. 582]

Public Views on Major Rail Consolidations

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board.

ACTION: Notice of Public Hearing and Request for Comments.

SUMMARY: The Surface Transportation Board (Board) will hold a public hearing beginning on Wednesday, March 8, 2000, at its offices in Washington, DC, to provide interested persons an opportunity to express their views on the subject of major railroad consolidations and the present and future structure of the North American railroad industry.

DATES: The public hearing will begin on Wednesday, March 8, 2000, and, if necessary, will continue on Thursday, March 9, 2000. Any person wishing to speak at the hearing must file with the Board a written notice of intent to participate, and must indicate therein a requested time allotment, by February 8, 2000. A schedule for the hearing, which will include a list of speakers and their allotted times, will be issued by the Board by February 18, 2000. Each speaker or commenter must file with the Board the text of his/her anticipated written statement, and/or a summary thereof, by February 29, 2000.

ADDRESSES: An original and 10 copies of all notices of intent to participate and all written comments and/or summaries must refer to STB Ex Parte No. 582, and must be sent to: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, Attn: STB Ex Parte No. 582, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition to submitting an original and 10 copies of all paper documents filed with the Board, parties must also submit, on 3.5-inch IBM-compatible floppy diskettes (in, or convertible by and into, WordPerfect 7.0 format), an electronic copy of each such paper document.¹

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Julia M. Farr, (202) 565-1613. [TDD for the hearing impaired: 1-800-877-8339.]

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Surface Transportation Board (Board) has decided, on its own motion, to hold a public hearing beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 8, 2000, at its offices in Washington, DC, to provide a forum for the expression of views by interested persons, including railroads, rail shippers and other users, rail employees, and other elements of the rail sector, on major rail consolidations and the present and future structure of the North American railroad industry.

Issues. This public hearing is prompted in part by the initiation of, but will be conducted separate and apart from, the "BNSF/CN" control

proceeding in STB Finance Docket No. 33842, which was initiated on December 20, 1999, with the filing by Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation and The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (referred to collectively as BNSF) and Canadian National Railway Company, Grand Trunk Western Railroad Incorporated, and Illinois Central Railroad Company (referred to collectively as CN) of a notice indicating their intent to file an application seeking Board authorization under 49 U.S.C. 11323-25 and 49 CFR part 1180 for a transaction (referred to as the BNSF/CN transaction) under which BNSF and CN would be brought under common control.² We are aware that, in the wake of the filing of the BNSF/CN notice of intent, there has been a great deal of speculation that the strategic responses of the remaining North American rail carriers to the proposed BNSF/CN transaction will lead to a new round of major railroad consolidations, ultimately resulting in the formation of two North American transcontinental railroad systems.

We are also aware that this speculation has caused concern given that the structure of the North American railroad industry has already changed dramatically in the past half decade. There remain two major western railroads and two major eastern railroads in the United States. And, although there have been no major changes in the structure of the Canadian rail network following the privatization of CN, the "CN/IC" transaction represents a significant tightening of the bonds between the Canadian and American components of the overall North American rail network. Recognizing the restructuring that has occurred and the speculation about future restructuring, by joint letter dated January 14, 2000, Chairman Bud Shuster and Ranking Democratic Member James L. Oberstar of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure have urged the Board "to promptly explore all options to ensure an early and vigorous debate" on whether the "downstream" effects of the proposed BNSF/CN transaction are in the public interest. Given this letter and the concerns that have been voiced publicly, there appears to be strong

sentiment for a public review at this time of what the evolving structure of the North American railroad industry is and should be.

In scheduling a hearing now, we intend no prejudgment of the yet-to-be-filed BNSF/CN application. Rather, we are providing a forum for the discussion of broader matters that have been raised since the announcement of the proposed BNSF/CN transaction. In this regard, there are several issues upon which we seek specific comments, and any other relevant comments, as always, are welcome.

In particular, we note that a majority of the large railroads have recently stated that now is the time to concentrate on existing opportunities to improve service rather than on further consolidation. And, other parties have expressed concern about more restructuring while the industry is still recovering from service difficulties and other disruptions associated with implementation of the last round of major rail consolidations.³ Accordingly, we especially wish to explore public and, in particular, rail shipper and other user views on the timing of any proposed large railroad consolidation.

In addition, we have made reference earlier in this notice to the concern publicly expressed that the strategic responses engendered by another large railroad consolidation would lead to significant additional consolidation, and possibly other changes in the structure of the rail industry or in the way in which the industry is regulated. The views of all interested persons are invited on these matters, as well as on the question of whether or not these eventualities would be a good thing for large and small railroads, and for their customers and employees, and, more broadly, whether it would be in the public interest.

Views are sought also on fundamental questions related to the effects of railroad consolidations on the financial condition of the railroad industry and the industry's ability to provide responsive service at reasonable prices. In this regard, we seek comments on whether the railroad industry has and will have the necessary infrastructure, capacity and configuration to meet expected demand for freight service now and in the future.

³ In this regard, while we would expect commenters to reference implementation and other issues that have arisen in the wake of mergers that have already been approved, we remind parties that we have other proceedings more specifically focused in oversight of individual mergers and thus would not expect the use of this proceeding to litigate or relitigate issues specifically related to those transactions.

¹ Any party may seek a waiver from the electronic submission requirement.

² See *Canadian National Railway Company, Grand Trunk Western Railroad Incorporated, Illinois Central Railroad Company, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corporation, and The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company "Common Control"*, STB Finance Docket No. 33842, Decision Nos. 1 & 1A (STB served Dec. 28, 1999) (published in the *Federal Register* on January 4, 2000, at 65 FR 318).

The public hearing that will be held beginning on March 8, 2000, will allow all interested persons, including railroads, rail shippers and other users, rail employees, and other elements of the rail sector, to voice their views on rail consolidation in general, and on the present and future structure of the North American railroad industry, and will give us a better sense of the current thinking of those most directly affected by our regulation. The hearing is scheduled for that date both because the letter from Chairman Shuster and Ranking Democratic Member Oberstar has urged prompt action on our part and because the application in the BNSF/CN control proceeding could conceivably be filed as early as March 20, 2000.

It should be emphasized that the comments made at this hearing will not be regarded as "evidence" in the BNSF/CN control proceeding. That application, if and when it is filed, will be judged on its merits, on the basis of the record compiled in STB Finance Docket No. 33842, in accordance with the evidentiary directives already issued by the Board in its decision notifying the public of the future BNSF/CN filing, and subject to any other future rulings of the Board regarding that filing.

Date(s) Of Hearing. The hearing will begin on Wednesday, March 8, 2000, at 10:00 a.m., in the 7th floor hearing room at the Board's headquarters in Washington, DC, and will be conducted as other Board hearings have been conducted in recent years: there will be only short breaks during the hearing; the hearing can be expected to continue into the evening hours; and, if necessary, the hearing will resume on Thursday, March 9, 2000, and continue until every person scheduled to speak has been heard.

Notice Of Intent To Participate. Any person wishing to speak at the hearing must file with the Board a written notice of intent to participate, and must indicate therein a requested time allotment, by February 8, 2000.

Schedule. A schedule for the hearing, which will include a list of speakers and their allotted times, will be issued by the Board by February 18, 2000.

Statement and/or Summary. Each speaker or commenter must file with the Board the text of his/her anticipated written statement, and/or a summary thereof, by February 29, 2000.

Paper Copies; Electronic Copies. Each person intending to speak at the hearing should submit an original and 10 paper copies of his/her notice of intent to participate (these must be submitted by February 8, 2000). Each person intending to speak or to submit written comments must submit his/her written

comments and/or a written summary thereof (these must be submitted by February 29, 2000). Each such person should also submit, in addition to an original and 10 copies of all paper documents filed with the Board, an electronic copy of each such paper document. The electronic copy should be on a 3.5-inch IBM-compatible floppy diskette, and should be in, or convertible by and into, WordPerfect 7.0. Any person may seek a waiver from the electronic submission requirement.

Coordination Encouraged. We encourage interested persons to coordinate the presentation of their views by selecting a single individual to appear at the hearing on behalf of their common interests. Because of the importance of shipper views on the subject matter, however, we encourage individual shippers to appear and express their positions.

Post-Hearing Action. We will take such action, if any, as necessary to respond in an appropriate fashion to the views expressed at the hearing.

Federal Register Publication. Notice of the March 8, 2000 hearing will be published in the **Federal Register**.

Board Releases Available Via The Internet. Decisions and notices of the Board, including this notice, are available on the Board's website at "www.stb.dot.gov."

This action will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

Decided: January 21, 2000.

By the Board, Chairman Morgan, Vice Chairman Burkes, and Commissioner Clyburn.

Vernon A. Williams,
Secretary.

[FR Doc. 00-1999 Filed 1-27-00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 146X)]

Union Pacific Railroad Company— Abandonment and Discontinuance of Trackage Rights Exemption—in Dallas County, TX

Union Pacific Railroad Company (UP) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments and Discontinuances of Service and Trackage Rights* to abandon 2,367 feet of railroad over the Oakland Avenue Spur from station 186+62 at Malcolm X Boulevard to the end of the track at Station 210+29.2 in the city of Dallas, Dallas County, TX. The line

traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 75215.

UP has certified that: (1) No local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) there is no overhead traffic moving over the line; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment and discontinuance shall be protected under *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on February 23, 2000, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,¹ formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),² and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by February 3, 2000. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by February 14, 2000, with: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: James P. Gatlin, General Attorney, Union Pacific Railroad Company, 1416 Dodge Street, Room 830, Omaha, NE 68179.

¹ The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See *Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines*, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

² Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1000. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).