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TITLE 49--TRANSPORTATION

CHAPTER X--SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

PART 1152_ABANDONMENT AND DISCONTINUANCE OF RAIL LINES AND RAIL TRANSPORTATION UNDER 49 U.S.C. 10903--Table of Contents

Subpart C_Procedures Governing Notice, Applications, Financial Assistance, Acquisition for Public Use, and Trail Use

Sec. 1152.27 Financial assistance procedures.

(a) Provision of information. An applicant must provide promptly upon request to a party considering an offer of financial assistance to continue existing rail service, and concurrently to the Board, the following:

(1)(i) In an application or petition for exemption proceeding, an estimate of the annual subsidy and minimum purchase price required to keep the line or a portion of the line in operation;

(ii) In a class exemption proceeding, either an estimate of the annual subsidy or the minimum purchase price, depending upon the type of financial assistance indicated in the potential offeror's formal expression of intent submitted under paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section;

(2) Its most recent reports on the physical condition of the involved line; and

(3) Traffic, revenue, and other data necessary to determine the amount of annual financial assistance that would be required to continue rail transportation over that part of the railroad line. In an exemption proceeding, the data to be provided must at a minimum include the carrier's estimate of the net liquidation value of the line, with supporting data reflecting available real estate appraisals, assessments of the quality and quantity of track materials in a line, and removal cost estimates (including the cost of transporting removed materials to point of sale or point of storage for relay use), and, if an offer of subsidy is contemplated, an estimate of the cost of rehabilitating the line to Federal Railroad Administration class 1 Safety Standards (49 CFR part 213).

(b) Federal Register notice--(1) Abandonment and discontinuance applications. The Federal Register publication, which gives notice of the filing of the application 20 days after the application is filed, will serve as notice to persons intending to offer financial assistance to assure continued rail service under 49 U.S.C. 10904 and these regulations as they relate to abandonment and discontinuance applications. Offers of financial assistance will be due 120 days after the application is filed or 10 days after a decision granting the application is served, whichever occurs sooner.

(2) Exemption proceedings. (i) If a petition for individual exemption from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 10903 is filed with the Board for abandonment or discontinuance of a line of

railroad, the Board will publish notice of the petition in the Federal Register within 20 days of the filing of the petition. The Federal Register publication will serve as notice to persons with a potential interest in providing financial assistance to assure continued rail service on the line under 49 U.S.C. 10904 and these regulations as they relate to exempt abandonments and discontinuances. Offers of financial assistance will be due 120 days after the filing of the petition for exemption or 10 days after service of a Board decision granting the exemption, whichever occurs sooner.

(ii) If a notice of exemption is filed under the class exemption, the Board will publish notice of the exemption in the Federal Register within 20 days of filing. The Federal Register publication will serve as notice to persons with a potential interest in providing financial assistance to assure continued rail service on the line under 49

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U.S.C. 10904 and these regulations as they relate to exempt abandonments and discontinuances. Offers of financial assistance will be due no later than 30 days after the date of the Federal Register publication giving notice of the exemption.

(c) Submission of financial assistance offer--(1) Abandonment and discontinuance applications and petitions for exemption--(i) Service and filing. An offeror must serve its offer of assistance on the carrier owning and operating the line and all parties to the abandonment or discontinuance application or exemption proceeding. The offer must be filed concurrently with the Secretary, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423.

(A) An offer may be filed and served at any time after the filing of the abandonment or discontinuance application or petition for exemption. Once a decision is served granting an application or petition for exemption, however, the Board must be notified that an offer has previously been submitted.

(B) An offer, or notification of a previously filed offer, must be filed and served no later than 10 days after service of the Board decision granting the application or petition for exemption. This filing and service is subject to the requirements of 49 CFR 1152.25 (d)(1), (d)(2), and (d)(4).

(C) If, after a bona fide request, applicant or petitioner has failed to provide a potential offeror promptly with the information required under paragraph (a) of this section and if that information is not contained in the application or petition, the Board will entertain petitions to toll the 10-day period for submitting offers of financial assistance under paragraph (c)(1) of this section. Petitions must be filed with the Board within 5 days after service of the decision granting the application or petition for exemption. Petitions should include copies of the prior written request for information or an accurate outline of the specific information that was orally requested. Replies to these petitions must be filed within 10 days after service of the decision granting the application or petition for exemption. These petitions and replies must be filed on or before their actual due date under 49 CFR 1152.25(d)(4). The Board will issue a decision on petitions within 15 days after service of the decision granting the application or petition for exemption.

(ii) Contents of offer. The offeror shall set forth its offer in detail. The offer must:

(A) Identify the line, or the portion of the line, in question;

(B) Demonstrate that the offeror is financially responsible; that is, that it has or within a reasonable time will have the financial resources to fulfill proposed contractual obligations; governmental entities will be presumed to be financially responsible; and

(C) Explain the disparity between the offeror's purchase price or subsidy if it is less than the carrier's estimate under paragraph (a)(1) of this section, and explain how the offer of subsidy or purchase is calculated.

(2) Class exemption proceedings--(i) Expression of intent to file offer. Persons with a potential interest in providing financial assistance must, no later than 10 days after the Federal Register publication described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section, submit to the carrier and the Board a formal expression of their intent to file an offer of financial assistance, indicating the type of financial assistance they wish to provide (i.e., subsidy or purchase). Such submissions are subject to the filing requirements of Sec. 1152.25(d)(1) through (d)(3). Submission of a formal expression of intent under this subsection will automatically stay the effective date of the notice of exemption under the class exemption for 40 days (normally, this will be 10 days beyond the date stated in the Federal Register publication).

(ii) Service and filing. An offeror must serve its offer of assistance on the carrier that instituted the exempt filing as well as all other parties to the proceeding. The offer must be filed concurrently with the Secretary, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423.

(A) An offer may be filed and served at any time after the filing of the notice of exemption. Once a notice of exemption is published in the Federal Register, however, the Board must be notified that an offer has previously been submitted.

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(B) An offer, or notification of a previously filed offer, must be filed and served no later than 30 days after the Federal Register publication described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section. This filing and service is subject to the requirements of 49 CFR 1152.25(d)(1), (d)(2), and (d)(4).

(C) If, after a bona fide request, applicant has failed to provide a potential offeror promptly with the information required under paragraph (a) of this section and if that information is not contained in the notice of exemption, the Board will entertain petitions to toll the 30-day period for submitting offers of financial assistance under paragraph (c)(2) of this section. Petitions must be filed with the Board within 25 days after publication in the Federal Register (described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section). Petitions should include copies of the prior written request for information or an accurate outline of the specific information that was orally requested. Replies to these petitions must be filed within 30 days after the publication. These petitions and replies must be filed on or before their actual due date under 49 CFR 1152.25(d)(4). The Board will issue a decision on petitions to toll the offer period within 35 days after publication.

(D) Upon receipt of a formal expression of intent to file an offer under paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section, the rail carrier applicant may advise the Board and the potential offeror that additional time is needed to develop the information required under paragraph (a) of this section. Applicant shall expressly indicate the amount of time it considers necessary (not to exceed 60 days) to develop and submit the required information to the potential offeror. For the duration of the time period so indicated by the applicant, the 30-day period for submitting offers of financial assistance under paragraph (c)(2) of this section shall be tolled without formal Board action.

(iii) Contents of offer. The offeror shall set forth its offer in detail. The offer must meet the requirements of paragraph (c)(1)(ii) of this section.

(d) Access to documents. Upon receipt by the carrier of a written comment under Sec. 1152.25 or a formal expression of intent under paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section indicating an intent to offer financial assistance, or upon receipt by the carrier of an offer of financial assistance, whichever occurs earlier, the carrier must make available to that party or offeror the records, accounts, appraisals, working papers, and other documents used in preparing Exhibit 1 (Sec. 1152.36) or, if an exemption proceeding, those documents that would have been used in preparing Exhibit 1 had an abandonment or discontinuance application been filed, or other records, reports, and data in the possession of the carrier seeking the exemption that provide comparable data. These documents shall be made available during regular business hours at a time and place mutually agreeable to the parties.

(e) Review of offers--(1) Abandonment and discontinuance applications. The Board will review each offer submitted to determine if a financially responsible person has offered assistance. If that criterion is met, the Board will issue a decision postponing the effective date of the authorization for abandonment or discontinuance. This decision will be issued within 15 days of the service of the decision granting the application (or within 5 days after the offer is filed if the time for filing has been tolled under paragraph (c)(1)(i)(C) of this section, or within 5 days after expiration of the 120 day (4 month) period described in 49 U.S.C. 10904, if that occurs first). Under the delegation of authority at Sec. 1011.8, the Director of the Office of Proceedings will make the initial determination whether offers of financial assistance satisfy the standards of 49 U.S.C. 10904(d) for purposes of instituting negotiations. Appeals of initial decisions determining whether offers of financial assistance satisfy the standards of 49 U.S.C. 10904(d) for purposes of instituting negotiations will be acted upon by the entire Board pursuant to 49 CFR 1011.2(a)(7).

(2) Exemption proceedings. The Board will review each offer submitted to determine if a financially responsible person has offered assistance. If that criterion is met, the Board will postpone the effective date either of the decision granting a petition for individual exemption or the notice of exemption under the class exemption and

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partially revoke the exemption or (in the case of a class exemption) the notice of exemption to the extent it applies to 49 U.S.C. 10904. The decision to postpone and partially revoke will be issued within 15 days of the service date of a decision granting a petition for exemption, or within 35 days of the Federal Register publication described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section (or within 5 days after the offer is filed if the time for filing has been tolled under paragraph (c)(1)(i)(C) or (c)(2)(ii) (C) or (D) of this section). Under the delegation of authority at Sec. 1011.8, the Director of the Office of Proceedings will make the initial determination whether offers of financial assistance satisfy the standards of 49 U.S.C. 10904(d) for purposes of partial revocation and institution of negotiations. Appeals of initial decisions determining whether offers of financial assistance satisfy the standards of 49 U.S.C. 10904(d) for purposes of partial revocation and institution of negotiations will be acted upon by the entire Board pursuant to 49 CFR 1011.2(a)(7).

(f) Agreement on financial assistance. (1) If the carrier and a person offering financial assistance enter into a subsidy agreement designed to provide for continued rail service, the Board will postpone the effective date of the abandonment or discontinuance. If a decision granting a petition for individual exemption, or a notice of exemption, has been issued, the Board will postpone the effective date of the decision or notice of exemption. The postponement will be for as long as

the subsidy agreement is in effect.

(2) If the carrier and a person offering to purchase a line enter into a purchase agreement which will result in continued rail service, the Board will approve the transaction and dismiss the application for abandonment or discontinuance, or the petition for exemption or notice of exemption. Board approval is not required under 49 U.S.C. 10901, 10902, or 11323 for the parties to consummate the transaction or for the purchaser to institute service and operate as a railroad subject to 49 U.S.C. 10501(a).

(g) Failure to reach agreement on financial assistance. (1) If the carrier and a financially responsible person fail to agree on the amount or terms of subsidy or purchase, either party may request the Board to establish the conditions and amount of compensation. This request must be filed with the Board within 30 days after the offer is made and served concurrently by overnight mail on all parties to the proceeding. The request must be accompanied by the appropriate fee, codified at 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(26). Replies will be due 5 days later.

(2) If no agreement is reached within 30 days after the offer of purchase or subsidy is made, and no request is made to the Board to set the conditions and amount of compensation under paragraph (g)(1) of this section, the Board will serve a decision vacating the prior decision, which postponed the effective date of the decision granting the application, the decision granting the exemption, or the notice of exemption and, which, if applicable, partially revoked either the decision granting the exemption or (in the case of a class exemption) the notice of exemption. The Board will issue the decision to vacate within 10 days of the due date for requesting the Board to set the conditions and amount of compensation, and the Board will make the decision to vacate effective on its date of service.

(h) Request to establish conditions and compensation for financial assistance. (1) If the Board is requested to establish conditions and compensation for financial assistance under paragraph (g)(1) of this section, the Board will issue a decision within 30 days after the request is due.

(2) If the applicant receives multiple offers of financial assistance, requests to establish conditions and compensation will not be permitted before the applicant selects the offeror with whom it wishes to transact business. (See paragraph (1)(1) of this section.)

(3) A party requesting the Board to establish conditions and compensation for financial assistance must, within the time period set forth in paragraph (h)(4) of this section, provide its case in chief, including reasons why its estimates are correct and the other negotiating party's estimates are incorrect, points of agreement and points of disagreement between the negotiating

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parties, and evidence substantiating these allegations. The offeror has the burden of proof as to all issues in dispute.

(4) The offeror must submit all evidence and information supporting the terms it seeks within 30 days after the offer is made. The carrier's reply to this evidence and support for the terms it seeks are due within 35 days after the offer is made. No rebuttal evidence will be permitted and evidence and information submitted after these dates will be rejected.

(5) If requested, the Board will determine the amount and terms of subsidy based on the avoidable cost of providing continued rail transportation, plus a reasonable return on the value of the line. Under 49 U.S.C. 10904(f)(4)(B), no subsidy arrangement approved under section 10904 shall remain in effect for more than one year unless mutually agreed by the parties.

(6) If requested, the Board will determine the price and other terms of sale. The Board will not set a price below the fair market value of the line (including, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parties, all facilities on the line or portion necessary to provide effective transportation services). Fair market value equals constitutional minimum value which is the greater of the net liquidation value of the line or the going concern value of the line. The constitutional minimum value is computed without regard to labor protection costs.

(7) Within 10 days of the service date of the Board's decision, the offeror must accept or reject the Board's terms and conditions with a written notification to the Board and all parties to the proceeding. If the offeror accepts the terms and conditions set by the Board, the Board's decision is binding on both parties. If the offeror withdraws its offer or does not accept the terms and conditions set by the Board with a timely written notification, the Board will serve, within 20 days after the service date of the Board decision setting the terms and conditions, a decision vacating the prior decision, which postponed the effective date of either the decision granting the application or exemption or the notice of exemption, and which, if applicable, partially revoked the exemption or (in the case of a class exemption) the notice of exemption (unless other offers are being considered under paragraph (1) of this section). The decision to vacate will be effective on its date of service.

(i) Substitution of purchasers and disposition after sale. (1) Prior to the consummation of a purchase under this section, an offeror may substitute its corporate affiliate as the purchaser under an agreement, provided the Board has determined either:

(i) The original offeror has guaranteed the financial responsibility of its affiliate; or

(ii) The affiliate has demonstrated financial responsibility in its own right.

(2) Except as provided in paragraph (i)(3) of this section, a purchaser under this section may not:

(i) Transfer the line or discontinue service over the line prior to the end of the second year after consummation of the original sale under these provisions; or

(ii) Transfer the line, except to the carrier from whom the line was purchased, prior to the end of the fifth year after consummation.

(3) Paragraph (i)(2) of this section does not preclude a purchaser under this section from transferring the line to a corporate affiliate following the consummation of the original sale. Prior Board approval of the affiliate's acquisition and operation, however, is required under 49 U.S.C. 10901, 10902, or 11323. A corporate affiliate acquiring a line under this section is prohibited from discontinuing service over the line or transferring the line to a party that is not a corporate affiliate during the time periods prescribed in paragraph (i)(2) of this section.

(j) Discontinuance of subsidy. A subsidizer may discontinue a subsidy under this section by giving 60 days notice of the discontinuance to the applicant and all other parties to the proceeding. Unless another financially responsible party enters into a subsidy agreement as beneficial to the carrier as the discontinued subsidy agreement in a situation where the 1-year time limit of 49 U.S.C. 10904(f)(4)(B) has not yet run, the carrier may by filing a request with the Board and serving the

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request on all parties to the abandonment or exemption proceeding obtain a decision vacating the decision postponing the effective date of either the decision granting the application, or petition for individual

exemption, or the notice of exemption. The Board will issue a decision to vacate within 10 days after the filing and service of the request. This decision to vacate will be effective on its service date.

(k) Default on agreement. If any party defaults on its obligations under a financial assistance agreement, any other party to the agreement may promptly inform the Board of that default. Upon notification, the Board will take appropriate action.

(l) Multiple offers of financial assistance. (1) If an applicant receives more than one offer to purchase or subsidize the line from offerors found to be financially responsible, the applicant must select the offeror from those with whom it wishes to transact business. In abandonment and discontinuance application and petition for exemption proceedings within 25 days after service of the decision granting the application or petition for exemption, and in class exemption proceedings within 45 days after the Federal Register publication described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section, the railroad must:

(i) File a written notification of its selection with the Board; and
(ii) Serve a copy of the notification on all parties to the proceeding.

(2)(i) Abandonment and discontinuance applications and petitions for exemption. If the applicant has received multiple offers of financial assistance from persons found to be financially responsible and has selected the offeror with whom it wishes to transact business, the negotiating parties shall complete the sale or subsidy agreement or request the Board to establish the conditions and amount of compensation within 40 days after the service date of the decision granting the application or petition for exemption. A request to the Board to set terms and conditions must be served concurrently on all parties to the proceeding. If no agreement on subsidy or sale is reached within the 40-day period and the Board has not been requested to establish the conditions and amount of compensation, any other financially responsible offeror may request the Board to establish the conditions and amount of compensation. This request must be filed at the Board within 50 days of the service date of the decision granting the application or petition for exemption and served concurrently on all parties to the proceeding. If no other request is filed, the Board will issue a decision authorizing abandonment or discontinuance within 60 days of the service date of the decision granting the application or petition for exemption. This decision will be effective on the date of service.

(ii) Class exemption proceedings. If the carrier seeking the exemption has received multiple offers of financial assistance from persons found to be financially responsible and has selected the offeror with whom it wishes to transact business, the negotiating parties shall complete the sale or subsidy agreement or request the Board to establish the conditions and amount of compensation within 60 days after the Federal Register publication described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section. A request to the Board to set terms and conditions must be served concurrently on all parties to the proceeding. If no agreement on subsidy or sale is reached within the 60-day period and the Board has not been requested to establish the conditions and amount of compensation, any other financially responsible offeror may request the Board to establish the conditions and amount of compensation. This request must be filed at the Board within 70 days of the Federal Register publication described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section and served concurrently on all parties to the proceeding. If no other request is filed, the Board will issue a decision vacating the decision postponing the effective date of the notice of exemption within 80 days of the Federal Register publication described in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section. The decision to vacate will be effective on the date of service.

(3) If the Board has established the conditions and amount of

compensation, and the original offer is withdrawn under paragraph (h)(7) of this section, any other offeror found to be

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financially responsible may accept the Board's decision within 20 days after the service date of the Board's decision setting terms and conditions. If the decision is accepted by another such offeror, the Board will require the applicant to accept the terms incorporated in the Board's decision.

(m) Additional time for filing. Notwithstanding the deadlines previously set forth in part 1152 for filing an offer of financial assistance, parties that can show that they would be materially prejudiced by having less than the full 4 months for filing an offer of financial assistance provided in 49 U.S.C. 10904(c) for application proceedings may seek relief under 49 CFR part 1117.

(n) Special provisions for summary discontinuance and abandonment of lines not part of the Final System Plan. (1) Board authorization is not needed for the cessation of service on a line of railroad formerly in reorganization that was not included in the Final System Plan (Plan) under the Regional Rail Reorganization Act of 1973, 45 U.S.C. 701 et seq., as amended by the Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act of 1976, if the line has been continuously subsidized since the inception of the Plan. To provide an opportunity for rail service continuation through offers of financial assistance, however, the owner of the line must give not less than 60 days' notice of a discontinuance, and beginning 120 days after discontinuance, not less than 30 days' notice of abandonment. Designated operators need only comply with the notice requirements of Sec. 1150.11 of this title. In instances of discontinuance by a designated operator, the line owner is not obligated to operate the line. Notice is to be sent by the line owner to the Board, the governor and transportation agencies and the government of each political subdivision of each state in which such rail properties are located and to each shipper who has used the rail service during the previous 12 months. The Board will generally apply the OFA procedures in this section (49 CFR 1152.27) for class exemptions to summary abandonment and discontinuance notices (except that the Board will not postpone the effective date of a summary discontinuance). For example, notice of summary abandonment or discontinuance will be published by the Board in the Federal Register within 20 days of filing. Paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section. Expressions of intent to file an offer must be filed no later than 10 days after the Federal Register publication. Paragraph (c)(2)(i) of this section. An offer must be filed within 30 days of the Federal Register publication. Paragraphs (b)(2)(ii) and (c)(2)(ii)(B) of this section. The Board will review offers to determine if a financially responsible person has offered assistance. If this criterion is met, the Board will postpone the effective date of the summary abandonment (but not the discontinuance) within 35 days of the Federal Register publication. Paragraph (e)(2) of this section. If the carrier and financially responsible person fail to agree on the amount or terms of subsidy or purchase, either party may request the Board to establish the conditions and amount of the compensation. This request must be filed within 30 days after the offer of purchase or subsidy is made, and the Board will issue a decision within 30 days after the request is due. Paragraphs (g)(1) and (h)(1) of this section.

(2) Where a designated operator is being used, it shall be paid a reasonable management fee. If the parties cannot agree on this fee, it shall be four and one-half percent of the total annual revenues attributable to the branch.

