

By the Board, Board Members Fuchs, Hedlund, and Schultz.

Zantori Dickerson,
Clearance Clerk.

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SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

[Docket No. EP 526 (Sub-No. 24)]

Notice of Railroad-Shipper Transportation Advisory Council Vacancies

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board (Board).

ACTION: Notice of vacancies on the Railroad-Shipper Transportation Advisory Council (RSTAC) and solicitation of nominations.

SUMMARY: The Board hereby gives notice of vacancies on RSTAC for two large shipper representatives and one small shipper representative. The Board seeks nominations for candidates to fill these vacancies.

DATES: Nominations are due on January 12, 2026.

ADDRESSES: Nominations should be submitted via e-filing on the Board's website at www.stb.gov or in writing addressed to: Surface Transportation Board, 395 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20423-0001. Submissions will be posted to the Board's website under Docket No. EP 526 (Sub-No. 24).

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Stephanie Lyons at (202) 997-7813. If you require an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please call (202) 245-0245.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Board exercises broad authority over transportation by rail carriers, including regulation of railroad rates, practices, and service issues, (49 U.S.C. 10701-47, 11101-24), the construction, acquisition, operation, and abandonment of rail lines (49 U.S.C. 10901-07), as well as railroad line sales, consolidations, mergers, and common control arrangements, (49 U.S.C. 10902, 11323-27).

Pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 1325, RSTAC was established to advise the Board's Chairman; the Secretary of Transportation; the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate; and the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives with respect to rail transportation policy issues RSTAC considers significant. RSTAC focuses on issues of importance to shippers and railroads. The ICC Termination Act of 1995 instructs RSTAC to endeavor to

develop private sector mechanisms to prevent, or identify and address, obstacles to the most effective and efficient transportation system practicable. The members of RSTAC also prepare an annual report concerning RSTAC's activities. RSTAC is not subject to the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

RSTAC's 15 appointed members include representatives of small and large shippers, and small and large railroads. These members are appointed by the Chairman of the Board. In addition, members of the Board and the Secretary of Transportation serve as ex officio members. Of the 15 appointed members, nine are voting members and are appointed from senior executive officers of organizations engaged in the railroad and rail shipping industries. At least four of the voting members must be representatives of small shippers as determined by the Chairman of the Board, and at least four of the voting members must be representatives of Class II or III railroads. The remaining voting member has traditionally been an at-large representative. The other six members—three representing Class I railroads and three representing large shipper organizations—serve in a nonvoting, advisory capacity, but may participate in RSTAC deliberations.

Meetings of RSTAC are required by statute to be held at least semi-annually. RSTAC typically holds meetings quarterly at the Board's headquarters in Washington, DC, although some meetings are held virtually or in other locations.

The members of RSTAC receive no compensation for their services and are required to provide for the expenses incidental to their service, including travel expenses. Currently, RSTAC members have elected to submit annual dues to pay for certain RSTAC expenses.

RSTAC members must be citizens of the United States and represent as broadly as practicable the various segments of the railroad and rail shipper industries. They may not be full-time employees of the United States Government. According to revised guidance issued by the Office of Management and Budget, it is permissible for federally registered lobbyists to serve on advisory committees, such as RSTAC, as long as they do so in a representative capacity, rather than an individual capacity. See *Revised Guidance on Appointment of Lobbyists to Fed. Advisory Comms., Bds., & Comm'ns*, 79 FR 47,482 (Aug. 13, 2014). Members of RSTAC are appointed to serve in a representative capacity.

Each RSTAC member is appointed for a term of three years. No member will be eligible to serve in excess of two consecutive terms. However, a member may serve after the expiration of his or her term until a successor has taken office.

Due to the expiration of the terms of two large shipper representatives and one small shipper representative, the Board is seeking to fill three RSTAC positions. Nominations for candidates to fill a vacancy should be submitted in letter form, identifying the name of the candidate and the vacancy for which the candidate is being nominated, providing a summary of why the candidate is qualified to serve on RSTAC, and containing representations that the candidate is willing to serve as an RSTAC member effective immediately upon appointment. Candidates may nominate themselves. RSTAC candidate nominations should be filed with the Board by January 12, 2026. Members selected to serve on RSTAC are chosen at the discretion of the Board's Chairman.

Please note that submissions will be posted on the Board's website under Docket No. EP 526 (Sub-No. 24) and can also be obtained by contacting the Office of Public Assistance, Governmental Affairs, and Compliance at RCPA@stb.gov or (202) 245-0238.

(Authority: 49 U.S.C. 1325.)

Decided: December 10, 2025.

By the Board, Anika S. Cooper, Chief Counsel, Office of Chief Counsel.

Jeffrey Herzig,
Clearance Clerk.

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SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

[Docket No. AB 55 (Sub-No. 822X)]

CSX Transportation, Inc.— Discontinuance of Service Exemption—in Robeson and Bladen Counties, N.C.

CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT), has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR part 1152 subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments and Discontinuances of Service* to discontinue service over an approximately 21.72-mile rail line on its Southeast Division, Wilmington Subdivision from milepost SEA 297.61 to milepost SEA 311.19 and milepost SEB 311.19 to milepost SEB 319.33 in Robeson and Bladen Counties, N.C. (the

Line).¹ The Line traverses U.S. Postal Service Zip Codes 28384, 28306, and 28358.

CSXT has certified that: (1) no local traffic has moved over the Line for at least two years; (2) any overhead traffic can be and has been rerouted over other lines; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the Line (or 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 or any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of a complainant within the two-year period; and (4) the requirements at 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 discontinuance of service shall be protected under *Oregon Short Line Railroad—Abandonment Portion Goshen Branch Between Firth & Ammon, in Bingham & Bonneville Counties, Idaho*, 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)² to subsidize continued rail service has been received, this exemption will be effective on January 12, 2026, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues and formal expressions of intent to file an OFA to subsidize continued rail service under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2)³ must be filed by December 22, 2025.⁴ Petitions for reconsideration must be filed by January 2, 2026.

All pleadings, referring to Docket No. AB 55 (Sub-No. 822X), must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board either via e-filing on the Board's website or in writing addressed to 395 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20423-0001. A

¹ On December 5, 2025, CSXT filed errata to its verified notice of exemption.

² Persons interested in submitting an OFA to subsidize continued rail service must first file a formal expression of intent to file an offer, indicating the intent to file an OFA for subsidy and demonstrating that they are preliminarily financially responsible. See 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2)(i).

³ The filing fee for OFAs can be found at 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

⁴ Because this is a discontinuance proceeding and not an abandonment, interim trail use/railbanking and public use conditions are not appropriate. Because there will be an environmental review during abandonment, this discontinuance does not require environmental review.

copy of each pleading filed with the Board must be sent to CSXT's representative, Louis E. Gitomer, Law Offices of Louis E. Gitomer, LLC, 600 Baltimore Avenue, Suite 301, Towson, MD 21204.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio.

Board decisions and notices are available at www.stb.gov.

Decided: December 9, 2025.

By the Board, Anika S. Cooper, Chief Counsel, Office of Chief Counsel.

Regena Smith-Bernard,
Clearance Clerk.

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OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

Notice of Action: Nicaragua's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Labor Rights, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Rule of Law

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative.

ACTION: Notice of action.

SUMMARY: The United States Trade Representative (U.S. Trade Representative) has determined that appropriate action in this investigation includes the imposition of a tariff that is phased-in over two years on all imported Nicaraguan goods not originating under the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR).

DATES: Tariff increases in 2026, 2027, and 2028 are applicable with respect to products that are entered for consumption, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after January 1 of the corresponding year.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Philip Butler, Chair of the Section 301 Committee, Leigh Bacon, Chief Counsel for Negotiations, Legislation, and Administrative Law, or Nathaniel Halvorson, Deputy Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Monitoring & Enforcement, at (202) 395-5725.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Proceedings in the Investigation

On December 10, 2024, the U.S. Trade Representative initiated an investigation regarding Nicaragua's acts, policies, and practices related to labor rights, human rights, and the rule of law pursuant to 302(b)(1) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (Trade Act) (19 U.S.C. 2412(b)(1)). See 89 FR 101088

(December 13, 2024). The notice of initiation solicited written comments on, *inter alia*: Nicaragua's acts, policies, and practices related to labor rights, human rights, and the rule of law; whether Nicaragua's acts, policies, and practices related to labor rights, human rights, and the rule of law are unreasonable or discriminatory; whether Nicaragua's acts, policies, and practices burden or restrict U.S. commerce, and if so, the nature and level of the burden or restriction; and what action, if any, should be taken.

Interested persons filed over 160 written comments. In addition, USTR and the Section 301 Committee convened a public hearing on January 16, 2025, during which witnesses provided testimony and responded to questions. The public submissions are available at: <https://comments.ustr.gov/s/> in docket number USTR-2024-0021, and a transcript of the hearing is available on USTR's website.

On December 10, 2024, the U.S. Trade Representative requested consultations with the Government of Nicaragua pursuant to Section 303(a) of the Trade Act (19 U.S.C. 2413(a)). The Government of Nicaragua declined to hold consultations regarding the investigation under the statutory framework.

Based on information obtained during the investigation, and in consultation with the Section 301 Committee, USTR prepared a public Report on the investigation. Published on October 20, 2025, the "Report on Nicaragua's Acts, Policies, and Practices Related to Labor Rights, Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Rule of Law" is available on USTR's website.

As detailed in the Report, Nicaragua has engaged in increasingly pervasive abuses of labor rights, as well as human rights and fundamental freedoms, and has systematically dismantled rule of law protections against arbitrary government action. First, the Ortega-Murillo regime has committed or allowed a number of *abuses of internationally recognized labor rights*. These include repression of freedom of association and collective bargaining; interference in worker and employer organizations; seizure of assets and removal of citizenship of members of worker and employer organizations; arbitrary dismissals and arrests; child and forced labor; human trafficking; and workplace abuses. Second, the Ortega-Murillo regime engages in *abuses of human rights and fundamental freedoms*, including against U.S. persons and property, such as the repression of religious organizations through the forced closure and seizures