

Surface Transportation Board

§ 1105.6

(h) *Filing* means any request for STB authority, whether by application, petition, notice of exemption, or any other means that initiates a formal Board proceeding.

(i) *Office of Environmental Analysis* or “OEA” means the Office that prepares the Board’s environmental documents and analyses.

(j) *Third-Party Consultant* means an independent contractor, utilized by the applicant, who works with OEA’s approval and under OEA’s direction to prepare any necessary environmental documentation. The third party consultant must act on behalf of the Board. The railroad may participate in the selection process, as well as in the subsequent preparation of environmental documents. However, to avoid any impermissible conflict of interest (*i.e.*, essentially any financial or other interest in the outcome of the railroad-sponsored project), the railroad may not be responsible for the selection or control of independent contractors.

[56 FR 36105, July 31, 1991, as amended at 64 FR 53268, Oct. 1, 1999; 81 FR 8853, Feb. 23, 2016]

§ 1105.5 Determinative criteria.

(a) In determining whether a “major Federal action” (as that term is defined by the Council on Environmental Quality in 40 CFR 1508.18) has the potential to affect significantly the quality of the human environment, the Board is guided by the definition of “significantly” at 40 CFR 1508.27.

(b) A finding that a service or transaction is not within the STB’s jurisdiction does not require an environmental analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act or historic review under the National Historic Preservation Act.

(c) The environmental laws are not triggered where the STB’s action is nothing more than a ministerial act, as in:

(1) The processing of abandonments proposed under the Northeast Rail Services Act (45 U.S.C. 744(b)(3));

(2) Statutorily-authorized interim trail use arrangements under 16 U.S.C. 1247(d) [*see*, 49 CFR 1152.29]; or

(3) Financial assistance arrangements under 49 U.S.C. 10904 (*see* 49 CFR 1152.27).

Finally, no environmental analysis is necessary for abandonments that are authorized by a bankruptcy court, or transfers of rail lines under plans of reorganization, where our function is merely advisory under 11 U.S.C. 1166, 1170, and 1172.

[56 FR 36105, July 31, 1991; 56 FR 49821, Oct. 1, 1991; 81 FR 8853, Feb. 23, 2016]

§ 1105.6 Classification of actions.

(a) Environmental Impact Statements will normally be prepared for rail construction proposals other than those described in paragraph (b)(1) of this section.

(b) Environmental Assessments will normally be prepared for the following proposed actions:

(1) Construction of connecting track within existing rail rights-of-way, or on land owned by the connecting railroads;

(2) Abandonment of a rail line (unless proposed under the Northeast Rail Services Act or the Bankruptcy Act);

(3) Discontinuance of passenger train service or freight service (except for discontinuances of freight service under modified certificates issued under 49 CFR 1150.21 and discontinuances of trackage rights where the affected line will continue to be operated);

(4) An acquisition, lease or operation under 49 U.S.C. 10901, 10902, or 10907, or consolidation, merger or acquisition of control under 49 U.S.C. 11323 and 14303, if it will result in either

(i) Operational changes that would exceed any of the thresholds established in § 1105.7(e) (4) or (5); or

(ii) An action that would normally require environmental documentation (such as a construction or abandonment);

(5) A rulemaking, policy statement, or legislative proposal that has the potential for significant environmental impacts; and

(6) Any other proceeding not listed in paragraphs (a) or (c) of this section.

(c) No environmental documentation will normally be prepared (although a Historic Report may be required under section 1105.8) for the following actions:

§ 1105.7

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(1) Any action that does not result in significant changes in carrier operations (*i.e.*, changes that do not exceed the thresholds established in section 1105.7(e) (4) or (5)), including (but not limited to) all of the following actions that meet this criterion:

(i) An acquisition, lease, or operation under 49 U.S.C. 10901, 10902, or 10907, or consolidation, merger, or acquisition of control under 49 U.S.C. 11323 and 14303 that does not come within subsection (b)(4) of this section.

(ii) Transactions involving corporate changes (such as a change in the ownership or the operator, or the issuance of securities or reorganization) including grants of authority to hold position as an officer or director;

(iii) Declaratory orders, interpretation or clarification of operating authority, substitution of an applicant, name changes, and waiver of lease and interchange regulations;

(iv) Pooling authorizations, approval of rate bureau agreements, and approval of shipper antitrust immunity;

(v) Determinations of the fact of competition;

(2) Rate, fare, and tariff actions;

(3) Common use of rail terminals and trackage rights;

(4) Discontinuance of rail freight service under a modified certificate issued pursuant to 49 CFR 1150.21;

(5) Discontinuance of trackage rights where the affected line will continue to be operated; and

(6) A rulemaking, policy statement, or legislative proposal that has no potential for significant environmental impacts.

(d) The Board may reclassify or modify these requirements for individual proceedings. For actions that generally require no environmental documentation, the Board may decide that a particular action has the potential for significant environmental impacts and that, therefore, the applicant should provide an environmental report and either an EA or an EIS will be prepared. For actions generally requiring an EA, the Board may prepare a full EIS where the probability of significant impacts from the particular proposal is high enough to warrant an EIS. Alternatively, in a rail construction, an applicant can seek to demonstrate

(with supporting information addressing the pertinent aspects of §1105.7(e)) that an EA, rather than an EIS, will be sufficient because the particular proposal is not likely to have a significant environmental impact. Any request for reclassification must be in writing and, in a rail construction, should be presented with the prefilings notice required by §1105.10(a)(1) (or a request to waive that prefilings notice period).

(e) The classifications in this section apply without regard to whether the action is proposed by application, petition, notice of exemption, or any other means that initiates a formal Board proceeding.

[56 FR 36105, July 31, 1991, as amended at 81 FR 8853, Feb. 23, 2016]

§ 1105.7 Environmental reports.

(a) *Filing.* An applicant for an action identified in §1105.6 (a) or (b) must submit to the Board (with or prior to its application, petition or notice of exemption) except as provided in paragraph (b) for abandonments and discontinuances) an Environmental Report on the proposed action containing the information set forth in paragraph (e) of this section. The Environmental Report may be filed with the Board electronically.

(b) At least 20 days prior to the filing with the Board of a notice of exemption, petition for exemption, or an application for abandonment or discontinuance, the applicant must serve copies of the Environmental Report on:

(1) The State Clearinghouse of each State involved (or other State equivalent agency if the State has no clearinghouse);

(2) The State Environmental Protection Agency of each State involved;

(3) The State Coastal Zone Management Agency for any state where the proposed activity would affect land or water uses within that State's coastal zone;

(4) The head of each county (or comparable political entity including any Indian reservation) through which the line goes;

(5) The appropriate regional offices of the Environmental Protection Agency;

(6) The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;