SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

[Docket No. EP 290 (Sub-No. 5) (2026–4)]

Quarterly Rail Cost Adjustment Factor

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board.

ACTION: Approval of rail cost adjustment factor.

SUMMARY: The Surface Transportation Board has adopted the fourth quarter 2026 Rail Cost Adjustment Factor and cost index filed by the Association of American Railroads.

DATES: *Applicability Date:* October 1, 2026.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dylan Richmond, (202) 915–0962. If you require an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please call (202) 245–0245.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The rail cost adjustment factor (RCAF) is an index formulated to represent changes in railroad costs incurred by the nation's largest railroads over a specified period of time. The Surface Transportation Board (Board) is required by law to publish the RCAF on at least a quarterly basis. Each quarter, the Association of American Railroads computes three types of RCAF figures and submits those figures to the Board for approval. The Board has reviewed the submission and adopts the RCAF figures for the fourth quarter of 2026. The fourth quarter 2026 RCAF (Unadjusted) is 1.193. The fourth quarter 2026 RCAF (Adjusted) is 0.453. The fourth quarter 2026 RCAF–5 is 0.429. Additional information is contained in the Board's decision, which is available at *www.stb.gov.*

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

Decided: September 16, 2026.

Stefan Rice,

Clearance Clerk.

[FR Doc. 2026–19184 Filed 9–17–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915–01–P

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

[Docket No. FD 36937]

Ventura County Railroad Company—Operation Exemption—Ventura County Railway Company, LLC

Ventura County Railroad Company (VCRR), a Class III rail carrier, has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.41 to enter into an amendment to extend the term of an operating and maintenance agreement with Ventura County Railway Company, LLC (VCRC, LLC), for approximately 12.19-miles of rail line (the Line). The Line consists of a mainline from milepost 0.0 (at the interchange with Union Pacific Railroad Company) to approximately milepost 5.8 on the docks at Port Hueneme, and three branches: the 1.05-mile Diamond Branch; the 1.71-mile Edison Branch, and the 3.63-mile Patterson Branch in the Port of Hueneme and Oxnard, Cal.

According to the verified notice, in 2022, VCRR entered into an agreement with VCRC, LLC to operate the Line. *Ventura Cnty. R.R.—Operation Exemption—Ventura Cnty. Ry.,* FD 36651 (STB served Dec. 16, 2022). The verified notice states that the amended agreement allows VCRR to continue operating over the Line by extending the term of the agreement for five years with an option to extend the agreement another five years thereafter.

VCRR certifies that its projected annual revenue resulting from the proposed transaction will not exceed $5 million and will not exceed those that would qualify it as a Class III rail carrier. VCRR also certifies that the amended agreement does not include an interchange commitment.

The transaction may be consummated on or after October 4, 2026, the effective date of the exemption (30 days after the verified notice was filed).

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke will not automatically stay the effectiveness of the exemption. Petitions for stay must be filed no later than September 25, 2026 (at least seven days before the exemption becomes effective).

All pleadings, referring to Docket No. FD 36937, 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. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on VCRR's representative, Justin J. Marks, Clark Hill PLC, 601 13th Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20005.

According to VCRR, this action is categorically excluded from environmental review under 49 CFR 1105.6(c) and from historic preservation reporting requirements under 49 CFR 1105.8(b).

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

Decided: September 15, 2026.

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

Kenyatta Clay,

Clearance Clerk.

[FR Doc. 2026–19099 Filed 9–17–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915–01–P

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

[Docket No. FD 36950]

The Great Walton Railroad Company, Inc.—Continuance in Control Exemption—The Athens Line, LLC

The Great Walton Railroad Company, Inc. (GWRC), a Class III rail carrier, has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(2) to obtain after-the-fact authority to continue in control of The Athens Line, LLC (The Athens Line).[1] GWRC controls two rail carriers: The Athens Line and the Hartwell Railroad Company (Hartwell). GWRC states that it obtained authority to control Hartwell,[2] but mistakenly did not obtain authority for its continuance in control of The Athens Line.

GWRC represents that its after-the-fact continuance in control of The Athens Line: (1) is not a transaction where The Athens Line would connect with any other GWRC railroads; (2) is not part of a series of anticipated transactions that would result in any such connection; and (3) does not involve a Class I carrier. Therefore, the transaction is exempt from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 11323. *See* 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(2).

Under 49 U.S.C. 10502(g), the Board may not use its exemption authority to relieve a rail carrier of its statutory obligation to protect the interests of its employees. However, 49 U.S.C. 11326(c) does not provide for labor protection for transactions under 49 U.S.C. 11324 and 11325 that involve only Class III rail carriers. Accordingly, because this transaction involves Class III rail carriers only, the Board may not impose labor protective conditions here.

The earliest this transaction may be consummated is October 4, 2026, the effective date of the exemption. If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio. Petitions to revoke the

[1] The Athens Line is a wholly owned subsidiary of GWRC. The Athens Line became a rail carrier when it originally leased, and eventually acquired, a line of railroad from Central of Georgia Railroad Company. *See Athens Line, LLC—Lease & Operation Exemption—Norfolk S. Ry.,* FD 34118 (STB served Dec. 27, 2001); *Athens Line, LLC—Acquis. & Operation Exemption—Rail Line of Norfolk S. Ry.,* FD 36122 (STB served June 16, 2017).

[2] *See Great Walton R.R.—Acquis. Exemption—Hartwell R.R.,* FD 36599 (STB served May 23, 2022).

exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke will not automatically stay the effectiveness of the exemption. Petitions for stay must be filed by September 25, 2026 (at least seven days before the exemption becomes effective).

All pleadings, referring to Docket No. FD 36950, 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. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on GWRC's representative, Richard H. Streeter, Law Office of Richard H. Streeter, 5255 Partridge Lane NW, Washington, DC 20016.

According to GWRC, this action is excluded from environmental review under 49 CFR 1105.6(c) and from historic preservation reporting requirements under 49 CFR 1105.8(b).

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

Decided: September 15, 2026.

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

Zantori Dickerson,

Clearance Clerk.

[FR Doc. 2026–19105 Filed 9–17–26; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

[Docket No. FAA–2026–10264]

Notice of Availability, Notice of Public Comment Period, and Request for Comment on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Reentry Vehicle Operations in the Marine Environment

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comment.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended (NEPA), DOT Order 5610.1D, *DOT's Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts,* and FAA Order 1050.1G, *FAA National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Procedures,* FAA is announcing the availability of and requesting comment on the Draft Programmatic Environmental Assessment for Reentry Vehicle Operations in the Marine Environment (Draft PEA). FAA is also requesting comment on proposed new categorical exclusions (CATEXs) as described in and substantiated by the Draft PEA.

DATES: The public comment period for the Draft PEA will close on October 19, 2026.

ADDRESSES: The Draft PEA is available for public review at *https://www.faa.gov/space/environmental/nepa_docs*. Public comments can be submitted electronically to *www.regulations.gov* under Docket No. FAA–2026–10264, or by postal mail to Nicholas Baker, FAA Environmental Protection Specialist, c/o ICF, 1902 Reston Metro Plaza, Reston, VA 20190. The Unique ID for this document is PEAX–012–12–000–1774526578.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For more information, visit *https://www.faa.gov/space/environmental/nepa_docs* or send an email to *ReentryCapsulePEA@icf.com*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: FAA is the lead federal agency, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and U.S. Coast Guard are cooperating agencies. FAA has prepared this Draft PEA to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with issuing vehicle operator licenses or experimental permits to commercial reentry vehicle operators, which would authorize reentry operations of vehicles in the marine environment. In addition to issuing a license or permit, FAA's federal actions include issuing airspace closures to ensure reentry operations are conducted safely. FAA intends to use this PEA to comply with its National Environmental Policy Act requirements for subsequent reviews of license or permit applications involving reentry operations in the marine environment, as well as to establish three new CATEXs, as described in the Draft PEA. The new CATEXs would be added to FAA Order 1050.1G, Appendix B–2.2 (Categorical Exclusions for Certification Actions). Concurrent with this public review period, FAA is consulting with the Council on Environmental Quality on its PEA and proposed CATEXs, in accordance with Section 1.4(b)(2) of FAA Order 1050.1G.

Proposed Categorical Exclusions

The first proposed CATEX is for *issuing* FAA vehicle operator licenses or experimental permits for reentry operations that are within the scope of operations described in Chapter 2, *Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives,* of the PEA. All FAA-licensed or -permitted reentry operations would occur within the study area analyzed in the PEA and the applicant's annual frequency of reentry operations would not exceed the cumulative number of annual FAA-licensed and -permitted reentries described in the PEA.

The second proposed CATEX is for *renewing* FAA vehicle operator licenses or experimental permits for reentry operations that are within the scope of operations described in Chapter 2, *Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives,* of the PEA. All FAA-licensed or -permitted reentry operations would occur within the study area analyzed in the PEA and the applicant's annual frequency of reentry operations would not exceed the cumulative number of annual FAA-licensed and -permitted reentries described in the PEA.

The third proposed CATEX is for *modifying* FAA vehicle operator licenses or experimental permits for reentry operations that are within the scope of operations described in Chapter 2, *Description of Proposed Action and Alternatives,* of the PEA. Such modifications might include new splashdown locations within the study area analyzed in the PEA or new expended or reused components within the type and frequency described in Chapter 2 of the PEA.

Basis for Establishing the Categorical Exclusions

FAA Order 1050.1G states FAA may establish a CATEX through a decision document supported by a programmatic environmental document that substantiates the FAA's conclusion that the category of actions analyzed in the programmatic environmental document does not have significant effects, individually or in the aggregate.

As described in the PEA and consistent with CEQ's guidance memorandum, *Establishing, Revising, Adopting, and Applying Categorical Exclusions under the National Environmental Policy Act* (April 9, 2026), FAA has analyzed previously implemented reentry operations in multiple environmental documents prepared in accordance with NEPA and determined there would not be significant impacts on the human environment. Each EA resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (refer to Appendix B of the PEA for a list of these EAs).

Public Disclosure Statement

Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask the FAA in your comment