

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).