



Freight Rail Customer Alliance

Fiscal Year 2020 Budget and Appropriations Surface Transportation Board

FRCA Position

FRCA continues to support the highest annual appropriated level possible for the Surface Transportation Board (STB or Board), particularly the level needed to update and enhance the Board's information technology (IT) and data needs to better ensure transparency, consistency, timeliness, and ease of access.

For Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 FRCA advocated at a minimum, \$37.1 million as recommended in the President's budget released in March 2019.

Issue Background

As stated in the STB's justification document for its FY 2020 budget request, the \$37.1 million is necessary to cover the Board's overall operating costs:

<https://www.stb.gov/stb/docs/Budget/STB%20FY%202020%20Budget.pdf>

This is the same recommend budget and enacted level in Fiscal Years 2019 and 2018 (which followed a record enacted level of \$37 million in FY 2017).

The STB requires adequate resources to perform key functions: rail rate reasonableness oversight; processing of rail consolidations, licensing, and other restructuring proposals; and, the resolution of non-rail matters.

Similar to prior agency budget requests, the significant majority of the Board's FY 2020 budget request is for basic operating expenses, including salaries and benefits, rent, security, and activities associated with carrying out its mandated responsibilities, which are largely driven by the number and types of cases filed. The agency anticipates a steady, and potentially increased workload in FY 2020 given its important statutory responsibilities, including those under the Interstate Commerce Act and the *STB Reauthorization Act of 2015*. In addition to meeting shortened rate case processing deadlines, the Board is continuing to explore options to improve its rate case methodologies for all shippers, as well as working to improve the timeliness of its decisions generally.

Since FY 2015, the Board has been working to implement extensive upgrades to its IT infrastructure and capabilities. Although the recommended budget for continued IT enhancements is \$2.3 million – a little less than identified in its FY 2019 budget – the STB maintains that this would be adequate to continue upgrading its IT systems. As stated in the STB justification document for its FY 2020 budget request:

“...The STB's request would fund the continued maintenance and modernization of the Board's website to better serve the needs of stakeholders and the public. The continued modernization includes easier reading and navigation on mobile devices, search engine optimization, and better website load times for end users. Modernization efforts would also include complete integration of the website with the anticipated new Case Management system and Pay.gov.

The Board is also interested in acquiring a Document Management System or services to augment the capabilities of its Case Management System, Office 365 (O365), and associated records management capabilities. This system or services would be used to organize all digital and paper documents to reduce paper use and keep a record of all versions created for each work product, while maintaining a single system for storing agency work throughout the Board. In addition, the

Board would invest in a business process solutions assessment to improve operational efficiency and to better align organizational priorities with agency resources...”

Status

On May 24, the House Transportation and Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations Subcommittee approved its draft FY 2020 bill which includes \$37.1 million for the STB:

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD SALARIES AND EXPENSES

For necessary expenses of the Surface Transportation Board, including services authorized by U.S.C. 3109, **\$37,100,000**: Provided, That notwithstanding any other provision of law, not to exceed \$1,250,000 from fees established by the Chairman of the Surface Transportation Board shall be credited to this appropriation as offsetting collections and used for necessary and authorized expenses under this heading: Provided further, That the sum herein appropriated from the general fund shall be reduced on a dollar-for-dollar basis as such offsetting collections are received during fiscal year 2020, to result in a final appropriation from the general fund estimated at no more than \$35,850,000.

The complete draft text can be found via:

<https://appropriations.house.gov/sites/democrats.appropriations.house.gov/files/FY2020%20THUD%20Sub%20Markup%20Draft.pdf>

Accompany draft report language is unavailable at the time of this writing.

On May 15, and consistent with previous Fiscal Years, FRCA sent the following letter to the House THUD Subcommittee Members supporting the \$37.1 million for the STB:



FRCA Support of STB
FY '20 Appr \$37.1m-H

On March 11, President Trump released the Administration’s FY 2020 Budget including \$37.1 million for the STB: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/administration-presents-president-trumps-fiscal-year-2020-budget-request/>

In the U.S. Senate, no specific FY 2020 THUD measure has materialized yet within its Appropriation Committee. On May 14, and consistent with previous Fiscal Years, FRCA sent the following letter to the House THUD Subcommittee Members supporting the \$37.1 million for the STB:



FRCA Support of STB
FY '20 Appr \$37.1m-S

The current FY 2019 ends September 30, 2019.

Snap Shot View: Refer to the FY 2020 Appropriation Side-by-Side Document