



RAILROAD RETIREMENT BOARD



OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN

April 2010

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Open Government Plan

I. Introduction

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) Open Government Plan is a public roadmap detailing current practices that incorporate the principles of the President's January 21, 2009, Memorandum on Transparency and Open Government into the agency's core mission objectives, and the strategy to advance such practices in the future. The Open Government Directive¹ emphasizes the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration; together forming the cornerstone of an open government.

- Transparency promotes accountability by providing the public with information about what the Government is doing.
- Participation allows members of the public to contribute ideas and expertise so that their government can make policies with the benefit of information that is widely dispersed in society.
- Collaboration improves the effectiveness of Government by encouraging partnerships and cooperation within the Federal Government, across levels of government, and between the Government and private institutions.

The RRB participates in a wide-range of government-wide transparency initiatives. During FY 2009, a series of documents outlining the RRB's implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was developed and published to the www.recovery.gov website. ARRA-related documents as well as background on RRB benefit programs were published to the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance www.cfda.gov website and to the RRB's website at www.rrb.gov. Five data sets containing railroad employment data were published to www.data.gov. The RRB also provides input to the General Services Administration (GSA) through the Federal Procurement Data System www.FPDS.gov.

II. Activities and Milestones

The Open Government Directive requires Federal agencies to take the following steps toward the goal of creating a more open government:

¹ http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/assets/memoranda_2010/m10-06.pdf

- Publish Government Information Online
- Improve the Quality of Government Information
- Create and Institutionalize a Culture of Open Government
- Create an Enabling Policy Framework for Open Government

Publish Government Information Online

The RRB has a long history publishing substantial amounts of information on its website (www.rrb.gov) for all interested parties. Past practices provided such information in a Portable Document Format (PDF). Consistent with the Open Government Directive, the RRB will continue to publish such information with consideration to expanding access to information in open formats.²

Online Publishing

The RRB will respect the presumption of openness by publishing information online (in addition to any other planned or mandated publication methods) and by preserving and maintaining electronic information, consistent with the Federal Records Act and other applicable law and policy.

Open Format

The RRB will continue to publicize underlying data in cases where the agency provides public information maintained in electronic format. To the extent practicable and subject to valid restrictions, the RRB will publish high-value information online in an open format that can be retrieved, downloaded, indexed, and searched by commonly used web search applications that meet the needs of railroad employees, railroad employers and the public in general.

Modern Technology

To the extent practical and subject to valid restrictions, the RRB will continue to use its website to disseminate useful information, rather than waiting for specific requests under FOIA.

² The Federal Government has defined information in OMB Circular A-130, “*Management of Federal Information Resources*,” as any communication or representation of knowledge such as facts, data, or opinions presented in any medium or format.

High-Value Data Sets

The RRB identified and published online in an open format five high-value data sets and registered those data sets via Data.gov. Going forward, the RRB will consider existing published data for conversion to open format for publication to Data.gov.

High Value Information and Data Set Inventory

The RRB High-Value Information and Data Set Inventory details the underlying data sets that are in an open format and accessible directly via Data.gov.

High-Value Information and Data Set Inventory		
Information/Data Set Name	Description	URL
Active Employees and Railroad Retirement Act Beneficiaries by State, 2008	A breakdown of Active Employees and Railroad Retirement Act Beneficiaries by State.	http://www.data.gov/details/1331
Longevity of Railroad Retirement Beneficiaries	Calculations of life expectancies of Railroad Retirement beneficiaries.	http://www.data.gov/details/1332
Railroad Retirement Act Annuitants and Active Railroad Employees by Congressional District	A breakdown of Railroad Retirement Act Annuitants and Active Railroad Employees by Congressional District.	http://www.data.gov/details/1330
Total Number of Railroad Employees by State and Last Railroad Employer, 2007	A breakdown of Railroad employees by State and Last Railroad Employer.	http://www.data.gov/details/455
Total Railroad Employment by State and County, 2007	A breakdown of Railroad employees by State and County.	http://www.data.gov/details/456

Open Government Webpage

The RRB's Open Government Webpage (www.rrb.gov/open) serves as the gateway for agency activities related to the Open Government Directive. The site allows the public to provide input about the agency's Open Government Plan, give feedback regarding the quality of published information, and provide input about what information should be prioritized for publication to RRB staff via E-mail.

Response to Public Input

The RRB will respond to public input received on its Open Government Webpage within ten business days.

Freedom of Information Act Report Publishing

The RRB publishes its annual Freedom of Information Act Report in an open format on its Open Government Webpage (www.rrb.gov/open). The RRB does not have a backlog of requests to publish information in accordance with FOIA.

Open Government Initiative Guidance

The RRB will continue to observe guidance on implementing specific Presidential open government initiatives, such as Data.gov, Recovery.gov, and USAspending.gov.

Improve the Quality of Government Information

To improve the quality of government information available to the public, the RRB will ensure that the information conforms to OMB guidance on information quality and that adequate systems and processes are in place within the RRB to promote such conformity.

Designation of a Data Official

The RRB designated the Director of Administration to be accountable for the quality and objectivity of, and internal controls over, the Federal spending information publicly disseminated through such public venues as USAspending.gov or other similar websites.

Initiate Plan for Quarterly Data Information Quality Improvement

The RRB awaits guidance on the longer-term comprehensive strategy of the Deputy Director for Management at OMB for Federal spending transparency, including the Federal Funding Accountability Transparency Act and the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act. The RRB designates the Director of Administration to respond to the OMB guidance for transparency in Federal spending.

Create and Institutionalize a Culture of Open Government

To create a sustained level of openness and accountability, the RRB will strive to incorporate the values of transparency, participation, and collaboration into the ongoing work of the agency.

Open Government Plan

The RRB's Open Government plan describes how the RRB embraces transparency and integrates public participation and collaboration into its activities and can be found at our Open Government Webpage (www.rrb.gov/open). The plan will be updated every two years.

Incentive-Based Strategies

The RRB has designated the Director of Administration to review the findings of the Deputy Director for Management at OMB about the use of challenges, prizes, and other incentive-backed strategies to find innovative or cost-effective solutions to improve open government.

Create an Enabling Policy Framework for Open Government

Emerging technologies open new forms of communication between a government and the people. It is important that policies evolve to realize the potential of technology for open government.

Clarifying Guidance and Proposed Revisions

The RRB will observe guidance applicable to small agencies, from the Administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), in consultation with the Federal Chief Information Officer and the Federal Chief Technology Officer, to promote greater openness in government.

III. Transparency

The RRB's long history of transparency is evident by the extensive amount of information frequently published on its website (www.rrb.gov). To uphold and advance this strong commitment to transparency in the future, the RRB will continue to publish information in support of its mission to administer retirement/survivor and unemployment/sickness insurance benefit programs for railway workers and their families under the Railroad Retirement Act and the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act.

Agency Plans, Management and Reports

The RRB Strategic Plan details the RRB's long and distinguished history of excellent customer service and the continuation of that tradition by calling for the attainment and maintenance of high levels of accuracy and timeliness in paying retirement, survivor, unemployment and sickness insurance benefits. The Agency Management and Reports webpage provides information on the RRB's structure, responsibilities to the public, and communication methods.

The RRB Annual Report provides information on agency operations that are distributed to officials of railway management and labor, members of Congress, officials of the Federal Government, and requesting libraries

http://www.rrb.gov/general/plan_rpt_inv.asp#fair

http://www.rrb.gov/mep/agency_mgt.asp

http://www.rrb.gov/opa/AnnualRprt/Ann_Rpt_toc.asp

Agency Procedure Manuals

The Agency Procedure Manuals webpage is an index of the chapters in the various manuals used by the RRB in the processing of claims under either the Railroad Retirement or Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts.

http://www.rrb.gov/general/admin_manuals_index.asp

Board Coverage Decisions

Board Coverage Decisions are the determinations of the three-member Board as to the status of various companies or persons with respect to coverage as employers or employees under the Railroad Retirement and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Acts.

http://www.rrb.gov/blaw/bcd/cov_introduction.asp

Congressional Requests

The Congressional Inquiry Section of the RRB's Office of Administration is responsible for responding to all inquiries from congressional offices concerning constituents, benefit claims or applications filed with the agency.

Questions about proposed railroad retirement legislation, the status of pending legislation, or congressional schedules, hearings or committee jurisdiction should be directed to the Office of Legislative Affairs (ola@rrb.gov).

http://www.rrb.gov/opa/rrbcongress_contacts.asp

Federal Register

The Federal Register is the official daily publication for rules, proposed rules, and notices of Federal agencies and organizations, as well as executive orders and other presidential documents. Descriptions of agency organization, procedures for the public to obtain information, statements

of agency function, rules of procedure, descriptions of agency forms, substantive rules of general applicability and statements of general policy, and any changes in material required to be published are available through the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/fr/index.html>

http://www.rrb.gov/irm/fedreg_notices.asp

http://www.rrb.gov/irm/fedreg_regs.asp

Financial, Actuarial and Statistical Data

The RRB Financial, Actuarial and Statistical Data webpage consists of the following sections:

- Annual Railroad Retirement Act and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act Data
- Budget and Financial Reports: Current and Projected
- Earnings Limits, Tax Rates and COLA's
- Monthly and Quarterly Railroad Retirement Act and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act Data
- Performance and Accountability Reports

http://www.rrb.gov/mep/fin_act_stat.asp

Forms and Publications

The Railroad Retirement Handbook provides a comprehensive single source of authoritative information on the development and character of the railroad retirement and railroad unemployment insurance systems. The Benefit Forms and Publications webpage provides information on Unemployment & Sickness Benefits, Retirement & Survivor Benefits, Medicare, Income Tax, Protests and Appeals, and Work/Earnings. The Employer Forms and Publications webpage provides content from the Exhibits Section of the Labor Reporting, Employer Reporting and Sickness Reporting Instructions, and publications in the format of Employer Exchange Newsletters and Office of the Labor Member Questions and Answers.

<http://www.rrb.gov/general/handbook/toc.asp>

http://www.rrb.gov/mep/ben_forms.asp

http://www.rrb.gov/mmo/rail_forms.asp

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The RRB is required under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to disclose records requested in writing by any person. However, we may withhold information under certain exemptions and exclusions provided by the statute. In addition, the Railroad Retirement Act, the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act, and the Privacy Act restrict disclosure of information about individuals.

<http://www.rrb.gov/blaw/foia/foia.asp>

Information Dissemination

In accordance with Section 3506(d) of the Paperwork Reduction Act and Section 515 of Public Law 106-554 the RRB has developed a procedure to allow one to seek and obtain correction of certain information RRB maintains and disseminates. Procedures to seek correction of information under section 515 do not replace other established procedures for challenges to disseminated information. Challenges to information disseminated in the course of rulemaking should be made through the channels established for that purpose.

<http://www.rrb.gov/bis/section515/introduction.asp>

<http://www.rrb.gov/bis/section515/guidelines.asp>

<http://www.rrb.gov/bis/section515/correct.asp>

IMPAC Credit Card Holders List

The RRB receives frequent requests under the Freedom of Information Act for a list of the IMPAC credit card holders at the agency. In accord with section 4 of the Electronic Freedom of Information Act Amendments of 1996 (P.L. 104-231), the RRB posts the list of credit card holders.

<http://www.rrb.gov/general/impac.asp>

News Releases

The RRB News webpage provides access to periodic news releases distributed to editors of railway publications and major newspapers, officials of railway management and labor, and requesting agencies and organizations in and outside of the Federal Government.

http://www.rrb.gov/mep/news_releases.asp

Paperwork Reduction Act

The RRB is essentially compliant with the information dissemination requirements of the PRA.

Privacy Act - Privacy Act Systems of Records

The RRB Privacy Act webpage provides information on one's right to records which the RRB maintains about individuals, including individuals in the railroad industry. The text of all of the RRB's Privacy Act Systems of Records, as published in the Federal Register, are available for study.

http://www.rrb.gov/bis/privacy_act/introduction.asp

http://www.rrb.gov/bis/privacy_act/SORNList.asp

Records Management

The RRB records schedules are in transition. We will post updated RRB records schedules to www.rrb.gov upon completion of all remaining NARA Bulletin 2006-02-related RRB/NARA appraisal work later in FY 2010.

RRBVision

The RRBVision service allows users to view video presentations with accompanying training materials, such as PowerPoint presentations or online screens. Presentations can be viewed in real time or saved for later viewing. These presentations covered instructions in filing for sickness and unemployment benefits under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act, filing for retirement benefits under the Railroad Retirement Act, completing a variety of compensation-reporting forms and navigating the Board's Web site.

http://www.rrb.gov/rrbvision/video_library.asp

IV. Participation & Collaboration

The RRB encourages civic involvement and promotes opportunities for the public to participate throughout the decision-making process of the agency's core mission activities. The RRB advocates collaboration and will continue to develop such practices to further cooperation with other Federal and non-Federal governmental agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities in fulfilling the agency's core mission activities.

American Customer Satisfaction Index

The RRB participates in the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) survey. Produced through a partnership of the University of Michigan Business School, the CFI Group, and the American Society for Quality, the ACSI regularly measures national customer satisfaction with corporate and government goods and services. Working with the Department of the Interior's National Business Center Federal Consulting Group, government agencies participating in the survey use the ACSI to gauge their level of service and benchmark their performance for comparison with similar organizations in the private sector. The ACSI helps agencies focus on those processes, based on customer feedback, which will have the biggest impact on an agency's ability to deliver the highest quality products and services. The RRB earned a score of 88 out of a possible 100 in a recent ACSI survey. This is 19 points higher than the latest Federal government average of 69 and demonstrates a very high level of satisfaction with the services provided by the RRB.

<http://www.rrb.gov/opa/pr/pr0910.asp>

RRB Customer Assessment Survey

A Customer Assessment Survey Form is available in every RRB field office. After visiting field offices, the RRB encourages the completion of this form to assist us in gathering data on in-person service. Our goal is to provide our railroad public with the efficient, friendly service it deserves.

RRB Strategic Plan

The RRB Strategic Plan reflects input and feedback from our stakeholders, including customers in the railroad community, Congressional committees, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and other Federal agencies. We believe this plan reflects an updated focus on our commitment to providing outstanding customer service in the most effective, efficient ways possible.

http://www.rrb.gov/general/plan_rpt_inv.asp#fair

RSS Feeds & Email Subscriptions

RSS (Really Simple Syndication) is a technology that allows organizations to deliver content to a desktop computer or other Internet device. By subscribing to RSS feeds, users can easily stay up-to-date with areas of the RRB's web site that are of interest and provide resultant feedback. RRB feeds consist of headline, brief summary, and a link that leads back to the agency's web site for more information. RSS feeds and email subscriptions are available for content such as Annual

RRA & RUIA Data, Annual RRA & RUIA Data, Budget and Financial Reports, Earnings Limits, Tax Rates & COLA's, Monthly & Quarterly RRA & RUIA Data, Office of the Inspector General - Library, Open Government Initiative, Railroad Job Vacancies Reported to the RRB, Recent Updates on the RRB Web Site, and RRBVision Video Presentations.

<http://www.rrb.gov/rss/rss.asp>

V. Flagship Initiative

American Customer Satisfaction Index Web-Based Survey

Starting in May 2010, working in collaboration with Foresee Results and the Federal Consulting Group, the Railroad Retirement Board will be participating in the American Customer Satisfaction Index survey of visitors to the agency's website. The survey will specifically measure the visitors' perception of "Online Transparency" among other things. Unlike previous ACSI surveys the agency has conducted at a single point in time, this survey will be ongoing for at least a year. Each month, the survey questions can be adjusted to obtain customer feedback on potential enhancements thus providing a vehicle for customer participation. Each quarter we will receive an analytical report which will help us determine which website improvements will yield the greatest return on satisfaction and on our investment. This approach will also allow us to determine the importance of website elements to our customers—based on their input—so we can make informed decisions about website improvements and other online investments. The ability to adjust both the survey and the website along the way provides an ongoing measure of improved transparency and effectiveness. Depending on the level of public participation, funding availability, and the RRB's ability to respond to the feedback, we will consider extending the survey for another year or more, and/or obtaining additional analytical services to further improve website performance and openness, and ultimately efficiency and effectiveness of operations, as well as customer satisfaction.

Please send any comments, ideas or questions regarding the RRB Open Government Plan to:

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