

GAO

**Resources, Community, and Economic
Development Division**

August 1998

Transportation Issue Area

Active Assignments

Foreword

This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Transportation issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of August 17, 1998, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

If you have questions or would like additional information about assignments listed, please contact John Anderson, Director, on (202) 512-8021; or Gerald Dillingham, Associate Director, on (202) 512-4803; or Phyllis Scheinberg, Associate Director, on (202) 512-9696.

The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the main problems which are facing it. It is a very interesting and informative study of the country's economic and social development.

The second part of the report deals with the specific problems of the country and the measures which are being taken to solve them. It is a very detailed and thorough study of the country's economic and social development.

The third part of the report deals with the future of the country and the measures which are being taken to solve them. It is a very detailed and thorough study of the country's economic and social development.

Contents

	Page
AVIATION SAFETY	
<i>New</i> • REVIEW OF FAA'S DECISION TO APPROVE THE USE OF PERSONAL COMPUTER AVIATION TRAINING DEVICES FOR GENERAL AVIATION PILOT INSTRUMENT CERTIFICATION.	1
<i>New</i> • REVIEW OF THE THEFT OF AIRLINE TICKET STOCKS (BLANK TICKETS).	1
AVIATION INFRASTRUCTURE	
• HRA:22 REVIEW OF FAA'S EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT THE FREE FLIGHT CONCEPT.	1
<i>New</i> • HRA:22 REVIEW OF FAA'S ATC IT INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT.	1
<i>New</i> • STATUS OF YEAR 2000 COMPLIANCE AT THE NATION'S COMMERCIAL AIRPORTS.	2
<i>New</i> • HRA:22 AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL: STATUS OF FAA'S MODERNIZATION PROGRAM.	2
<i>New</i> • HRA:22 EQUIPMENT OUTAGES AT FAA'S TRACON IN KANSAS CITY, MO, AND ITS EN ROUTE CENTER LOCATED IN OLATHE, KS.	2
SURFACE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE	
<i>New</i> • STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF UTILITY RELOCATION DELAYS ON THE DELIVERY AND COST OF FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAY AND BRIDGE PROJECTS.	2
<i>New</i> • REVIEW OF FTA'S ACCESS TO JOBS AND REVERSE COMMUTE PROGRAM.	3
<i>New</i> • VIABILITY OF HIGH SPEED RAIL PROJECTS IN THE UNITED STATES.	3
<i>New</i> • ASSESSMENT OF HERS MODEL AND IRI RELIABILITY.	3
<i>New</i> • REVIEW OF THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION'S IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS NEW CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING NEW STARTS TRANSIT PROJECTS FOR FEDERAL FUNDING.	3
<i>New</i> • EFFECTIVENESS OF STATE BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION (BAC) LAWS.	4
COMPETITION AND FINANCIAL HEALTH	
• THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD'S OVERSIGHT OF THE FREIGHT RAIL INDUSTRY.	4
<i>New</i> • COMPETITIVE IMPLICATIONS OF DOMESTIC AIRLINE ALLIANCES.	4
<i>New</i> • FREIGHT RAIL RATE AND SERVICE ISSUES.	4
COAST GUARD	
• ASSESSMENT OF COAST GUARD'S PLAN TO ACQUIRE MAJOR CAPITAL ASSETS.	5

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all activities.

2. It is essential that all personnel be trained in the proper handling of sensitive information.

3. The following procedures should be strictly followed to ensure the highest level of security.

4. All communications should be encrypted and transmitted through secure channels.

5. Regular audits should be conducted to verify the integrity of the data and the effectiveness of the controls.

6. Any breach of security must be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities.

7. The information contained in this document is classified and should be handled accordingly.

Transportation

AVIATION SAFETY

TITLE: REVIEW OF FAA'S DECISION TO APPROVE THE USE OF PERSONAL COMPUTER AVIATION TRAINING DEVICES FOR GENERAL AVIATION PILOT INSTRUMENT CERTIFICATION (348100)

KEY QUESTIONS : In May 1997, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued Advisory Circular 61-126. This circular allows general aviation (noncommercial) pilots to use personal computer-based aviation training devices (PCATD) to meet some of their flight training experience for an instrument rating. Pilots need this rating to fly in poor weather conditions when visibility is impaired. Concerns have been raised about whether FAA's decision was well founded. The requesters asked GAO to review FAA's decision. 1. What is the quality of the empirical data upon which the FAA based its decision? and 2. What is the consensus of the literature and expert opinion as to whether public safety is or is not compromised by FAA's decision?

TITLE: REVIEW OF THE THEFT OF AIRLINE TICKET STOCKS (BLANK TICKETS) (348108)

KEY QUESTIONS : Various domestic and international entities issue stock (blank tickets) for use in creating airline tickets. While estimates vary, according to one source, less than 1 percent of the 1.2 billion blank tickets issued in 1997 were stolen. The tickets were valued at about \$5 million. The total number and value of stolen ticket stocks from all sources is unknown. According to travel agents and others, the use of stolen ticket stock raises safety concerns that could be resolved if airlines adopted existing technologies. Q 1: What is the number and value of blank tickets stolen annually? Q 2: What are the adverse consequences associated with the use of stolen tickets? Q 3: What kinds of technological or other interventions exist to detect the use of stolen airline tickets?

AVIATION INFRASTRUCTURE

TITLE: HRA:22 REVIEW OF FAA'S EFFORTS TO IMPLEMENT THE FREE FLIGHT CONCEPT (348025)

KEY QUESTIONS : FAA is developing an air traffic management concept known as "free flight" that would fundamentally change the present air traffic system--allowing pilots to choose more direct, fuel efficient routes. They plan to test this concept through a limited real world demonstration known as "Flight 2000". The aviation community estimates that free flight could save billions of dollars annually and help meet the nation's growing airspace needs. However, it could increase FAA's funding requirements by as much as \$7 billion over the next 5-10 years. (1) What is the status of free flight implementation, including Flight 2000? and (2) What are the views of the aviation community and FAA regarding the challenges that must be met to implement free flight in a cost-efficient and effective manner.

TITLE: HRA:22 REVIEW OF FAA'S ATC IT INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT (348085)

KEY QUESTIONS : The National Airspace System modernization includes 210 projects estimated to cost \$36.5 billion dollars between 1982 and 2003. Information technology (IT) projects supporting the Air Traffic Control (ATC) system represent about 81% of the total projects and 64% of total funding. (1) To what extent does the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) have an integrated, comprehensive approach for selecting, controlling, and evaluating its ATC IT investments as prescribed by legislation and OMB guidance?

Transportation

TITLE: STATUS OF YEAR 2000 COMPLIANCE AT THE NATION'S COMMERCIAL AIRPORTS (348102)

KEY QUESTIONS : The computerized information systems and electronic equipment (e.g., communications equipment, elevator controls, card readers for secured access, etc.) at airports may be adversely affected by their inability to recognize the difference between the years 1900 and 2000. As a result, unless these systems and equipment are repaired or replaced, they may malfunction on and after January 1, 2000. Question 1: What are an airport's core functions that are necessary for safe and efficient operations? Question 2: What are airports doing to prepare for Year 2000? Question 3: What is the status of airports in their efforts to prepare for Year 2000 and what are some factors that may affect their efforts?

TITLE: HRA:22 AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL: STATUS OF FAA'S MODERNIZATION PROGRAM (348111)

KEY QUESTIONS : Since the 1980s, FAA has been involved in a multi-billion dollar effort to modernize the nation's air traffic control (ATC) system. The agency estimates that it will spend over \$36 billion between 1982 and 2003 on modernization. Over the past decade, GAO has prepared several reports on the status of FAA's ATC modernization program. The last report was issued in May 1995. Status updates have been included in several testimonies issued during the last three years. We will address the following questions: (1) what is the current status, including cost, schedule and performance goals, of 18 major FAA ATC projects, (2) what are the causes and potential effects of project baseline changes, and (3) what are the common challenges facing the 18 major modernization projects?

TITLE: HRA:22 EQUIPMENT OUTAGES AT FAA'S TRACON IN KANSAS CITY, MO, AND ITS EN ROUTE CENTER LOCATED IN OLATHE, KS (348112)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Kansas City terminal facility directs air traffic within a 60-mile radius of the airport. The en route center, located in Olathe, Kansas, directs aircraft in several Midwest states. Since December 1997, radar systems at both facilities have failed a number of times. As a result, questions have arisen about the reliability of the equipment and the ability of FAA to safely handle traffic in this area. (1) What impact does equipment failure have on system safety? (2) What procedures are in place to ensure safety when equipment fails? (3) To what extent is the primary equipment at the KC facilities meeting availability requirements? (4) How does Kansas City's equipment failure rate compare to other facilities? (5) What action is FAA taking to address equipment failures?

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

TITLE: STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF UTILITY RELOCATION DELAYS ON THE DELIVERY AND COST OF FEDERAL-AID HIGHWAY AND BRIDGE PROJECTS (348097)

KEY QUESTIONS : Highway and bridge construction is often delayed waiting for utilities (such as lines, facilities, or systems for producing, transmitting, or distributing communications, power, fuel, water, and waste) to be relocated. (1) To encourage timely relocation of utilities, to what extent do states (a) use available technologies, such as subsurface utility engineering, (b) seek legal remedies through the courts, or (c) offer incentives for early completion or impose penalties for delays? (2) How do states compensate contractors for costs incurred as a result of utility relocation delays?

Transportation

TITLE: REVIEW OF FTA'S ACCESS TO JOBS AND REVERSE COMMUTE PROGRAM (348116)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century authorized an Access to Jobs and Reverse Commute program that will provide a maximum of \$750 million over 5 years to support welfare recipients' move from welfare to work. The law requires GAO to review this program and report its findings to the authorizing committees every 6 months. For the first report we will address the questions (1) what progress has FTA made in implementing the new program? and (2) to what extent has FTA coordinated the program with other federal agencies' welfare to work initiatives?

TITLE: VIABILITY OF HIGH SPEED RAIL PROJECTS IN THE UNITED STATES (348118)

KEY QUESTIONS : Eight rail corridors in the U.S. have studied high speed rail as a transportation option. These corridors have considered using either technologies that provide marginal speed increases on existing lines or building new high speed systems. The Florida Corridor--Miami--Orlando--Tampa--is the first project to proceed into detailed design, and is addressing project development issues common to all corridors such as innovative finance and public/private partnerships. What are the project's (1) estimated costs, and factors that may impact total costs; (2) financial plans, and role federal funds will play; (3) schedules for design, construction, and operations; and (4) ridership estimates, and how does ridership affect the project's long-term viability?

TITLE: ASSESSMENT OF HERS MODEL AND IRI RELIABILITY (348119)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Department of Transportation (DOT) uses the Highway Economic Requirements System (HERS) model to project capital investment requirements for highways. HERS uses International Roughness Index (IRI) statistics to represent pavement conditions. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21, P.L. 105-178) mandates that GAO review both the HERS model and IRI by June 2000. Our review will address the questions: (1) How well does HERS estimate the optimal level of highway investment? (2) Can HERS be improved to provide Congress with better information for making surface transportation investment decisions? (3) How reliable are IRI measurements? and (4) How extensively are IRI statistics used?

TITLE: REVIEW OF THE FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION'S IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS NEW CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING NEW STARTS TRANSIT PROJECTS FOR FEDERAL FUNDING (348120)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides hundreds of millions of dollars annually to its grantees to financially assist them in the design and construction of new transit projects. For example, for fiscal year 1999, FTA recommended that about \$870 million in new start funding be provided to 14 projects. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century added new and modified existing criteria against which projects are justified. 1. How is the Federal Transit Administration developing and implementing the new criteria, and modifications to its existing criteria, for assessing transit new starts projects for federal funding? 2. What steps does FTA Headquarters take to ensure that the data supporting the criteria is accurate and reliable?

Transportation

TITLE: EFFECTIVENESS OF STATE BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION (BAC) LAWS (348125)

COMPETITION AND FINANCIAL HEALTH

TITLE: THE SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD'S OVERSIGHT OF THE FREIGHT RAIL INDUSTRY (348071)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Surface Transportation Board (STB) was established in 1996 to continue economic regulation of surface transportation modes--once the role of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Some rail shippers and industry groups believe that railroad deregulation in the 1980s and consolidation of major carriers through mergers may have increased railroads' ability to exert market power over rail rates, especially for shippers with no alternatives to rail and that STB rate relief procedures are burdensome and time consuming.

(1) What is the STB's rate relief process and how has it changed since the ICC Termination Act? (2) What has been the outcome of rate relief cases since GAO's last report (1990)? (3) What barriers exist to filing or defending a rate relief case before the STB?

TITLE: COMPETITIVE IMPLICATIONS OF DOMESTIC AIRLINE ALLIANCES (348107)

KEY QUESTIONS : The nation's 6 largest airlines have announced plans to form 3 alliances. Northwest is buying a controlling interest in Continental, although the companies are to remain separate. United and Delta plan to code-share on domestic flights. American and USAirways are planning reciprocal frequent flier programs. Collectively, these 6 airlines control nearly 80 percent of the total U.S. domestic aviation market. (1) What is the status and authority of the Departments of Transportation's and Justice's reviews of the proposed alliances? (2) Separately for each alliance, (a) what benefits do airlines say will result from their alliances and are these real and significant? and (b) what are the competitive implications of these proposed alliances for consumers?

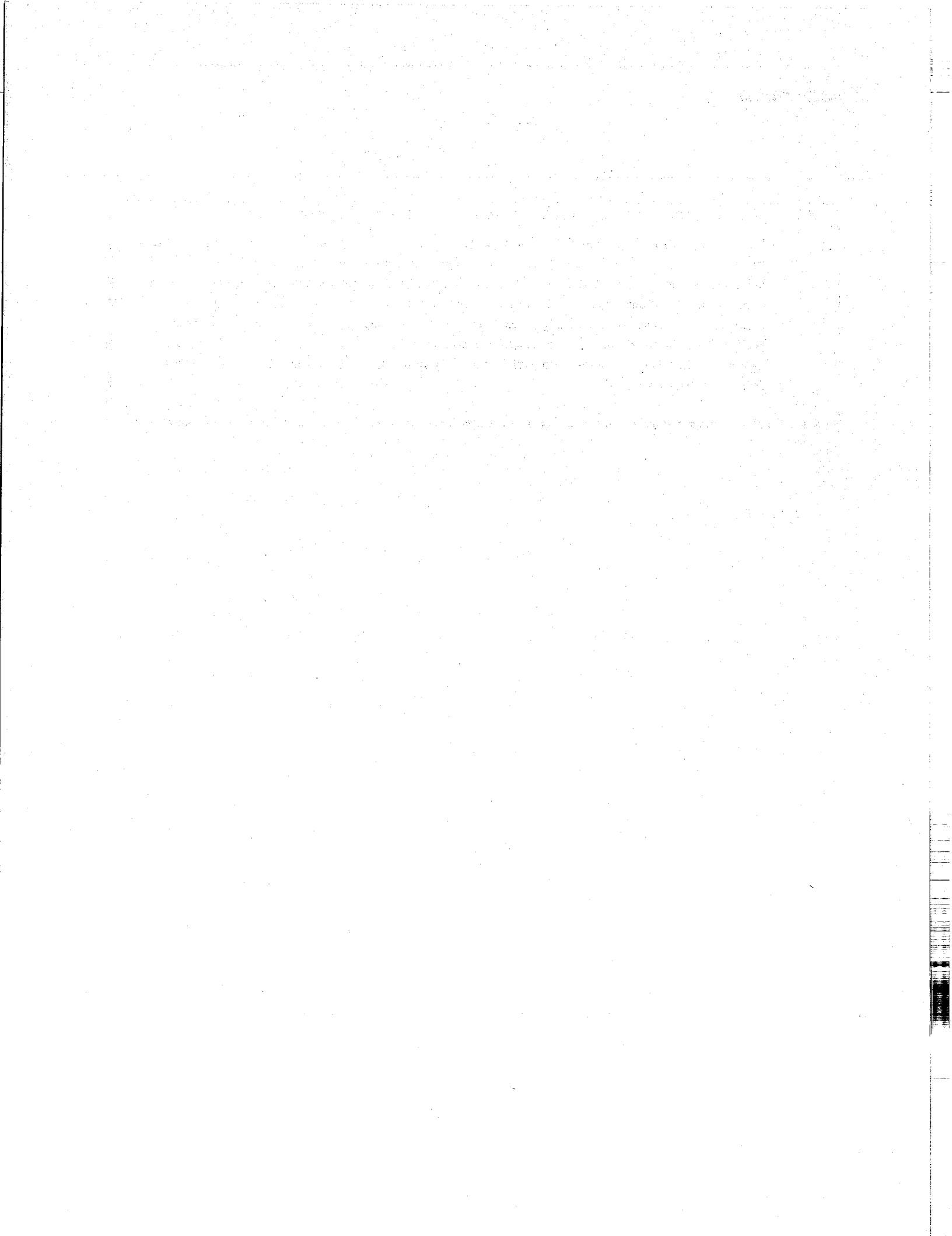
TITLE: FREIGHT RAIL RATE AND SERVICE ISSUES (348113)

KEY QUESTIONS : In 1996 the Surface Transportation Board (STB) was established to continue economic regulation of surface transportation modes--once the role of the Interstate Commerce Commission. Some industry groups and others believe that rail deregulation in the 1980s and subsequent mergers of major carriers may have increased railroads' ability to exert market power over rail rates, especially for shippers with no alternatives to rail. (1) How has the environment within which freight rail rates and service are established changed since 1990? (2) How have rail rates for users changed since 1990? (3) How has rail service changed since 1990? (4) What actions, if any, has the STB or others taken (or propose) to address rail rate and service problems and what are the expected results?

Transportation

TITLE: ASSESSMENT OF COAST GUARD'S PLAN TO ACQUIRE MAJOR CAPITAL ASSETS (348038)

KEY QUESTIONS : The Coast Guard is planning the largest acquisition project in its history. The Deepwater Project is a plan to replace/modernize over the next 15 years its cutters and aircraft at an estimated cost of \$7-15 billion. This would require more than doubling the \$380 million it currently spends for capital projects each year. The key questions are (1) To what extent will federal constraints and other capital needs of the Coast Guard affect the agency's ability to pay for the Deepwater Project? and (2) To what extent does the project justification in the Deepwater Mission Analysis Report accurately depict the Coast Guard's need to update or replace its vessel and aircraft assets (in terms of capability shortfalls, service life estimates, and increased demand for resource hours)?



51
