

a verified notice of exemption to continue in control of MSRR, upon its becoming a Class III rail carrier.

MSRR certifies that its projected revenues as a result of this transaction will not exceed those that would qualify it as a Class III rail carrier and states that such revenues will not exceed \$5 million annually. The transaction was scheduled to be consummated on or shortly after April 5, 2005.

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 transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 34684, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on Karl Morell, Of Counsel, Ball Janik LLP, 1455 F Street, NW., Suite 225, Washington, DC 20005.

Board decisions and notices are available on our Web site at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>.

Decided: April 13, 2005.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

**Vernon A. Williams,**  
*Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 05-7881 Filed 4-20-05; 8:45 am]

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**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**Surface Transportation Board**

[STB Finance Docket No. 34683]

**Watco Companies, Inc.—Continuance in Control Exemption—Mississippi Southern Railroad, Inc.**

Watco Companies, Inc. (Watco), has filed a verified notice of exemption to continue in control of the Mississippi Southern Railroad, Inc. (MSRR), upon MSRR's becoming a Class III rail carrier.<sup>1</sup>

The transaction was scheduled to be consummated on or shortly after April 5, 2005.

This transaction is related to the concurrently filed verified notice of exemption in STB Finance Docket No. 34684, *Mississippi Southern Railroad, Inc.—Lease and Operation Exemption—The Kansas City Southern Railway Company*. In that proceeding, MSRR seeks to acquire by lease from The Kansas City Southern Railway Company and operate approximately 26.5 miles of rail line extending between milepost 133.0, near Bay Springs, MS, and milepost 159.5, near Newton, MS.

Watco, a Kansas corporation, is a noncarrier that currently controls 11 Class III rail carriers: South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad Company (SKO), Palouse River & Coulee City Railroad, Inc. (PRCC), Timber Rock Railroad, Inc. (TIBR), Stillwater Central Railroad (SLWC), Eastern Idaho Railroad, Inc. (EIRR), Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad, Inc. (K&O), Pennsylvania Southwestern Railroad, Inc. (PSWR), Great Northwest Railroad, Inc. (GNR), Kaw River Railroad, Inc. (KRR), Mission Mountain Railroad, Inc. (MMT), and Appalachian & Ohio Railroad, Inc. (AO).

Applicant states that: (1) The rail lines operated by SKO, PRCC, TIBR, SLWC, EIRR, K&O, PSWR, GNR, KRR, MMT, and AO do not connect with the rail line being leased by MSRR; (2) the continuance in control is not part of a series of anticipated transactions that would connect the rail line being acquired by MSRR with any railroad in the Watco corporate family; and (3) neither MSRR nor any of the carriers controlled by Watco are Class I carriers. Therefore, the transaction is exempt from the prior approval requirements of 49 U.S.C. 11323. See 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(2). The purpose of the transaction is to reduce overhead expenses, coordinate billing, maintenance, mechanical and personnel policies and practices of applicant's rail carrier subsidiaries and thereby improve the overall efficiency of rail service provided by the 12 railroads.

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. Section 11326(c), however, does not provide for labor protection for

transactions under sections 11324 and 11325 that involve only Class III rail carriers. Accordingly, the Board may not impose labor protective conditions here, because all of the carriers involved are Class III carriers.

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 transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 34683, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on Karl Morell, Of Counsel, Ball Janik LLP, 1455 F Street, NW., Suite 225, Washington, DC 20005.

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Decided: April 13, 2005.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

**Vernon A. Williams,**  
*Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 05-7880 Filed 4-20-05; 8:45 am]

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**DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Joint Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Clinical Science Research and Development Services Scientific Merit Review Board; Notice of Meetings**

The Department of Veterans Affairs gives notice under Public Law 92-463 (Federally Advisory Committee Act) that the subcommittees of the Joint Biomedical Laboratory Research and Development and Clinical Science Research and Development Services Scientific Merit Review Board will meet from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. as indicated below:

Subcommittee for	Date(s)	Location
Nephrology .....	May 16, 2005 .....	One Washington Circle.
Respiration .....	May 16-27, 2005 .....	Holiday Inn on the Hill.
Immunology—B .....	May 19, 2005 .....	The Churchill Hotel.
General Medical Science .....	May 23, 2005 .....	Hotel Madera.
Aging and Clinical Geriatrics .....	May 25, 2005 .....	Hotel Lombardy.
Neurobiology—A .....	May 26-27, 2005 .....	Hotel Rouge.

<sup>1</sup> Watco owns 100% of the issued and outstanding stock of MSRR.

Subcommittee for	Date(s)	Location
Neurobiology—D	June 1, 2005	The Churchill Hotel.
Hematology	June 2, 2005	Hotel Lombardy.
Mental Hlth & Behav Sciences—A	June 3, 2005	Hotel Rouge.
Surgery—B	June 6, 2005	Hotel Lombardy.
Clinical Research Prgm	June 6, 2005	One Washington Circle.
Gastroenterology	June 9–10, 2005	Holiday Inn on the Hill.
Infectious Diseases—A	June 10, 2005	The Churchill Hotel.
Surgery—A	June 13, 2005	Holiday Inn Central.
Endocrinology—B	June 13, 2005	Hotel Madera.
Oncology—A	June 13–14, 2005	Crystal Gateway Marriott.
Infectious Diseases—B	June 14–15, 2005	The Churchill Hotel.
Immunology—A	June 16, 2005	Topaz Hotel.
Neurobiology—C	June 16–17, 2005	Hotel Helix.
Oncology—B	June 16–17, 2005	Holiday Inn on the Hill.
Cardiovascular Studies—A	June 20, 2005	Holiday Inn Central.
Endocrinology—A	June 20–21, 2005	Holiday Inn Central.
Neurobiology—E	June 22, 2005	Holiday Inn on the Hill.
Cardiovascular Studies—B	June 24, 2005	Hilton Embassy Row.
Neurobiology—B	June 24, 2005	Hilton Embassy Row.
Mental Hlth & Behav Sciences—B	June 23–24, 2005	Hotel Rouge.

The addresses of the hotels are:

Crystal Gateway Marriott, 1700 Jefferson Davis Hwy, Arlington, VA.

Hilton Embassy Row, 2015 Massachusetts Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

Holiday Inn Central, 1501 Rhode Island Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

Holiday Inn on the Hill, 415 New Jersey Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

Hotel Helix, 1430 Rhode Island Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

Hotel Lombardy, 2019 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

Hotel Madera, 1310 New Hampshire Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

Hotel Rouge, 1315 16th Street, NW., Washington, DC.

One Washington Circle, One Washington Circle, NW., Washington, DC.

The Churchill Hotel, 1914 Connecticut Avenue, NW., Washington, DC.

Topaz Hotel, 1733 N Street, NW., Washington, DC.

The purpose of the Merit Review Board is to provide advice on the scientific quality, budget, safety and mission relevance of investigator-initiated research proposals submitted for VA merit review consideration. Proposals submitted for review by the Board involve a wide range of medical specialties within the general areas of biomedical, behavioral and clinic science research.

The subcommittee meetings will be open to the public for approximately one hour at the start of each meeting to discuss the general status of the program. The remaining portion of each subcommittee meeting will be closed to the public for the review, discussion, and evaluation of initial and renewal projects.

The closed portion of the meetings involves discussion, examination, reference to staff and consultant critiques of research protocols. During this portion of the subcommittee meetings, discussion and recommendations will deal with qualifications of personnel conducting the studies, the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy, as well as research information, the premature disclosure of which could significantly frustrate implementation of proposed agency action regarding such research projects.

As provided by subsection 10(d) of Public Law 92–463, as amended, closing portions of these subcommittee meetings is in accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552b(c)(6) and (9)(B). Those who plan to attend or would like to obtain a copy of minutes of the subcommittee meetings and rosters of the members of the subcommittees should contact LeRoy G. Frey, Ph.D., Chief, Program Review (121F), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC, 20420 at (202) 254–0288.

Dated: April 8, 2005.

By direction of the Secretary.

**E. Philip Riggan,**

*Committee Management Officer.*

[FR Doc. 05–7985 Filed 4–20–05; 8:45 am]

**BILLING CODE 8320–01–M**

## **DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

### **Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission; Notice of Meeting**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) gives notice under Public Law 92–

463 (Federal Advisory Committee Act) that the Veterans' Disability Benefits Commission has scheduled a meeting on May 9 and 10, 2005, at Sofitel Lafayette Square Hotel, 806 15th Street, NW., Washington, DC 20005. The meeting will convene at 8 a.m. and conclude at 5 p.m. each day and is open to the public.

The purpose of the Commission is to carry out a study of the benefits under the laws of the United States that are provided to compensate and assist veterans and their survivors for disabilities and deaths attributable to military service. The Commission will receive briefings intended to provide an understanding of programs managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs and other Federal departments and agencies for disabled veterans and their survivors. The Commission will also take testimony from representatives of interested stakeholders and the public concerning issues relating to these benefits that should be addressed by the Commission. Stakeholder groups include veterans' service organizations and military associations.

The agenda for May 9 includes an introduction of Commission members, a description and the legislative history of VA's disability compensation program, Commission responsibilities, ethics requirements, other federal disability and survivor programs, and a review of literature concerned with disability issues. Agenda items for May 10 include testimony by panels comprised of representatives from veterans' service organizations and military associations.

Interested persons may attend and present oral statements to the Commission. Interested parties can provide written comments for review by the Commission in advance of the