

§ 701.10

49 CFR Ch. VII (10–1–03 Edition)

(2) The information has been published or has been officially made available to the public;

(3) Disclosure of the information is required by law (other than the FOIA);

(4) The designation made by the submitter under paragraph (c) of this section appears obviously frivolous. In such a case, Amtrak shall within a reasonable time prior to a specified disclosure date, give the submitter written notice of the final decision to disclose the information; or

(5) The information requested is not designated by the submitter as exempt from disclosure in accordance with this part, unless Amtrak has substantial reason to believe that disclosure of the information would result in competitive harm.

(i) *Notice of a FOIA lawsuit.* Whenever a FOIA requester files a lawsuit seeking to compel disclosure of business information, Amtrak shall promptly notify the submitter.

(j) *Notice to requesters.* (1) When Amtrak provides a submitter with notice and an opportunity to object to disclosure under paragraph (f) of this section, the FOIA Office shall also notify the requester(s).

(2) When Amtrak notifies a submitter of its intent to disclose requested information under paragraph (g) of this section, Amtrak shall also notify the requester(s).

(3) When a submitter files a lawsuit seeking to prevent the disclosure of business information, Amtrak shall notify the requester(s).

§ 701.10 Appeals.

(a) *Appeals of adverse determinations.*

(1) The requesting party may appeal:

(i) A decision to withhold any requested record in whole or in part;

(ii) A determination that a requested record does not exist or cannot be located;

(iii) A denial of a request for expedited treatment; or

(iv) Any disputed fee matter or the denial of a request for a fee waiver.

(2) The appeal must be addressed to the President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO); National Railroad Passenger Corporation; 60 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

(3) The appeal must be in writing and specify the relevant facts and the basis for the appeal. The appeal letter and envelope must be marked prominently “Freedom of Information Act Appeal” to ensure that it is properly routed.

(4) The appeal must be received by the President’s Office within thirty (30) days of the date of denial.

(5) An appeal will not be acted upon if the request becomes a matter of FOIA litigation.

(b) *Responses to appeals.* The decision on any appeal shall be made in writing.

(1) A decision upholding an adverse determination in whole or in part shall contain a statement of the reason(s) for such action, including any FOIA exemption(s) applied. The requesting party shall also be advised of the provision for judicial review of the decision contained in 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(4)(B).

(2) If the adverse determination is reversed or modified on appeal in whole or in part, the requesting party shall be notified, and the request shall be reprocessed in accordance with the decision.

(c) *When appeal is required.* The requesting party must appeal any adverse determination prior to seeking judicial review.

§ 701.11 Fees.

(a) *General.* Amtrak shall charge for processing requests under the FOIA in accordance with this section. A fee of \$9.50 per quarter hour shall be charged for search and review. For information concerning other processing fees, refer to paragraph (e) of this section. Amtrak shall collect all applicable fees before releasing copies of requested records to the requesting party. Payment of fees shall be made by check or money order payable to the National Railroad Passenger Corporation.

(b) *Definitions.* For purposes of this section:

(1) *Search* means the process of looking for and retrieving records or information responsive to a request. It includes page-by-page or line-by-line identification of information within records and also includes reasonable efforts to locate and retrieve information from records maintained in electronic form or format.

(2) *Review* means the process of examining a record located in response to a request to determine whether one or more of the statutory exemptions of the FOIA apply. Processing any record for disclosure includes doing all that is necessary to redact the record and prepare it for release. Review time includes time spent considering formal objection to disclosure by a commercial submitter under §701.9, but does not include time spent resolving general legal or policy issues regarding the application of exemptions. Review costs are recoverable even if a record ultimately is not disclosed.

(3) *Reproduction* means the making of a copy of a record or the information contained in it in order to respond to a FOIA request. Copies can take the form of paper, microform, audiovisual materials, or electronic records (*i.e.*, magnetic tape or disk) among others. Amtrak shall honor a requester's specified preference for the form or format of disclosure if the record is readily reproducible with reasonable effort in the requested form or format by the office responding to the request.

(4) *Direct costs* means those expenses actually incurred in searching for and reproducing (and, in the case of commercial use requests, reviewing) records to respond to a FOIA request. Direct costs include such costs as the salary of the employee performing the work (the basic rate of pay for the employee plus applicable benefits and the cost of operating reproduction equipment). Direct costs do not include overhead expenses such as the costs of space and heating or lighting of the facility.

(c) *Fee categories*. There are four categories of FOIA requesters for fee purposes: "commercial use requesters," "representatives of the news media," "educational and non-commercial scientific institution requesters," and "all other requesters." The categories are defined in paragraphs (c)(1) through (5), and applicable fees, which are the same for two of the categories, will be assessed as specified in paragraph (d) of this section.

(1) *Commercial requesters*. The term "commercial use" request refers to a request from or on behalf of a person who seeks information for a use or pur-

pose that furthers his commercial, trade, or profit interests, including furthering those interests through litigation. Amtrak shall determine, whenever reasonably possible, the use to which a requester will put the records sought by the request. When it appears that the requesting party will put the records to a commercial use, either because of the nature of the request itself or because Amtrak has reasonable cause to doubt the stated intended use, Amtrak shall provide the requesting party with an opportunity to submit further clarification. Where a requester does not explain the use or where explanation is insufficient, Amtrak may draw reasonable inferences from the requester's identity and charge accordingly.

(2) *Representative of the news media or news media requester* refers to any person actively gathering news for an entity that is organized and operated to publish or broadcast news to the public. The term "news" means information that is about current events or that would be of current interest to the public. Examples of news media entities include television or radio stations broadcasting to the public at large and publishers of periodicals (but only in those instances where they can qualify as disseminators of news). For "freelance" journalists to be regarded as working for a news organization, they must demonstrate a solid basis for expecting publication through an organization. A publication contract would be the clearest proof, but Amtrak shall also look to the past publication record of a requester in making this determination. A request for records supporting the news dissemination function of the requester shall not be considered to be for commercial use.

(3) *Educational institution* refers to a preschool, a public or private elementary or secondary school, an institution of undergraduate higher education, an institution of graduate higher education, an institution of professional education, or an institution of vocational education that operates a program of scholarly research. To be in this category, a requester must show that the request is authorized by and is made under the auspices of a qualifying institution and that the records are not

sought for commercial use but to further scholarly research.

(4) *Noncommercial scientific institution* refers to an institution that is not operated on a “commercial” basis, as that term is defined in paragraph (c)(1) of this section, and that is operated solely for the purpose of conducting scientific research, the results of which are not intended to promote any particular product or industry. To be in this category, the requesting party must show that the request is authorized by and is made under the auspices of a qualifying institution and that the records are not sought for commercial use but to further scientific research.

(5) *Other requesters* refers to requesters who do not come under the purview of paragraphs (c)(1) through (4) of this section.

(d) *Assessing fees.* In responding to FOIA requests, Amtrak shall charge the following fees unless a waiver or a reduction in fees has been granted under paragraph (k) of this section:

(1) *“Commercial use” requesters:* The full allowable direct costs for search, review, and duplication of records.

(2) *“Representatives of the news media” and “educational and non-commercial scientific institution” requesters:* Duplication charges only, excluding charges for the first 100 pages.

(3) *“All other” requesters:* The direct costs of search and duplication of records. The first 100 pages of duplication and the first two hours of search time shall be provided without charge.

(e) *Schedule of fees.* (1) *Manual searches*—Personnel search time includes time expended in either manual searches for paper records, searches using indices, review of computer search results for relevant records, and personal computer system searches.

(2) *Computer searches.* The direct costs of conducting a computer search will be charged. These direct costs will include the cost of operating a central processing unit for that portion of the operating time that is directly attributable to searching for responsive records as well as the costs of operator/programmer salary apportionable to the search.

(3) *Duplication fees.* Duplication fees will be charged all requesters subject to limitations specified in paragraph

(d) of this section. Amtrak shall charge 25 cents per page for a paper photocopy of a record. For copies produced by computer (such as tapes or printouts), Amtrak will charge the direct costs, including the operator time in producing the copy. For other forms of duplication, Amtrak will charge the direct costs of that duplication.

(4) *Review fees.* Review fees will be assessed for commercial use requests. Such fees will be assessed for review conducted in making an initial determination, or upon appeal, when review is conducted to determine whether an exemption not previously considered is applicable.

(5) *Charges for other services.* The actual cost or amount shall be charged for all other types of output, production, and duplication (e.g., photographs, maps, or printed materials). Determinations of actual cost shall include the commercial cost of the media, the personnel time expended in making the item available for release, and an allocated cost for the equipment used in producing the item. The requesting party will be charged actual production costs when a commercial service is required. Items published and available through Amtrak will be made available at the publication price.

(6) *Charges for special services.* Apart from the other provisions of this section, when Amtrak chooses as a matter of discretion to provide a special service such as certifying that records are true copies or sending records by other than ordinary mail, the direct costs of providing such services shall be charged.

(f) *Commitment to pay fees.* When Amtrak determines or estimates that applicable fees will likely exceed \$25.00, the requesting party will be notified of the actual or estimated amount unless a written statement has been received indicating a willingness to pay all fees. To protect requesters from large and/or unexpected fees, Amtrak will request a specific commitment when it is estimated or determined that fees will exceed \$100.00. See § 701.5(d) for additional information.

(g) *Restrictions in accessing fees.* (1) *General*— Fees for search and review will not be charged for a quarter-hour

period unless more than half of that period is required.

(2) *Minimum fee.* No fees will be charged if the cost of collecting the fee is equal to or greater than the fee itself. That cost includes the costs to Amtrak for billing, receiving, recording, and processing the fee for deposit, which has been deemed to be \$10.00.

(3) *Computer searches.* With the exception of requesters seeking documents for commercial use, Amtrak shall not charge fees for computer search until the cost of search equals the equivalent dollar amount of two hours of the salary of the operator performing the search.

(h) *Nonproductive searches.* Amtrak may charge for time spent for search and review even if responsive records are not located or if the records located are determined to be entirely exempt from disclosure.

(i) *Advance payments.* (1) When Amtrak estimates or determines that charges are likely to exceed \$250, an advance payment of the entire fee may be required before continuing to process the request.

(2) When there is evidence that the requester may not pay the fees that would be incurred by processing the request, an advance deposit may be required. Amtrak may require the full amount due plus applicable interest and an advance payment of the full amount of anticipated fees before beginning to process a new request or continuing to process a pending request where a requester has previously failed to pay a properly charged FOIA fee within thirty (30) days of the date of billing. The time limits of the FOIA will begin only after Amtrak has received such payment.

(3) Amtrak will hold in abeyance for forty-five (45) days requests where deposits are due.

(4) Monies owed for work already completed (i.e., before copies are sent to a requester) shall not be considered an advance payment.

(5) Amtrak shall not deem a request as being received in cases in which an advance deposit or payment is due, and further work will not be done until the required payment is received.

(j) *Charging interest.* Amtrak may charge interest on any unpaid bill for

processing charges starting on the 31st day following the date of billing the requester. Interest charges will be assessed at the rate that Amtrak pays for short-term borrowing.

(k) *Waiver or reduction of fees.* (1) *Automatic waiver of fees*—When the costs for a FOIA request total \$10.00 or less, fees shall be waived automatically for all requesters regardless of category.

(2) *Other fee waivers.* Decisions to waive or reduce fees that exceed the automatic waiver threshold shall be made on a case-by-case basis. Records responsive to a request will be furnished without charge or at below the established charge where Amtrak determines, based on all available information, that disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest because:

(i) It is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of Amtrak, and

(ii) It is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requesting party.

(3) To determine whether the fee waiver requirement in paragraph (k)(2)(i) of this section is met, Amtrak will consider the following factors:

(i) *The subject of the request*—whether the subject of the requested records concerns the operations or activities of Amtrak. The subject of the requested records must concern identifiable operations or activities of Amtrak with a connection that is direct and clear, not remote or attenuated.

(ii) *The informative value of the information to be disclosed*—whether the disclosure is likely to contribute to an understanding of Amtrak operations or activities. The disclosable portions of the requested records must be meaningfully informative about Amtrak's operations or activities in order to be found to be likely to contribute to an increased public understanding of those operations or activities. The disclosure of information that already is in the public domain, in either a duplicative or a substantially identical form, would not be as likely to contribute to such understanding where nothing new would be added to the public's understanding.

(iii) *The contribution to an understanding of the subject by the public likely to result from disclosure—whether disclosure of the requested information will contribute to public understanding.* The disclosure must contribute to the understanding of a reasonably broad audience of persons interested in the subject as opposed to the individual understanding of the requester. A requester's ability and expertise in the subject area as well as the requester's intention to effectively convey information to the public shall be considered. It shall be presumed that a representative of the news media will satisfy this consideration.

(iv) *The significance of the contribution to public understanding—whether the disclosure is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of Amtrak operations or activities.* The public's understanding of the subject in question, as compared to the level of public understanding existing prior to the disclosure, must be enhanced by the disclosure to a significant extent.

(4) To determine whether the fee waiver requirement in paragraph (k)(2)(ii) of this section is met, Amtrak will consider the following factors:

(i) *The existence and magnitude of a commercial interest—whether the requesting party has a commercial interest that would be furthered by the requested disclosure.* Amtrak shall consider any commercial interest of the requesting party (with reference to the definition of "commercial use" in paragraph (c)(1) of this section), or any person on whose behalf the requesting party may be acting that would be furthered by the requested disclosure. Requesters shall be given an opportunity to provide explanatory information regarding this consideration.

(ii) *The primary interest in disclosure—whether the magnitude of the identified commercial interest of the requester is sufficiently large in comparison with the*

public interest in disclosure, that disclosure is "primarily in the commercial interest of the requester." A fee waiver or reduction is justified where the public interest standard is satisfied and public interest is greater in magnitude than any identified commercial interest in disclosure.

(5) Requests for a fee waiver will be considered on a case-by-case basis, based upon the merits of the information provided. Where it is difficult to determine whether the request is commercial in nature, Amtrak may draw inference from the requester's identity and the circumstances of the request.

(6) Requests for a waiver or reduction of fees must address the factors listed in paragraphs (k) (3) and (4) of this section. In all cases, the burden shall be on the requesting party to present evidence of information in support of a request for a waiver of fees.

(l) *Aggregating requests.* A requester may not file multiple requests at the same time in order to avoid payment of fees. Where Amtrak reasonably believes that a requester or a group of requesters acting in concert is attempting to divide a request into a series of requests for the purpose of avoiding fees, Amtrak may aggregate those requests and charge accordingly. Amtrak may presume that multiple requests of this type made within a thirty-day period have been made in order to avoid fees. Where requests are separated by a longer period, Amtrak may aggregate them only when there exists a solid basis for determining that aggregation is warranted. Multiple requests involving unrelated matters may not be aggregated.

§ 701.12 Other rights and services.

Nothing in this part shall be construed as entitling any person, as of right, to any service or the disclosure of any record to which such person is not entitled under the FOIA.