

RAILBELT RELIABILITY COUNCIL – POLICIES & PROCEDURES		POLICY NO.: P-07
TITLE: <b>PUBLIC COMMENT &amp; MEETING ATTENDANCE POLICY</b>		REVISION NO.: 0
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## PUBLIC COMMENT & MEETING ATTENDANCE POLICY

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**1.0 PURPOSE & SCOPE**

**1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to detail the ways in which oral and written public comments may be submitted to the Railbelt Reliability Council (RRC). Public comment is an opportunity for the public to inform the RRC of its views on RRC matters. Public comment is an essential part of the RRC Board of Directors (Board) meetings, Board Committee meetings, RRC Committee meetings, and other RRC business. The RRC will give public comments due consideration in making its decisions.

**1.2 Scope**

This policy establishes a process for public comment for RRC meetings and other RRC actions where applicable and sets expectations for members of the public attending RRC meetings.

This policy is available on the RRC website: [www.akrrc.org](http://www.akrrc.org).

**2.0 DEFINITIONS**

Term	Definition
Board	RRC Board of Directors
Board Committee	A committee of the Board, as provided in RRC Bylaws Section 2.4 – Board Committees
RRC Committee	A committee, subcommittee, working group, task force, advisory committee, or other topic-specific group of the RRC, other than a Board Committee, that plays a role in RRC decision making
RRC	Railbelt Reliability Council

**3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES OF KEY PERSONNEL**

Title	Responsibilities
Board chair	The Board chair oversees compliance with this policy as it pertains to Board meetings.
Board Committee chair	The Board Committee chair oversees compliance with this policy as it pertains to Board Committee meetings.

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Title	Responsibilities
RRC Committee chair	The RRC Committee chair oversees compliance with this policy as it pertains to RRC Committee meetings.

#### 4.0 COMMENTS TO THE RAILBELT RELIABILITY COUNCIL

Oral comments shall not, and the RRC may decline to post written comments that:

- Violate the RRC Discrimination & Harassment Policy (P-01);
- Contain hate speech, including but not limited to speech expressing hate or encouraging violence toward a person or group based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, national origin, ethnicity, age, religion, or disability;
- Promote or endorse commercial or personal services or products; or
- Otherwise violate the RRC’s Website Terms & Use Policy.

#### 4.1 Oral Public Comments

Oral comments are spoken comments delivered contemporaneously in a meeting either in person or via telephone or Internet-based virtual meeting platform, as applicable. An oral public comment period as described below shall be reserved as an item of business on the agenda of every RRC Board, Board Committee, and RRC Committee meetings.

##### 4.1.1 *Procedures for Signing up & Speaking*

A public comment period will be held at the beginning and end of each RRC Board, Board Committee, and RRC Committee meeting. The following procedures will apply to public comments at RRC meetings:

1. Anyone desiring to comment must indicate their desire to do so at or before the meeting and provide their name and contact information. For in-person meetings, a hard copy signup will be available in the meeting room prior to and during the meeting. For meetings held telephonically, or for those participating in a meeting telephonically, a desire to comment may be submitted prior to the start of the meeting by emailing [info@akrrc.org](mailto:info@akrrc.org) or stated orally during the meeting’s public comment period(s). For meetings held via an Internet-based virtual meeting platform, a desire to comment may be submitted prior to the start of the meeting by emailing [info@akrrc.org](mailto:info@akrrc.org) or stated orally during the meeting’s public comment period(s).
2. Speakers will be called in the order in which they signed up.
3. All reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate each individual who has requested to speak.
4. Comments at the end of the meeting will be limited in scope to matters addressed at the meeting.

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#### **4.1.2 Callers**

After Board or committee roll call and agenda approval, callers will follow the instructions provided for callers to participate.

#### **4.1.3 Time Limits & Procedures for Speakers**

1. Oral statements provided by a speaker must be directly related to the business being addressed at that meeting.
2. After acknowledgment by the meeting chair, speakers shall address the RRC Board or committee members. Each speaker will only be allowed to speak once during each public comment period and up to twice per meeting. Speakers will begin their comments by first stating their name and where they currently reside or are calling from for informational purposes.
3. Comments will be limited to no more than five (5) minutes per speaker for each public comment period. Additional time may be granted by the chair if deemed necessary and clarifying questions from the RRC Board or committee will not count toward the five (5)-minute limit.
4. Speakers will be asked to respect the time limit allotted to each speaker. The meeting chair will indicate when the commenter's time has expired, and the next speaker will be invited to begin their comments.
5. A speaker cannot give their allotted minutes to another speaker to increase that person's allotted time. Any time not used by a speaker will be forfeited.

#### **4.1.4 Restrictions & Removal of Speakers & Meeting Attendees**

1. No food; bullhorns or similar devices; items that could be used as weapons; or large bags or cases are allowed into the meeting room. Small bags and backpacks are subject to search prior to meeting room entry. Items may be held outside of the meeting room by the Board or committee at the chair's discretion. The RRC is not responsible for the loss or damage of any items held.
2. Any meeting attendee who, at the direction of the meeting chair, is escorted from the meeting room will not be readmitted for the remainder of the day.
3. All speakers are required to refrain from violating the RRC Discrimination & Harassment Policy (P-01) when addressing the Board or committee. Failure to do so may result in disqualification from addressing the Board or committee and expulsion of the speaker from the meeting.
4. After the speaker has made their statement, the speaker shall be seated with no further debate, dialogue, or comment unless asked for follow-up or clarification by the Board or committee.

#### **4.1.5 RRC Board, Board Committee, and RRC Committee Procedures**

1. The Board or committee members may ask a speaker to clarify information to better understand the speaker's comments.
2. The Board or committee is not required to take action on an item or concern presented during the public comment period. The item may be added to the agenda of a future meeting, thereby

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providing RRC staff an opportunity to provide input to the Board or committee for further consideration and review.

3. The Board or committee may invite a speaker to provide comments during the public comment portion of the meeting. Invited speakers may not be subject to the five (5)-minute time limit and will not decrease or replace time available for public comment.

#### **4.2 Written Public Comments to the RRC**

Any person may file written comments with the RRC at any time. The RRC will accept written comments from the public on RRC Board and committee business and in response to specific RRC business noticed to the public for comment. Comments may be submitted via (1) the RRC website as provided in Sections 4.2.1 or (2) mail to P.O. Box 196300, Anchorage, AK 99519.

Written comments must identify the commenter, state the subject matter being commented on, and identify whether the written comments are being submitted to the Board, a Board Committee, or an RRC Committee, or generally in response to a public notice.

##### **4.2.1 Website Submissions**

The procedures for posting information on the RRC website are as follows:

1. Written comments may be submitted on the RRC website at [www.akrrc.org](http://www.akrrc.org) via the public comment link.
2. Copyrighted and other proprietary material should not be posted or submitted in any form unless permission to do so is clearly indicated. In posting their own comments or other work, a commenter grants the RRC and anyone viewing the RRC website irrevocable permission to copy, distribute, make derivatives, display, or perform the commenter's work publicly and free-of-charge.
3. Personal identifying, private, privileged, or confidential information such as social security numbers, medical information, home addresses, or home/cell telephone numbers should not be shared with the RRC.
4. Comments will be posted to the appropriate location on the RRC website within five (5) business days.

##### **4.2.2 Timeliness of Comments & Distribution Prior to Board or Committee Meeting**

Written comments addressing items on an agenda for a Board or committee meeting must be received by the RRC forty-eight (48) hours in advance of the scheduled meeting start time to ensure sufficient time for advanced distribution. The written comments must clearly identify the specific agenda item being addressed. Such comments will be distributed to members of the Board or committee prior to beginning of the Board or committee meeting.

Written submissions received less than forty-eight (48) hours in advance or received during the meeting will be distributed to the members of the Board or committee as soon as reasonably practicable.

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## 5.0 USE OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE PUBLIC COMMENTER

The RRC may use information about the individual or organization providing public comment depending upon the activities of the individual or organization providing comment. For personal identifiable information, the manner in which the RRC may use this information about the commenter depends upon the context in which the commenter provided the information. Information requested to remain confidential will be subject to the RRC Confidential Documents and Access Rule (ER4).

The RRC will not release nonpublic personal information to third parties except to further the purpose for which that information is provided or if release is required or permitted by law. The RRC will not disclose nonpublic personal information, or documents containing such information, except to the extent that (1) the release of such information has been waived expressly or by implication, or (2) the individual/organization has instructed or authorized the RRC to release such information to or file such information with third parties, such as the Regulatory Commission of Alaska. The RRC does not sell or trade personal information regarding public commenters to anyone.

## 6.0 ACCESSIBILITY

The RRC will take all reasonable steps to make Board and committee meetings accessible to all members of the public. Members of the public who require specific accommodations, including interpreter services and physical access accommodations, should contact the RRC at [info@akrrc.org](mailto:info@akrrc.org).

Individuals requiring interpreter assistance at a Board or committee meeting should request an interpreter prior to the meeting in accordance with the RRC's language access procedures. If interpretation of the requested language is not available through the RRC's vendor, or the individual's comments to be made at the meeting involve advanced technical language, a request for interpretation must be made at least two (2) business days in advance.

Individuals in need of other accommodation are asked to make a request to the RRC for such accommodations with sufficient advanced notice to fulfill the request. Other accommodations may include:

1. Using standard fonts (for example, Tahoma, Calibri, Helvetica, Arial, Verdana, and Times New Roman) and sizes (for example, no smaller than 14-point font) for public RRC communications to ensure maximum readability);
2. Providing an alternative text attribute for images;
3. Providing audio recordings of all public portions of meetings;
4. Providing meeting minutes;
5. Providing written transcripts of all public portions of meetings, if an audio recording is inadequate to allow accessibility.