

02 November 2011

Regional Express Holdings Limited REX

Snapshot	
Business Risk	High
Price Risk	Medium
Moat Rating	None
Fair Value \$	1.60
Market Cap \$Mil	122
Morningstar Style Box	
Last Price \$	1.01
52 Week High/Low \$	1.22/0.80
Shares Issued Mil	121
Sector	GICS -
	Transportation

Price vs. Market

- REX - Index					
1.5					
1.1		find	m-	≻	
0.8			·····		
0.4					
06/08	06/09	06/10	06/11	06/12	
	00.40	00/11	00.40	00/40	
	06/10	06/11	06/12e	06/13e	
NPAT (\$Mil)	17.7	16.5	20.2	20.5	
EPS ¢	15.9	14.9	18.1	18.4	
EPS Chg %	-7.0	-6.7	22.0	1.5	
DPS ¢	0.0	7.1	7.6	7.7	
Franked %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Div YId %	0.0	6.7	7.5	7.6	
P/E x	7.3	7.2	5.6	5.5	
Source: Mornin	ıgstar anal	yst estimat	tes.		

Business Description

Regional Express (REX) is Australia's largest independent regional airline. It was established in 2002 by a consortium of Singaporean and Australian investors, with the merger of Hazelton and Kendell, and the purchase of some former Ansett assets, and is the sole provider on the majority of its routes. REX also operates charter and freight services through wholly owned subsidiaries Pel Air and Airlink.

Preparing for takeoff?

Analyst Recommendation: Buy



Investment Rating

REX is Australia's largest independent regional airline, established in 2002 from the merger of Hazelton and Kendell. Airlines are capital intensive and traditionally offer poor returns for investors. But REX has a resilient core airline business holding monopoly position on most routes, many too small to be profitably served by Qantas, Virgin Blue or Jetstar. Expectations for solid growth in the charter business and pilot academy add to the appeal. Free float is small and share turnover low. REX is suitable for risk tolerant investors.

Event

► After languishing for the past few years, REX's stock price could be in for a decent rally as resumption of profit growth in 1H12 should improve sentiment, assuming northern hemisphere debt problems don't trigger another global crisis.

Impact

► On a PE of just 6.8x last year's earnings, REX is too cheap to be factoring in much growth. This isn't surprising considering the poor performance over the last few years but the immediate future looks bright with EPS expected to grow more than 20% in FY12, starting this half.

► Improved profitability should be driven by the big Air Ambulance Victoria contract from July 2011, restructure of loss making divisions and increased enrolment at the pilot academy. At the same time, the core airline business should remain stable despite soft economic conditions given limited competition and little exposure to discretionary tourism. ► We continue recommending risk tolerant investors Buy around the current price of \$1, believing REX offers an attractive risk/return trade-off.

Recommendation Impact

No change to our Buy recommendation.

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Adrian Atkins Morningstar Analyst

Analyst Note

After languishing for the past few years, REX's stock price could be in for a decent rally as resumption of profit growth in 1H12 should improve sentiment, assuming northern hemisphere debt problems don't trigger another global crisis. We continue recommending risk tolerant investors Buy around the current price of \$1, believing REX offers an attractive risk/return trade-off.

On a PE of just 6.8x last year's earnings, REX is too cheap to be factoring in much growth. This isn't surprising considering the poor performance over the last few years but the immediate future looks bright with EPS expected to grow more than 20% in FY12, starting this half.

Improved profitability should be driven by the big Air Ambulance Victoria contract from July 2011, restructure of loss making divisions and increased enrolment at the pilot academy. At the same time, the core airline business should remain stable despite soft economic conditions given limited competition and little exposure to discretionary tourism. Completion of the multi year fleet upgrade is also positive as lower capex requirements means more free cash flow to fund bigger dividends and the share buyback.

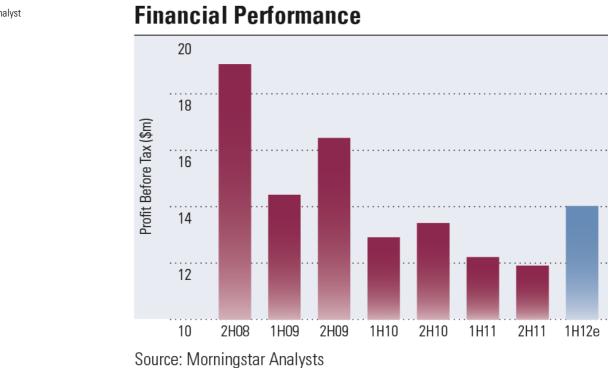
Passenger numbers should get a temporary boost from the grounding of Qantas' fleet following industrial dispute, mildly positive for 1H12 NPAT. Qantas flights have resumed but ongoing uncertainty could encourage passengers to book with more reliable competitors such as REX. Extra capacity can be added if demand is sufficient.

As a small firm in a notoriously difficult industry, risk is high but perhaps lower than some might expect. Limited competition allows most cost fluctuations to be passed through to passengers while the strong balance sheet shields the company from tough operating conditions and credit markets. REX has no debt except \$29m of project financing underwritten by the Air Ambulance Victoria contract. After paying the FY11 dividend, cash should be around \$11m.

REX shares traded over \$2.50 for much of 2007 when the market factored in significant growth opportunities. But growth floundered due to massive pilot attrition followed by the global financial crisis. At the same time, strong defence from heavyweight Qantas (QAN) made encroachment into new areas difficult and costly.

The fall from grace was swift and brutal, with the share price falling 60% in late 2007/early 2008 as the outlook shifted from positive to negative. The share price landed around \$1 in March 2008 and remains at that level now, unable to recover as profits trended lower. But now the profit downtrend is about to be broken with expectations of solid growth in 1H12 providing a catalyst for a share price rally in our opinion.





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Adrian Atkins Morningstar Analyst

Bulls Points

- ► REX faces minimal competition.
- Potential upside from high margin charter
- work for mining and government sectors.
- Potential upside from the pilot academy.
- Balance sheet is strong.

Bears Points

 Costs may rise, in particular fuel, wages, and airport costs, eroding away profits.
Competition could increase, as will capacity, causing Load Factors to deteriorate.
Economic woes will reduce passenger

demand. • High pilot attrition could once again be an

issue for the company when global growth improves.

Key Valuation Assumptions

Cost of Equity %	15.0
Weighted Avg Cost of Capital %	13.8
Long Run Tax Rate %	29.5
Stage II EBI Growth Rate %	3.0
Stage II Investment Rate %	12.0
Perpetuity Year	15.0

Thesis Last Updated: 06 Sep 2011

REX is Australia's largest independent regional airline. It services regional routes and was established in 2002 with the merger of Hazelton and Kendell. It is the sole provider in the majority of its routes which are too small to be profitably serviced by Qantas, Virgin Blue, or Jetstar. Competition, low operating margins, high fixed costs, low asset turnover, and high capital expenditure requirements are characteristics most airlines cannot escape. Overcapacity in the airline industry has been a problem.

REX holds monopoly positions on most of its routes. There is currently little incentive for competitors to set up, with most routes unable to service more than one provider profitably. This is similar to rural and small regional newspapers without the possible competition from the internet. REX services many of the routes Ansett maintained prior to bankruptcy. Recent growth into Queensland is hard work with Qantas defending its monopoly vigorously. There will be no easy gains at Qantas' expense.

There is no class structure in terms of service, but the airline price discriminates in terms of flight times, with flights at times most likely to suit business travelers (early morning and evening) at 1.5 - 2x their midday or tourist-targeted equivalents.

Travel alternatives are moderate given Australia's poor rail offering. Private car travel and coach may be cheaper but highly time consuming.

Airline revenue can grow through increases in the average fare, increase in the number of passengers per flight (load factor), increase in the number of flights on existing routes, and increase in the number of routes flown. REX also owns a charter business and a pilot academy which should contribute materially to earnings from FY12.

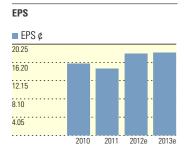
Balance sheet is strong. Key to our valuation is free cash flow which is helped by cheap planes. Airlines typically trade on low earnings multiples because of their capital intensive nature. Growth of charter operations looks attractive. REX is suitable for risk tolerant investors.

Valuation Last Updated: 06 Sep 2011 Fair value is \$1.60.

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The near-term outlook remains subdued with discretionary travel weak following the GFC. Potential headwinds to growth could include another pilot shortage, high fuel costs and global economic woes. We forecast Available Seat Kilometres (ASK) to show low single digit growth over the medium-term. We assume the average fares to remain around \$150 over the longer term. We assume a Load Factor - the measure of a plane's utility - of 60-65%, in line with historical averages. Airport costs are expected to remain at 5 cents per ASK. Jet fuel price typically follows oil price on a one month lag. We expect fares will match any increases in fuel costs.



EBIT Margin vs. ROE EBIT Margin % ROE% 14.08 11.26 8.45 5.63 2.82 2010 2011 2010 2010

Risk Last Updated: 22 Sep 2010

The pilot academy is a major investment in a new, non-core business enterprise. It may prove unsuccessful.

Passenger demand remains weak.

Airlines are capital intensive and have traditionally offered poor returns for investors.

Pilot attrition is a risk for REX as it is unable to match salaries with larger airlines. The global economic slowdown saw pilot demand fall off sharply, allowing REX to get on top of its pilot shortage, however, pilot demand is expected to increase over the next couple of years as airlines once again increase capacity. In the event of another pilot exodus, REX may be unable to replace all lost captains. Co-pilots are easier to replace.

Increased competition on REX routes, particularly by QantasLink.

Rex pays fees to infrastructure providers - e.g. Sydney Airport - many of whom are monopolies. The infrastructure providers may increase fees.

Financial Overview

Growth

Near-term passenger growth will be subdued until regional economies improve. Most growth will come from increasing charter work.

Profitability

Load factors, which are key to profitability, are currently around 60%. REX generates profits on Load factors above 55%. Current EBITDA margin is around 16%.

Financial Health

REX is financially strong. Debt is rising with investment in charter aircraft but financing costs are covered by long-term charter contracts.

Strategy Analysis Last Updated: 24 May 2011 Passenger and revenue growth comes through improved schedules, increased flight frequencies and seating capacity while maintaining affordable and sustainable pricing. Expansion into Queensland is hard work with Qantas aggressively defending its position. REX builds relationships with regional councils namely through joint ventures. The company runs the aircraft through operating leases but also owns some. REX flies on regional routes and does not offer dedicated services between capital cities. It is the largest holder of NSW regional slots at Sydney airport via Hazelton and Kendall legacy slots, with approximately 45% in peak periods (7.30am - 9.00am and 5.30pm - 7.00pm). Route frequency is paramount to regional travel, making it difficult for larger jets to compete on REX's routes. An increasing focus on higher-margin charter work servicing the mining and government sectors should drive good growth. The pilot academy will help alleviate pilot attrition which is a key risk for smaller airlines.

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General Financials

Per Share						
Deles d	06/09	06/10	06/11	06/12	06/13	06/14
Sales ¢	215.3	201.4	214.2	240.0	249.7	256.7
Adjusted Earnings ¢	17.1	15.9	14.9	18.1	18.4	18.6
Free Cash Flow ¢	5.3	-39.5	6.3	27.2	21.5	21.3
Net Tangible Assets ¢	104.5	129.2	137.8	148.3	159.0	169.8
Book Value ¢	111.0	135.7	144.5	155.0	165.7	176.5
Dividends ¢	6.6	0.0	7.1	7.6	7.7	7.8
Franking %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Growth %	06/09	06/10	06/11	06/12	06/13	06/14
Sales Revenue	-4.4	-8.1	6.5	12.1	4.0	2.8
EBITDA	-7.0	-6.7	9.3	29.5	7.2	1.1
Pre-Tax Profit	-5.1	-13.8	-1.6	22.0	1.5	0.8
EPS	0.4	-7.0	-6.7	22.0	1.5	0.8
DPS	0.0	-	-	7.0	1.3	1.3
Free Cash Flow per share	-19.6	-842.9	-	331.8	-20.7	-1.2
Profit & Loss (\$Mil)	06/09	06/10	06/11	06/12	06/13	06/14
Sales Revenue	243.3	223.6	238.2	267.0	277.8	285.6
EBITDA	32.4	30.2	33.0	42.8	45.9	46.4
Depreciation	9.1	10.0	11.2	12.8	15.0	15.3
Amortisation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
EBIT	23.3	20.2	21.9	30.0	30.9	31.1
Interest Expense	0.2	0.1	0.0	2.3	2.3	2.3
Interest Income	4.1	3.3	1.2	0.4	0.0	0.0
Profit Before Tax	27.2	23.4	23.0	28.1	28.5	28.8
Тах	7.8	5.7	6.5	7.9	8.1	8.1
Adjusted NPAT	19.3	17.7	16.5	20.2	20.5	20.6
Non-Recurring Items After Tax	0.0	6.8	1.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Reported NPAT	19.3	24.5	17.6	20.2	20.5	20.6
Free Cash Flow	6.0	-43.9	7.0	30.2	24.0	23.7
Effective Tax Rate %	28.8	24.5	28.2	28.2	28.2	28.2
Cash Flow (\$Mil)	06/09	06/10	06/11	06/12	06/13	06/14
Receipts from Customers	269.3	252.9	263.5	265.8	277.3	285.3
Payments to Suppliers	-230.3	-215.2	-230.1	-222.4	-231.3	-238.5
Other Operating Cashflow	-9.2	-7.6	1.0	-3.5	-9.5	-10.4
Net Operating Cashflow	29.8	30.0	34.4	39.9	36.5	36.4
Сарех	-17.7	-61.9	-28.8	-11.0	-14.2	-14.4
Acquisitions & Investments	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Sales of Investments & Subsidiaries	0.0	2.5	6.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Investing Cashflow	0.0	0.4	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Investing Cashflow	-16.8	-59.0	-21.3	-11.0	-14.2	-14.4
Proceeds from Issues	-3.6	-0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Proceeds from Borrowings	-1.8	24.3	3.0	-20.4	-8.6	0.0
Dividends Paid	-7.4	0.0	-7.3	-8.5	-8.6	-8.7
Other Financing Cashflow	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Net Financing Cashflow	-12.8	23.8	-4.3	-28.9	-17.2	-8.7
Net Increase Cash	0.3	-5.1	8.8	-0.0	5.1	13.3
Cash at Beginning	15.1	15.5	10.3	19.0	19.0	24.1
Exchange Rate Adjustment	0.1	-0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Cash at End	15.5	10.3	19.0	19.0	24.1	37.4

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General Financials

Financials			Historical			Forecast
Balance Sheet (\$Mil)	06/09	06/10	06/11	06/12	06/13	06/14
Cash & Equivalents	15.5	10.3	19.0	19.0	24.1	37.4
Accounts Receivable	8.3	9.5	10.0	11.2	11.7	12.0
Inventory	7.5	7.7	10.4	11.2	11.6	12.0
Other Short-Term Operating Assets	0.0	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Current Assets	31.3	30.9	39.4	41.5	47.4	61.4
Property Plant & Equipment, Net	126.4	174.8	185.7	183.9	183.1	182.3
Goodwill, Net	7.3	7.3	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
Other Intangibles	-	-	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Long-Term Operating Assets	2.7	5.0	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.9
Deferred Tax Assets	3.0	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Long-Term Non-Operating Assets	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Assets	170.8	218.9	239.6	239.8	244.9	258.1
Accounts Payable	31.1	18.3	19.4	21.2	21.7	22.5
Short-Term Debt	1.7	-	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Short-Term Operating Liabilities	9.9	16.4	29.2	29.2	29.2	29.2
Total Current Liabilities	42.6	34.7	50.5	50.4	50.9	51.7
Total Long-Term Debt	0.0	26.0	27.1	8.6	0.0	0.0
Long-Term Operating Liabilities	0.5	-	-	0.0	0.0	0.0
Deferred Tax Liabilities	2.3	7.5	0.6	7.8	9.1	9.6
Long-Term Non-Operating Liabilities	-	-	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Total Liabilities	45.3	68.2	78.8	67.4	60.6	61.8
Common Stock	75.0	74.7	74.7	74.7	74.7	74.7
Additional Paid in Capital	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Retained Earnings (Deficit)	51.4	76.0	86.3	98.0	109.8	121.8
Treasury Stock	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other Equity	-1.0	-0.0	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2	-0.2
Shareholders' Equity	125.4	150.6	160.8	172.5	184.3	196.3
Preferred Stock	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Minority Interest	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total Shareholders' Equity	125.4	150.6	160.8	172.5	184.3	196.3
Profitability %	06/09	06/10	06/11	06/12	06/13	06/14
EBITDA Margin	13.3	13.5	13.9	16.0	16.5	16.2
EBIT Margin	9.6	9.0	9.2	11.2	11.1	10.9
Net Profit Margin	8.0	7.9	6.9	7.6	7.4	7.2
Free Cash Flow Margin	2.5	-19.6	2.9	11.3	8.6	8.3
Return on Equity	16.3	12.8	10.6	12.1	11.5	10.8
Return on Assets	11.5	9.1	7.2	8.4	8.4	8.2
Return on Invested Capital(w/Goodwill)	12.3	8.2	11.4	15.1	12.4	12.1
ROIC (w/Goodwill) Less WACC	-1.5	-5.6	-2.3	1.3	-1.4	-1.7
Leverage & Liquidity	06/09	06/10	06/11	06/12	06/13	06/14
Net Debt to Capital %	-10.9	8.9	5.2	-5.8	-13.1	-19.1
Net Debt/(Net Debt + Equity) %	-12.4	9.4	5.8	-6.4	-15.0	-23.6
Net Debt/Equity %	-11.0	10.4	6.2	-6.0	-13.1	-19.1
Net Debt/EBITDA x	-0.4	0.5	0.3	-0.2	-0.5	-0.8
EBIT/Net Interest Expense x	-6.0	-6.4	-18.9	15.9	13.2	13.3
Current Ratio (Current Assets/Current Liabilities) x	0.7	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.9	1.2
Dividend Payout Ratio %	38.6	0.0	47.8	41.9	41.8	42.0
Cash Per Share ¢	13.7	9.3	17.1	17.1	21.7	33.6

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General Financials

/11 06/12 7.2 5.6 1.1 0.3 3.9 2.9 5.9 4.1	5 5 .5 3 3 .6	06/14 5.4 6.7 2.6
1.10.33.92.95.94.1	3.6	6.7
3.92.95.94.1		
5.9 4.1	2.7	26
		2.0
	4.0	3.9
5.9 26.9	21.3	21.1
6.7 7.5	5 7.6	7.7
3.4 2.8	3.1	3.1
7.0 3.7	4.7	4.7
0.4	0.4	0.4
).8 0.7	7 0.6	0.6
0.7	0.6	0.6
/11 06/12	2 06/13	06/14
7.9 30.7	31.5	31.4
4.9 14.5	5 15.0	15.1
2.8 45.2	46.5	46.5
7.9 57.6	6 59.1	58.8
4.2 93.1	79.6	78.6
2.4 149.8	3 117.0	114.7
540	6 48.1	48.6
	7.9 30.7 4.9 14.5 2.8 45.2 7.9 57.6 4.2 93.1 2.4 149.8	7.9 30.7 31.5 4.9 14.5 15.0 2.8 45.2 46.5 7.9 57.6 59.1 4.2 93.1 79.6 2.4 149.8 117.0

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Disclosure and Research Methodology

We seek undervalued stocks with a medium to long-term investment time horizon. Companies that make the best investments tend to be those able to grow earnings per share year after year and which are able to grow at rates above the average of the market. Earnings growth supports a solid and growing dividend stream which is the essence of shareholder return.

In searching for the best businesses in the market, we want to see an ability to turn revenue into profits and a record of strong returns to equity. The ability to generate strong free cash flow is critical as this is where the funds come from to pay dividends or to invest in new growth areas. The greatest free cash flow generators will have strong margins, good controls over working capital and limited requirement for capital expenditure. The best businesses will also have robust balance sheets including a not onerous level of debt. We believe in strong, experienced and disciplined management.

Recommendations

Our qualitative recommendations are simple and easy to understand:

- Buy: Substantially undervalued
- Accumulate: Modestly undervalued
- ► Hold: Appropriately priced, neither buy nor sell
- ► Reduce: Sell part holding
- ► Sell: Sell all holdings now
- Avoid: Not investment grade

Economic Moats

The pursuit of high quality businesses is central to our investment philosophy. These offer the greatest gains to the long term investor, so long as they are bought at a reasonable price. The concept of economic moats is valuable in assessing the quality of a business, with the phrase popularised by Warren Buffett and Charlie Munger. Just as wide moats protected castles from invaders in medieval times, businesses with wide economic moats have strong defences against their profits being competed away.

We ascribe a moat rating to each stock researched: Wide, Narrow or None.

The moat is the competitive advantage that one company has over other companies in the same industry. Wide moat firms have unique skills or assets, allowing them to stay ahead of the competition and earn above-average profits for many years. Returns on their invested capital will exceed the cost of that capital. Without a moat, highly profitable firms can have their profits competed away. Other companies will see how attractive the market is and try to move in to reap some of the rewards themselves. Sources of economic moats include innovation skills or first mover advantages, a superior cost position, the ability to provide a range of products to suit the needs of a variety of markets, high switching costs or locking out of competitors.

The moat rating is just one of the ingredients used in determining whether a company is undervalued, though it is obviously an important one. We are not saying that no-moat companies should be avoided. Simply, the very best long term investments are in wide moat firms bought when they are undervalued.

Intrinsic Value

Intrinsic Value (otherwise known as Fair or Underlying Value) is the analyst's interpretation of what the stock is worth today. The stock is considered to be undervalued when the quoted price is below this point or overvalued where the price is above it.

Whether to invest in a stock will depend on consideration of the prospective return and the risk undertaken. Prospective return includes both share price moves and dividend yield. Our analysts incorporate the stock's risk in their intrinsic value. Other things being equal, lower risk stocks will have greater intrinsic value than higher risk ones. A stock becomes a buy when the quoted share price is at a discount to intrinsic value that provides a sufficient prospective return.

Business Risk

Business risk encompasses all operational risk and financial risk. Companies with low business risk have the most reliable earnings streams. A change in business conditions may reduce earnings predictability and therefore increase risk. Examples are market entry of a new competitor, unfavourable shifts in the economy, changes in key management personnel, major investment in an uncertain new venture or acquisition, and increased interest burden caused by higher debt levels or raised interest rates.

Pricing Risk

Pricing risk reflects the premium or discount implied in the current price of the shares. Many growth stocks trade on high earnings multiples giving them high pricing risk though they may have low business risk. Investors should consider their risk tolerance before investing in the share market. Many investors will decide to have only low risk stocks in their portfolio though others will accept higher risk levels in order to pursue higher returns.

Declaration

Declaration of personal shareholdings, disclosure list.

These positions can change at any time and are not additional recommendations, AAO, ABC, ACG, ACL, ACR, AEU, AFI, AGK, AGS, AGX, AIX, AKF, ALL, ALS, AMP, ANO, ANP, ANZ, APA, APN, ARD, ARG, ARU, ASB, ASX, ASZ, ATI, AUN, AVX, BEN, BFG, BHP, BKI, BKN, BLY, BND, BNO, BOQ, BSL, BTU, BXB, CAB, CBA, CDD, CGS, CIF, CKA, CND, COH, CPA, CPB, COO, COT, CRK, CRZ, CSL, CSS, CTN, DJS, DOW, DTE, DUE, DVN, EGL, EGP, EQT, ERA, ESG, ESV, EVZ, FMG, FXJ, GBG, GCL, GFF, GMG, GPT, GWA, HIL, HSN, HST, IAG, IFL, IGR, IIN, ILF, IPD, JMB, KAR, KBC, KCN, KEY, KMD, LEG, LEI, LLC, MBN, MCR, MFF, MIO, MPO, MQG, MSB, MSF, MTS, MUN, MYR, NAB, NEU, NHC, NMS, NUF, NUP, NVT, NWS, OSH, OST, PBG, PBT, PGA, PGM, PMV, PNR, PPT, PRE, PRG, PRY, PTS, QBE, QFX, QUB, RCR, REX, RFE, RHC, RHG, RIO, RKN, ROK, RQL, RWH, SAKHA, SEK, SGP, SGT, SHV, SMX, SNO, SOL, SRH, SRX, STS, STW, SUN, SVW, TAH, TCL, TEN, TLS, TOL, TPM, TRF, TRS, TSE, UGL, UXC, VBA, WAL, WAM, WBB, WBC, WCB, WDC, WES, WHC, WHG, WOW, WPL, WRT, ZGL.

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