

US59(S) on the west side of Texarkana and connecting with IH-30(E) and US71(S) on the east side of Texarkana. This facility has the potential to divert through US71 traffic around the two cities, and reduce traffic volumes along the stretch of IH-30 between the northern loop termini and other routes through Texarkana. The northern loop alternatives add approximately 18 miles (29 kilometers) of new alignment to the project. Revisions to previously studied alternatives will add approximately 5 miles (8 km) of additional new alignment to the project.

The east-west connector portion of the proposed northern loop, along with a new northern extension from the loop crossing the Red River, result in environmental consequences that were not thoroughly documented as a part of the 1997 DEIS. The Northern Loop alternatives will include major environmental issues at different locations than those studied in the Draft EIS such as floodplain encroachments, a crossing of the Red River, wetlands, and archaeological sites on the Red River floodplain. In addition to documenting the engineering and environmental aspects of the new northern loop alignments, the SDEIS will provide a comparative analysis of the project's alternatives with the goal being the identification of a preferred alternative for the entire project, from Texarkana to DeQueen, AR.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate federal, state, and local agencies and to private organizations who have expressed interest in the project in the past, and to major Arkansas and northeast Texas newspapers. Formal public hearings will be held in Arkansas and Texas during the circulation of the SDEIS. Public notice will be given of the time and place of the public involvement sessions and the public hearings. The SDEIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearings. The US Army Corps of Engineers, the US Environmental Protection Agency, and the US Department of Interior are Cooperating Agencies for the EIS. A formal scoping meeting for the Northern Loop Alternatives will be held and opportunity for public comment will be provided.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be directed to either the FHWA Arkansas

or Texas Division at the addresses provided above.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation of Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)

Elizabeth A. Romero,

Environmental Specialist, Federal Highway Administration, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Walter C. Waidelich,

District Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, Austin, Texas.

[FR Doc. 98-30348 Filed 11-12-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement: Steuben County, NY

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration, New York State Department of Transportation.

ACTION: Notice of Intent.

SUMMARY: The action to be evaluated by this environmental impact statement is the reconstruction of the U.S. Route 15 juncture with NYS Route 17 (the Southern Tier Expressway) in Steuben County, New York. This proposed action would improve capacity at the interchange and provide for the separation of local and regional traffic.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Harold J. Brown, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, New York Division, Leo W. O'Brien Federal Building, 9th Floor, Clinton Avenue and North Pearl Street, Albany, New York 12207, (518) 431-4125; or Peter White, Regional Director, New York State Department of Transportation Region 6, 107 Broadway, Hornell, New York 14843, (607) 324-8404.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT), will evaluate various alternatives which will consider development of a fully directional interchange at the juncture of U.S. Route 15 with NYS Route 17 in Steuben County, New York. Each build option would include the complete reconfiguration/reconstruction of the existing interchange to provide direct connections for the primary movements between Route 15 and Route 17 while accommodating local high volume traffic flows and local access.

Additionally there would be new expressway and ramp construction, pavement rehabilitation/reconstruction, bridge and culvert rehabilitation/replacement, drainage, lighting and signalization. The proposed project limits extend along NYS Route 17 from Exit 43 (NYS Route 415) easterly to Exit 45 (NYS Route 352) approximately two miles; and along U.S. Route 15 from its intersection NYS Route 17, southerly to its overpass with NYS Route 417 approximately two miles. The proposed action is anticipated to result in a balanced transportation system that will supply sufficient capacity, improved mobility and access; meet current/future traffic demand; eliminate current bridge deficiencies; reduce or eliminate vehicular conflicts/accidents; separate local and regional traffic flows, as well as provide improved local service access between the City of Coming, the Villages of Riverside and painted Post, and the Hamlet of Gang Mills.

Alternatives under consideration include: no build or the null alternative; separation of local and expressway traffic through the relocation of Hamilton Street and the upgrade of Route 15 to a limited access expressway; development of a half or full diamond interchange at Route 417; retainage or elimination of the Route 352 flyover to Route 17; the development of collector-distributor roads along Route 17 between Exit 44 and Exit 45; and retention or elimination of local access at Exit 44. The environmental, socio-economic, and engineering viability implications of each alternative will be examined. The no action alternative will also be analyzed as a base line for gauging, the impacts of the build alternates.

Input from Federal, state and local governments, local agencies, private organizations, and the community will be solicited during the development of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A public scoping, meetings and a formal public hearing will be scheduled. Public notice will be given to identify the time and place for the meeting and hearing. The Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing.

Comments, questions, and suggestions pertaining to the proposed action are invited from interested parties to ensure that all significant issues are identified and addressed. Comments should be directed to the FHWA or the NYSDOT at the addresses provided above.

Issued on November 4, 1998.

Douglas P. Conlan,

*District Engineer, Federal Highway
Administration, Albany, New York.*

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 567X)]

CSX Transportation, Inc.; Abandonment Exemption; in Allegheny County, PA

On October 26 1998, CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT), filed with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) a petition under 49 U.S.C. 10502 for exemption from the provisions of 49 U.S.C. 10903 to abandon a line of railroad known as the Lower Allegheny Branch extending from milepost 0.00 to milepost 0.85 in Pittsburgh, together with a 0.15-mile line segment of connecting track that joins the Lower Allegheny Branch to a nearby line of the Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail),¹ a total distance of 1.00 mile in Allegheny County, PA. The line traverses U.S. Postal Service Zip Code 15233 and includes no stations.

The line does not contain any federally granted rights-of-way. Any documentation in the railroad's possession will be made available promptly to those requesting it.

The interest of railroad employees will be protected by the conditions specified in *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979).

By issuance of this notice, the Board is instituting an exemption proceeding pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 10502(b). A final decision will be issued by February 12, 1999.

Any offer of financial assistance (OFA) under 49 CFR 1152.27(b)(2) will be due no later than 10 days after service of a decision granting the petition for exemption. Each OFA must be accompanied by a \$1,000 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

All interested persons should be aware that, following abandonment of rail service and salvage of the line, the line may be suitable for other public use, including interim trail use. Any request for a public use condition under 49 CFR 1152.28 or for trail use/rail banking under 49 CFR 1152.29 will be

due no later than December 3, 1998.

Each trail use request must be accompanied by a \$150 filing fee. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(27).

All filings in response to this notice must refer to STB Docket No. AB-55 (Sub-No. 567X) and must be sent to: (1) Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001; and (2) Charles M. Rosenberger, 500 Water Street—J150, Jacksonville, FL 32202. Replies to the CSXT petition are due on or before December 3, 1998.

Persons seeking further information concerning abandonment procedures may contact the Board's Office of Public Services at (202) 565-1592 or refer to the full abandonment or discontinuance regulations at 49 CFR part 1152.

Questions concerning environmental issues may be directed to the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) at (202) 565-1545. [TDD for the hearing impaired is available at (202) 565-1695.]

An environmental assessment (EA) (or environmental impact statement (EIS), if necessary) prepared by SEA will be served upon all parties of record and upon any agencies or other persons who commented during its preparation. Other interested persons may contact SEA to obtain a copy of the EA (or EIS). EAs in these abandonment proceedings normally will be made available within 60 days of the filing of the petition. The deadline for submission of comments on the EA will generally be within 30 days of its service.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "WWW.STB.DOT.GOV."

Decided: November 6, 1998.

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

Vernon A. Williams,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 98-30434 Filed 11-12-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

Administrative Services to the NIS College and University Partnerships Program (NISCUPP)

ACTION: Request for proposals.

SUMMARY: The Office of Academic Programs' Specialized Programs Branch of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition to assist in the administration of the Fiscal Year 1999 NIS College and University Partnerships

Program (NISCUPP) competition. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to assist in the administration of the technical and academic review of approximately 65 to 85 proposals for the Fiscal Year 1999 NIS College and University Partnerships Program competition (E/ASU-99-05).

The NISCUPP supports linkages between U.S. institutions of higher education and institutions of higher education from the New Independent States in specified fields and disciplines.

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries * * *; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations * * * and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program cited above is provided through the Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992 (Freedom Support Act).

Projects must conform with Agency requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package. USIA projects are subject to the availability of funds.

Announcement Title and Number: All communications with USIA concerning this RFP should refer to the announcement's title and reference number, E/ASU-99-06.

Deadline for Proposals: All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, D.C. time on Monday, December 21, 1998. Faxed application documents will not be accepted.

Documents postmarked by the due date but received at a later date will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure compliance with the deadline.

Approximate Program Dates: Grant should begin on or about February 15, 1999 and end approximately five months later.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: The Specialized Programs Branch (E/ASU), Room 349, U.S. Information Agency,

¹ The Lower Allegheny Branch is accessed over trackage rights from Conrail's Etna Yard in Pittsburgh and Conrail's Preble Avenue Industrial Track via the 0.15-mile connecting track owned by CSXT.