

Issued in Washington, DC, on June 22, 1998.

Vanester M. Williams,

Clearance Officer, United States Department of Transportation

[FR Doc. 98-17068 Filed 6-25-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-62-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Broad Agency Announcement: Funds Availability for Research Projects and Technology Advancements Under the Next Generation High-Speed Rail Program

AGENCY: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of funds availability: Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) for research projects and technology advancements under the next generation high-speed rail program.

Introduction

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is soliciting pre-proposal concept papers for various research projects, technology advancements and/or demonstrations directed at enhancing the deployment of high-speed rail service in the United States.

Technologies most likely to enhance the deployment of high-speed rail service in the U.S. are those which will—(a) enhance the revenue-generating capability of high-speed operations; (b) bring about capital cost reductions and economy in producing equipment and facilities; (c) reduce operating costs of high-speed rail service; (d) improve the reliability of equipment and infrastructure components; (e) improve safety; and/or (f) enhance the social benefits and/or environmental aspects of high speed rail.

Eligible Participants

This is an unrestricted solicitation. Any responsible source may submit a pre-proposal concept paper for consideration including, but not limited to, states or local governments, or organizations of state or local governments, institutions of higher education, hospitals or other non-profit organizations, private individuals, corporations, businesses or commercial organizations, except that any business owned in whole or in part by the Federal Government is not eligible. Although businesses owned in whole or in part by the Federal Government are not eligible for funding under the Program, they may contract with eligible

participants. Cooperative arrangements (e.g., joint ventures, limited partnerships, teaming arrangements, or collaboration and consortium arrangements) are permitted and encouraged. Small, Small Disadvantaged (SD), and Women-Owned (WO) Business Concerns, and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and Minority Institutions (MIs) are encouraged to submit pre-proposal concept papers on their own and/or in collaboration with others. However, no portion of this BAA will be set aside exclusively for Small, SD, or WO Business Concerns, or for HBCU and MIs. Attention: Minority, Women-Owned and Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs)! The Department of Transportation (DOT), Short-Term Lending Program (STLP) offers working capital financing in the form of lines of credit to finance accounts receivable for transportation related contracts. Maximum line of credit is \$500,000 with interest at the prime rate. For further information call (800) 532-1169. Internet address: <http://osdbuweb.dot.gov>.

Exchanges and Points of Contact

Exchanges of information between interested parties and the Government, prior to submission of pre-proposal concept papers, are strongly encouraged. Such informal exchanges may provide would-be offerors with preliminary information on the Government's level of interest in prospective works or projects or on the availability of funds. Any exchanges of information must be consistent with procurement integrity requirements of section 27 of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy Act (41 U.S.C. 423, as amended) (see Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) 3.104). For technical inquiries, interested parties may contact the BAA primary technical point of contact, Mr. Robert McCown (Tel: 202/632-3250, Fax: 202/632-3854), or one of the other, secondary technical points of contact identified in Appendix A of the BAA 98-01 Pre-Proposal Preparation Package (BAA 98-01 Package), available from the FRA. All non-technical inquiries should be directed to the Grants/Contracting Officer, Mr. Thomas Riddle (Tel: 202/632-3391, Fax: 202/632-3846). Please note that FRA anticipates changing its telephone service on or about July 10, 1998. New telephone numbers will be assigned during this change over. For the first 30 days after the change over, there will be a automatic bridge/link in which the service provider will furnish callers with the new number of the party they are trying to reach when an old

[replaced] number is dialed. After 30 days, a caller who dials an old number will be routed to the DOT operator for assistance/new number, or the caller may dial the DOT information line direct at 202/366-4000. As of the date this announcement/notice was submitted for publication, the following numbers have been tentatively assigned for the points of contact identified above, for *usage on or after July 10, 1998*: Mr. McCown—Tel: 202/493-6350, RDV-30 Fax: 202/493-6333. Mr. Riddle—Tel: 202/493-6149.

BAA Time Line

BAA 98-01 is being published in both the Commerce Business Daily (CBD) and the **Federal Register** (FR) in June 1998. (Note: BAA 98-01 is a single broad agency announcement of the FRA, that is being advertised and published in these two different media to reach a broad base of prospective applicants. The description of BAA 98-01 may differ slightly in form between the two publications, but each will be substantially the same as the other in all material respects.) FRA will accept pre-proposal concept paper submissions, inquiries and requests for the BAA 98-01 Package under BAA 98-01, immediately upon its announcement and appearance in either the CBD, or FR, or June 22, 1998, whichever single date/event occurs first. However, to allow interested parties adequate time to prepare pre-proposal concept papers, FRA will not begin its technical evaluations before July 22, 1998. Unless BAA 98-01 is superceded or canceled, FRA will continue to accept concept submissions, inquiries and package requests, through April 30, 1999; however, fiscal year 1999 (FY 99) awards are subject to the availability of FY 99 appropriations or the continued availability of unobligated prior no-year funds. Although the BAA is open for an extended period, interested parties would be well advised to submit proposals as early as possible.

Funding Authority and Related Information

Funds for this program are authorized in the Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act 1998, Public Law 105-66 (October 27, 1997). FRA will make available up to \$4.3 million for awards under the BAA during fiscal year 1998 for research project and technology advancements in areas of research interest to the FRA, that are evaluated favorably and determined by the FRA to be consistent with the objectives of this BAA and of interest to the Government, and for which adequate funding exist. Awards

may be of any dollar value within the maximum amounts allowed for each area of interest (so long as those amounts do not exceed the total amount available under the BAA), but it is anticipated that most, if not all, individual awards (or that part of the Government's portion in a cost sharing arrangement) will have dollar values ranging between \$25,000 and \$500,000 each. Prospective offerors are advised that awards greater than \$500,000 will generally require the awardee (except a small business concern) to already have in place or prepare, at or before the time of award, an acceptable plan to maximize the participation of minority, women-owned and disadvantaged business enterprises. Because the range and diversity of activities that may be proposed under the BAA does not permit a common work statement, no single Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) code will be issued for the BAA. SIC codes will be specific to each individual contract award as determined by the type of activity in which the actual offeror will be engaged, and as a function of the ownership characteristics of the prospective offeror. Cost sharing by awardees is not mandatory under this BAA, however because of the potential for long-term benefits to those firms or institutions involved in these research and development activities, offerors are strongly encouraged to consider sharing the cost of their proposed projects.

Awards

Research projects, technology advancements, and/or demonstrations proposed under this BAA will be considered for award through a two-step process. In the first step, interested parties must submit a pre-proposal concept paper for each research project, technology advancement or demonstration (by area of interest) the applicant wishes the FRA to consider. The purpose of the pre-proposal concept paper is to preclude unwarranted and possibly costly effort on the part of interested parties whose proposed work may not be of interest to the FRA under this BAA. Pre-proposal concept papers submitted under this BAA will be subject to technical review in accordance with the established evaluation criteria. Based upon its evaluations, the FRA will subsequently notify each respondent who submits a pre-proposal concept paper as to whether the Government encourages or does not encourage the submission of a full proposal. In the second step, respondents whose pre-proposal concept papers are evaluated favorably and determined by the FRA to be

consistent with the objectives of the BAA and of interest to the Government, may be requested to submit a full technical and cost proposal or other information relative to the initial submission for further consideration. Such a request will NOT guarantee the applicant that an award will be forthcoming for the offered work or project, nor otherwise create an obligation on the part of the Government. Awards may take the form of contracts, grants or cooperative agreements. Contracts will be used when the principal purpose is the acquisition of supplies or services (including research and development) for the direct benefit or use of the Federal Government. Grants or cooperative agreements will be used when the principal purpose of the transaction is to stimulate or support research and development for another public purpose.

Areas of Technology Interest

Technologies which are high-priority research candidates for evaluation pursuant to this announcement include: (1) Grade crossing hazard mitigation systems. (2) Innovative, low cost technologies to improve track and structures. (3) Advance train control systems. (4) Non-electric locomotives and passenger equipment systems. (5) Other scientific study, technology adaptation, or demonstration directed toward advancing the state-of-the-art or increasing the knowledge or understanding of high-speed passenger rail service in the U.S.

Pre-Proposal Concept Papers and Preparation Instructions

Pre-proposal concept papers should be ten (10) pages or less (except as otherwise noted). Pre-proposal concept paper submissions must contain a Technical Concept Section and a Cost or Pricing Section, and when applicable, should contain a Phased or Follow-on Research Project Section. Specific content and format requirements and additional instructions for preparing submissions, as well as further information on the areas of interest themselves and the evaluation/selection process, are provided in the BAA 98-01 Package. Interested parties may obtain a copy of the BAA 98-01 Package by submitting a written request to U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Railroad Administration, Office of Acquisition and Grants Services, RAD-30, 400 7th Street, SW, Mail Stop 50, Washington, DC 20590, or via telefacsimile request (Fax No. 202/632-3846), to the attention of the Grants/Contracting Officer, Mr. Riddle. The

request should also reference the Solicitation No. BAA 98-01. The BAA 98-01 Package should also be available on the Internet in July 1998,

Evaluation Criteria

Pre-proposal concept papers (and later full proposals or other submissions, if and when requested) will be evaluated using the following criteria, which are listed in descending order of relative importance: (1) The overall scientific merit and/or technical merits of the proposal. (2) The degree to which the overall proposed technical effort will advance U.S. high-speed rail technology, and the extent to which its application to railroad operations would improve intercity passenger operations through improved railroad capital equipment or infrastructure, traffic control centers, interfaces among these, or operating methods, and/or its potential for performance improvement in one or more qualities such as, cost effectiveness, reliability, safety, availability, or maintainability. (3) The technical qualifications and demonstrated experience of key personnel proposed to perform the technical efforts. (4) The administrative qualifications and demonstrated experience of the proposing organization to support projects such as those proposed. (5) The reasonableness and realism of the proposed costs and fee (if any). (6) The degree to which Federal funds are leveraged by private, non-Federal, and/or Federal funds available from sources other than FRA programs. (7) The availability of funds. THIS ANNOUNCEMENT CONSTITUTES THE ONLY SOLICITATION. NO OTHER REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS OR ANNOUNCEMENT WILL BE ISSUED.

Dated: June 18, 1998.

James T. McQueen,

Associate Administrator for Railroad Development.

[FR Doc. 98-16762 Filed 6-25-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-06-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 33556]

Canadian National Railway Company, Grand Trunk Corporation, and Grand Trunk Western Railroad Incorporated—Control—Illinois Central Corporation, Illinois Central Railroad Company, Chicago, Central and Pacific Railroad Company, and Cedar River Railroad Company

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board.