

47; a lack of corridor-wide transit service; and the lack of alternative transportation modes.

A public involvement program was conducted during Phase I of the project to receive input from the public and stakeholders in the Corridor. Public outreach presentations were given to over 30 community groups. Communications to the public were via a newsletter and a monthly Project Update to the NCDA distribution list of approximately 1000 names/addresses, a Web Site, and a series of three public information open houses.

### III. Alternatives

Phase I of the MIS process defined and evaluated eight transit technologies for the Northstar Corridor: bus, commuter rail, light rail transit (LRT), diesel multiple unit (DMU), heavy rail, monorail, automated guideway transit (AGT), and personal rapid transit (PRT). Each of these transit technologies was reviewed based on the following evaluation parameters: capital cost, proven technology, operating environment, ability to accommodate at-grade station access, optimal station spacing distance, environmental impacts, and other considerations such as ridership potential and implementation. Based on this transit technology screening analysis, the following transit technologies have been recommended for further analysis: Bus, LRT and Commuter Rail. The scoping process will review the full range of modal technologies considered and the evaluation process followed.

The alternatives proposed for consideration in the Northstar Corridor DEIS include:

1. *No-Build Alternative*—No change to transportation services or facilities in the Corridor beyond already committed projects. This includes only those roadway and transit improvements defined in the appropriate agencies' Long Range Transportation Plans and Transit Development Plans for which funding has been committed.

2. *Transportation Systems Management Alternative*—Low cost infrastructure and bus transit improvements, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS), Travel Demand Management, bus operations, and Transportation Systems Management improvements will be included in this alternative.

3. *Commuter Rail Alternative*—A commuter rail line on the existing BNSF rail line to include all facilities associated with the construction and operations of the commuter rail line, including right-of-way, structures, track, stations, park-and-ride lots, storage and

maintenance facilities as well as the respective rail and bus operating plans will be elements of the alternative. The extension of the Hiawatha Corridor LRT service to the commuter rail line will be included in this alternative. The Commuter Rail Alternative will also incorporate the elements of the No-Build Alternative and will include feeder bus improvements to provide access from local and regional land uses to the commuter rail connection.

### IV. Probable Effects/Potential Impacts for Analysis

The FTA and the NCDA will evaluate significant environmental, social and economic impacts of the alternatives analyzed in the EIS. Primary environmental issues include: land use, historic and archeological resources, traffic and parking, noise and vibration, neighborhoods and environmental justice, floodplain encroachment, coordination with ongoing related transportation and economic development projects, and construction impacts. Other issues the EIS will address include natural areas, rare and endangered species, air and water quality, groundwater, energy, potentially contaminated sites, displacements and relocations, ecosystems, water resources, hazardous waste, parklands, and energy impacts. The impacts will be evaluated both for the construction period and for the long-term period of operation of each alternative. In addition, cumulative effects of the proposed project and any irreversible or ir retrievable commitment of resources will be identified. Measures to avoid or mitigate any significant adverse impacts will be developed.

### V. Procedures

In accordance with the regulations and guidance established by the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), as well as 23 CFR 450 and 23 CFR 771 of the FHWA/FTA planning and environmental regulations and policies, the DEIS will include an evaluation of the social, economic and environmental impact of the alternatives. The EIS will also comply with the requirements of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) and with the Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. The EIS will also meet the requirements of the US Environmental Protection Agency's transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR 93 and 23 CFR 450.322(b)(8)). After its publication, the DEIS will be available for public and agency review and comment. Public hearings will be held on the DEIS.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will consider the

public and agency comments received during the public and agency circulation of the DEIS and the NCDA will select the preferred alternative. Then the NCDA, with FTA as federal lead agency, will continue with the preparation of the FEIS. Opportunity for additional public comment will be provided throughout all phases of project development.

Issued on: June 1, 1999.

**Donald Gismond**,

*Deputy Regional Administrator.*

[FR Doc. 99-14325 Filed 6-4-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-57-P

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Maritime Administration

[Docket No. MARAD-99-5761]

### Information Collection Available for Public Comments and Recommendations; Notice and Request for Comments

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Maritime Administration's (MARAD's) intentions to request extension of approval for three years of a currently approved information collection.

**DATES:** Comments should be submitted on or before August 6, 1999.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Jeffrey McMahon, Office of Sealift Support, MAR-630, Maritime Administration, 400 Seventh St., S.W., Room 7307, Washington, D.C. 20590. Telephone: 202-366-2323, or FAX 202-366-3889.

Copies of this collection can also be obtained from that office.

### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*Title of Collection:* Application and Reporting Elements for Participation in the Maritime Security Program.

*Type of Request:* Extension of currently approved information collection.

*OMB Control Number:* 2133-0525.

*Form Numbers:* None.

*Expiration Date of Approval:* February 28, 2000.

*Summary of Collection of Information:* The Maritime Security Act of 1996 established the Maritime Security Program which supports the operations of U.S.-flag vessels in the foreign commerce of the United States through assistance payments. Participating vessel operators receive assistance payments and are required to make their ships and other commercial transportation resources available to the Government during times of war or

national emergency. The vessel operators who are interested in participating in the Maritime Security Fleet are required to submit an application to MARAD for its review and approval.

**Need and Use of the Information:** The collected information is necessary for MARAD to determine if selected vessels are qualified to participate in the Maritime Security Program.

**Description of Respondents:** Operators of U.S.-flag vessels who are interested in participating in the Maritime Security Fleet.

**Annual Responses:** Approximately 10–15.

**Annual Burden:** Approximately four to six hours.

**Comments:** Comments should refer to the docket number that appears at the top of this document. Written comments may be submitted to the Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20590. Comments may also be submitted by electronic means via the Internet at <http://dmses.dot.gov/submit/>. Specifically, address whether this information collection is necessary for proper performance of the function of the agency and will have practical utility, accuracy of the burden estimates, ways to minimize this burden and ways to enhance quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected. All comments received will be available for examination at the above address between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., ET., Monday through Friday, except Federal Holidays. An electronic version of this document and filings in this docket are available on the World Wide Web at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

By Order of the Maritime Administrator.

Dated: June 2, 1999.

**Joel C. Richard,**

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 99–14328 Filed 6–4–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–81–P

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 33753]

#### South Plains Switching, Ltd. Co.— Acquisition Exemption—The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company

South Plains Switching, Ltd. Co. (South Plains), a Class III rail common carrier, has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.41 to acquire approximately 67,784 feet of rail lines from The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF)<sup>1</sup> in Lubbock, TX, as follows: (1) former ATSF side tracks 0310–0313, 032, 0330–0332, 0340–0341, 0370, 0372–0373, 0380–0382, 0385, 0387, and 0390; and (2) former BN side tracks 9201–9204, 9208, 9220, 9298, 9310, 9320, 9322, 9330, Orchard Lead, 9304, 9311–9312, 9321, 9323–9326, 9331, 9333, 9401–9406, 9409–9412, 9415, and 9420–9424. In conjunction with the acquisition of these rail lines, South Plains will acquire approximately 18 miles of incidental trackage rights over BNSF's tracks 0340, 9200, 9205 and 9208 and BNSF's mainline between track 9298 and BNSF's Lower Yard at Lubbock.

The transaction is expected to be consummated on or shortly after June 4, 1999.

If the notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke does not automatically stay the transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 33753, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423–0001. In addition, a copy of each pleading must be served on William R. Power, Esq., 260 Cordovan Park, 5840 West Interstate Twenty, Arlington, TX 76017.

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

<sup>1</sup> On December 31, 1996, The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company (ATSF) merged with and into Burlington Northern Railroad Company (BN). The name of the surviving corporation of the merger is The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company.

Decided: May 28, 1999.

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

**Vernon A. Williams,**

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 99–14324 Filed 6–4–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915–00–P

## UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

### Culturally Significant Objects Imported for Exhibition; Determinations: “Discovering the Secrets of Soft Paste Porcelain in the Saint Cloud Manufactory, 1690–1766”

**AGENCY:** United States Information  
Agency.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** Notice is hereby given of the following determinations: Pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Act of October 19, 1965 (79 Stat. 985, 22 U.S.C. 2459), Executive Order 12047 of March 27, 1978 (43 FR 13359, March 29, 1978), and Delegation Order No. 85–5 of June 27, 1985 (50 FR 27393, July 2, 1985). I hereby determine that the objects to be included in the exhibit “Discovering the Secrets of Soft Paste Porcelain in the Saint Cloud Manufactory, 1690–1766,” imported from abroad for temporary exhibition without profit within the United States, are of cultural significance. These objects are imported pursuant to a loan agreement with the foreign lenders. I also determine that the exhibition or display of the listed exhibit objects at the Bard Graduate Center, New York, NY, from on or about July 14, 1999, to on or about October 24, 1999, is in the national interest. Public Notice of these determinations is ordered to be published in the **Federal Register**.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** For a copy of the list of exhibit objects or for further information, contact Carol Epstein, Assistant General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel, United States Information Agency, at 202/619–6981, or USIA, 301 4th Street, SW, Room 700, Washington, DC 20547–0001.

Dated: June 2, 1999.

**Les Jin,**

General Counsel.

[FR Doc. 99–14294 Filed 6–4–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8230–01–M