

SUMMARY: The FHWA has forwarded the information collection request described in this notice to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review and comment. We published a **Federal Register** Notice with a 60-day public comment period on this information collection on April 8, 2004 (69 FR 18672). We are required to publish this notice in the **Federal Register** by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Please submit comments by August 2, 2004.

ADDRESSES: You may send comments to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, 725 17th Street, NW., Washington, DC 20503, Attention: DOT Desk Officer. You are asked to comment on any aspect of this information collection, including: (1) Whether the proposed collection is necessary for the FHWA's performance; (2) the accuracy of the estimated burdens; (3) ways for the FHWA to enhance the quality, usefulness, and clarity of the collected information; and (4) ways that the burdens could be minimized, including the use of electronic technology, without reducing the quality of the collected information.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Ann Shemaka, (202) 366-1575, Office of Infrastructure, Office of Bridge Technology, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001. Office hours are from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Structure Inventory and Appraisal Sheet.

OMB Control Number: 2125-0501 (Expiration Date: July 31, 2004).

Abstract: The collection of the bridge information contained on the Structure Inventory and Appraisal Sheet (SI&A) is necessary to satisfy the requirements of Title 23 United States Code 144 and 151, and the Code of Federal Regulations, 23 Highways Part 650, Subpart C, National Bridge Inspection Standards (NBIS) and Subpart D, Highway Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program. The National Bridge Inspection Standards require bridge inspection and reporting at regular intervals for all bridges located on public roads. The bridge inspection information is provided to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on the Structure Inventory and Appraisal (SI&A) Sheets. The NBIS information is used for multiple purposes, including: (1) The determination of the condition

of the Nation's bridges; (2) as a basis for setting priorities for the replacement or rehabilitation of bridges under the Highway Bridge Replacement and Rehabilitation Program (HBRRP); and (3) for apportioning HBRRP funds to the States for bridge replacement or rehabilitation. In addition, the information is used for strategic national defense needs and for preparing the report to Congress on the status of the Nation's highway bridges and funding under the HBRRP.

Respondents: 50 State Transportation Departments, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Frequency: Biannual inspections and annual reporting.

Estimated Total Annual Burden: The estimated total annual burden is 540,000 hours. The average burden is two hours to complete each SI&A sheet on the approximate 270,000 bridges that are inspected annually. The total bridge inventory (rounded to 600,000) requires biannual inspections. Approximately 10-percent of the 270,000 bridges that are inspected each year receive an extended inspection. Some States voluntarily inspect bridges more frequently; however, these estimates do not include this information.

Authority: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995; 44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended; and 49 CFR 1.48.

Issued on: June 28, 2004.

James R. Kabel,

Chief, Management Programs and Analysis Division.

[FR Doc. 04-15045 Filed 7-1-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Preparation of Environmental Impact Statement for Transportation Improvements Within the Southeast Corridor Between Nashville and Murfreesboro, TN

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) is issuing this notice to advise interested agencies and the public that, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, FTA and the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for proposed transportation improvements in the

Southeast Corridor between downtown Nashville in Davidson County, Tennessee and Murfreesboro in Rutherford County, Tennessee.

DATES: Comment Due Date: Written comments on the scope of the EIS, including the alternatives and impacts to be considered, should be sent to the address listed under **ADDRESSES** below by August 14, 2004.

Interagency Scoping Meeting: An interagency scoping meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 14, 2004, from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at the Nashville Downtown Library, 615 Church Street, Conference Room 1, Nashville, Tennessee 37219. Representatives of agencies likely to have an interest in, or jurisdiction over any aspect of the project will be individually contacted and invited to the meeting.

Public Scoping Meetings: Public scoping meetings will be held on: Monday, July 12, 2004, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., at Smyrna Town Centre, 100 Sam Ridley Parkway, Smyrna, Tennessee 37167; Tuesday, July 13, 2004, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at Rutherford County Courthouse, Courthouse Square, Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37130; and Wednesday, July 14, 2004 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Nashville Downtown Library, 615 Church Street, Conference Room 1, Nashville, Tennessee 37219.

All scoping meetings will be held in wheelchair-accessible locations. If additional assistance, such as signing for the hearing impaired, is needed, please notify Jim McAteer of the Nashville Area MPO as indicated below under **ADDRESSES**.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope of the EIS, including the alternatives to be analyzed and the impacts to be considered, should be sent by August 14, 2004 to: Jim McAteer, Transit Planner, Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, 730 2nd Ave South, Nashville, TN 37201, Phone (615) 862-7204, Fax (615) 862-7209, e-mail mcateer@nashvillempo.org. Also contact Mr. McAteer to be placed on the project mailing list or to request a copy of the scoping information packet which is also on the Nashville MPO website at www.nashvillempo.org. The locations of the scoping meetings are given above under **DATES**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Doug Frate, Federal Transit Administration, 61 Forsyth Street, SW., Suite 17T50, Atlanta, GA 30303. Phone: (404) 562-3514.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: FTA, the Federal lead agency, in cooperation with the Nashville Area MPO, the local

lead agency, is preparing an EIS for proposed transportation improvements in the corridor between downtown Nashville in Davidson County, Tennessee and Murfreesboro in Rutherford County, Tennessee, known as the Southeast Corridor. Issues and alternatives will be identified through a scoping process in accordance with the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended.

I. Scoping

The Nashville Area MPO and FTA invite interested individuals, organizations, and Federal, State, and local agencies to participate in scoping the EIS. Scoping participants are invited to comment on the alternatives to be addressed; the modes and technologies to be evaluated; the alignments and station locations to be considered; the environmental, social, and economic impacts to be analyzed; and the evaluation approach to be used to select a locally preferred alternative. Interested individuals, organizations, or agencies may propose the consideration of an additional, specific alternative or the study of a specific environmental effect associated with an alternative. Scoping comments should focus on the issues and alternatives for analysis, and not on preference for particular alternatives. (Individual preference for particular alternatives should be communicated during the comment period for the Draft EIS.) Comments may be made at the scoping meetings or in writing no later than August 14, 2004, as described in **DATES** and **ADDRESSES** above. After the scoping process, the MPO will conduct a planning Alternatives Analysis to decide what transportation improvements in the Southeast Corridor should be incorporated into its regional transportation plan. The EIS will incorporate the planning Alternatives Analysis by reference and evaluate the surviving alternatives in detail.

II. Description of Study Area

The study area, known as the Southeast Corridor, links the cities of Nashville in Davidson County and LaVergne, Smyrna and Murfreesboro in Rutherford County, all of which are within the MPO's area of responsibility for transportation planning. Nashville is the second largest city in Tennessee with a population of roughly 570,000. The central business district houses the Tennessee State Offices, music attractions, and the Tennessee Titans football team which brings visitors from across the state. Nashville draws approximately 132,000 commuters from surrounding counties, about 25,000 of

whom come from Rutherford County. Murfreesboro is the southernmost terminus of the study corridor and lies about 30 miles southeast of Nashville. It has a population of roughly 75,000 and is home to Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), which has an enrollment of about 21,000, of whom 3,500 live on the campus. Smyrna has a population of approximately 25,600 and LaVergne has an approximate population of 18,700. The estimated population along the corridor is 260,050.

The two primary north-south thoroughfares within the corridor are Murfreesboro Road, also known as U.S. 41/70S, and Interstate 24 (I-24). This corridor experiences significant levels of traffic congestion within the 30-mile segment of I-24 between Nashville and Murfreesboro, handling between 91,000 and 133,000 average daily annual trips. Murfreesboro Road has between 20,600 and 37,400 average annual daily trips. Some of the potential trip attractors/generators along the corridor include Nashville International Airport, and MTSU and major employers such as Dell Computer and regional shopping malls, commercial services, office parks, hospitals and the downtown core of Nashville. LaVergne and Smyrna form a major employment area known as "Interchange City," which is home to a Nissan manufacturing plant, Bridgestone and other major industries.

Few options exist in the corridor to provide alternatives to driving in heavily congested conditions. Improvements are needed to address traffic volumes that increase annually and the corresponding traffic congestion that is projected to occur. The planning Alternatives Analysis will examine alignments, technologies, station locations, cost, funding, ridership, economic development, land use, engineering feasibility, and environmental concerns. During this Alternatives Analysis process, the MPO will also evaluate options for transportation improvements in this corridor that do not involve significant capital investment.

III. Alternatives

The alternatives initially proposed for consideration in the Southeast Corridor include:

1. No Action Alternative: Based on projects included in the local transportation improvement plan (TIP) and financially-constrained long-range transportation plan, with no new change to transportation services or facilities in the area beyond already committed projects.

2. Transportation System Management Alternative: A low-cost alternative will be developed to include minor improvements to intersections, traffic signals, demand management and system management programs, bus services and facilities and other modifications to the transportation system that can be made without major investments in infrastructure or equipment.

3. Build Alternatives: Three alternatives, combining various types of major investments to meet the travel needs of the corridor, will be developed. These "build" alternatives most likely will include the development of busway or bus rapid transit, light rail transit, and conventional commuter rail technology along various existing rights-of-way in the corridor.

Based on public and agency input received during scoping, variations of the above alternatives and other transportation-related improvement options, both transit and non-transit, will be considered for the Southeast Corridor.

IV. Potential Impacts for Analysis

The FTA and MPO will consider all social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with the alternatives under consideration. Potential environmental issues to be addressed include: land use, historic and archaeological resources, traffic and parking, noise and vibration, environmental justice, floodplain encroachments, coordination with other transportation and economic development projects, and construction impacts. Other issues to be addressed include: natural areas, ecosystems, rare and endangered species, water resources, air quality, surface water and groundwater quality, contaminated sites, displacements and relocations, and parklands. The potential impacts will be evaluated for both the construction period and the long-term operations period of each alternative considered. In addition, the cumulative effects of the alternatives on major resources identified in the study area will be analyzed. Measures to avoid or mitigate any significant adverse impacts will be developed.

V. FTA Procedures

In accordance with FTA policy, all Federal laws, regulations, and executive orders affecting project development, including but not limited to the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality and FTA implementing NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500-1508, and 23 CFR part 771), the Clean Air Act, section 404 of the Clean

Water Act, Executive Order 12898 regarding environmental justice, the National Historic Preservation Act, the Endangered Species Act, and section 4(f) of the DOT Act, will be addressed to the maximum extent practicable during the NEPA process. In addition, the MPO may seek section 5309 New Starts funding for the project and will therefore be subject to the FTA New Starts regulation (49 CFR part 611). This New Starts regulation requires the submission of certain specified information to FTA to support a request to initiate preliminary engineering, which is normally done in conjunction with the NEPA process.

After the scoping process, the MPO will conduct a planning Alternatives Analysis to decide what transportation improvements in the Southeast Corridor should be incorporated into its regional transportation plan. The planning Alternatives Analysis will examine alignments, technologies, station locations, cost, funding, ridership, economic development, land use, engineering feasibility, and environmental concerns. The Draft EIS will incorporate the planning Alternatives Analysis by reference and evaluate the surviving alternatives in detail. After its publication, the Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment, and public hearings will be held on the Draft EIS. The Final EIS will consider comments received during the Draft EIS public review and will identify the preferred alternative. Additional opportunities for public involvement will be provided throughout all phases of project development.

Issued on: June 28, 2004.

Hiram J. Walker,

Regional Administrator.

[FR Doc. 04-15054 Filed 7-1-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-57-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Ex Parte No. 646]

Rail Rate Challenges in Small Cases

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board.

ACTION: Notice of public hearing.

SUMMARY: The Surface Transportation Board will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, July 21, 2004, at its offices in Washington, DC, to provide interested persons an opportunity to express their views on the subject of Board processing of rail rate challenges that are not suitable for handling under

the Board's constrained market pricing procedures. Persons wishing to speak at the hearing should notify the Board in writing.

DATES: The public hearing will take place on Wednesday, July 21, 2004. Any person wishing to speak at the hearing should file with the Board a written notice of intent to participate, and should indicate a requested time allotment, as soon as possible but no later than July 9, 2004. Each speaker should also file with the Board his/her written testimony by July 16, 2004.

ADDRESSES: All notices of intent to participate and testimony may be submitted either via the Board's e-filing format or in the traditional paper format. Any person using e-filing should comply with the instructions found on the Board's <http://www.stb.dot.gov> Web site, at the "E-FILING" link. Any person submitting a filing in the traditional paper format should send an original and 10 paper copies of the filing (referring to STB Ex Parte No. 646) to: Surface Transportation Board, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-0001.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joseph H. Dettmar, (202) 565-1609. (Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at: (800) 877-8339.)

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Board will hold a public hearing to provide a forum for the expression of views by rail shippers, railroads, and other interested persons, regarding rail rate challenges in small cases to be considered by the Board. This hearing will provide a forum for the oral discussion of any proposals that interested persons might wish to offer for handling small cases involving a challenge to the reasonableness of rates charged by a rail carrier. The Board is also interested in participants' views on how "small rate cases" should be defined or identified.

Date of Hearing. The hearing will begin at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, July 21, 2004, in the 7th floor hearing room at the Board's headquarters in Washington, DC, and will continue, with short breaks if necessary, until every person scheduled to speak has been heard.

Notice of Intent To Participate. Any person wishing to speak at the hearing should file a notice of intent to participate and a requested time allotment, as soon as possible but no later than July 9, 2004.

Testimony. Each speaker should file written testimony with the Board by July 16, 2004.

Board Releases and Live Audio Available Via the Internet. Decisions

and notices of the Board, including this notice, are available on the Board's Web site at <http://www.stb.dot.gov>. This hearing will be available on the Board's Web site by live audio streaming. To access the hearing, click on the "Live Audio" link under "Information Center" at the left side of the home page beginning at 10 a.m. on July 21, 2004.

This action will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

Dated: June 29, 2004.

Vernon A. Williams,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 04-15094 Filed 7-1-04; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 422X)]

The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company—Abandonment Exemption—in Snohomish County, WA

The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon and discontinue service over a 0.99-mile line of railroad between milepost 38.01 and milepost 39.00 in Snohomish, Snohomish County, WA. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Code 98290.¹

BNSF has certified that: (1) No local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) there is no overhead traffic to be rerouted; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

¹ Pursuant to 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(2), the railroad must file a verified notice with the Board at least 50 days before the abandonment or discontinuance is to be consummated. The applicant initially indicated a proposed consummation date of August 2, 2004, but because the verified notice was filed on June 15, 2004, consummation may not take place prior to August 4, 2004. By facsimile filed on June 18, 2004, applicant's representative confirmed that the consummation date will be August 4, 2004.