

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the Texas Turnpike Authority Division (TTA) of the Texas Department of Transportation, will prepare a joint MIS/EIS for a proposed project to relieve traffic congestion on U.S. Highway 183 and within the Cities of Cedar Park and Leander and adjacent portions of Williamson County, Texas. Alternatives to be considered for this project include upgrading the existing U.S. Highway 183 or constructing a traffic reliever route, known as U.S. Highway 183A, on new location. If ultimately selected as the recommended action, U.S. Highway 183A would be located parallel and northeast of existing U.S. Highway 183, beginning at Lakeline Boulevard, south of Cedar Park, Texas, and running north to a terminus with existing U.S. Highway 183 north of Leander, Texas. If constructed, the ultimate facility design for U.S. Highway 183A is anticipated to be a six-lane controlled access roadway with intermittent frontage roads and overpasses at major thoroughfares. The total length of U.S. Highway 183A would be approximately ten and one-half miles.

Other improvements to be considered within the U.S. Highway 183 corridor include implementing Transportation System Management (TSM) and/or Travel Demand Management (TDM) improvements for U.S. Highway 183. The TSM alternative would involve implementing only those activities which maximize the efficiency of existing U.S. Highway 183, such as improved traffic signal timing, more efficient accident removal, or the addition of turn lanes. TDM improvements could include strategies such as flex time, telecommuting, or other control measures to reduce travel time. Ongoing regional high occupancy vehicle (HOV) studies, toll road studies, as well as the combination of a fixed guideway facility (light rail) and/or commuter rail facility will be considered for integration with the proposed U.S. Highway 183A.

The MIS portion of the study will analyze the various mobility alternatives in the U.S. Highway 183 corridor as described above. Information on the costs, benefits, and impact of the alternatives will lead to decisions by TTA, FHWA, the Texas Department of Transportation and the Austin Transportation Study, the metropolitan planning organization for the Austin-area, on the design concept and scope of the investment.

For all alternatives being considered, the DEIS will include an analysis of the cost of the right-of-way, the numbers and types of relocations necessary,

engineering constraints and limitations due to topography, and potential environmental impacts involving land use, socioeconomic conditions, water resources, air quality, noise, traffic, ecological/cultural resources and hazardous material sites. At the present stage of the planning process, no preferred alternative has been selected. More in-depth studies will be conducted after a preferred alternative is chosen to avoid and/or minimize impacts to human, cultural and ecological resources. All studies will be coordinated through appropriate local, state and federal agencies.

If construction of U.S. Highway 183A is ultimately selected as the preferred alternative, the TTA will conduct a toll feasibility study to evaluate the viability of developing U.S. Highway 183A as a toll road and financing it, in whole or in part, through the issuance of revenue bonds. The toll road designation will not influence the selection of a preferred alternative. Proposed alternatives, including alternative alignments for U.S. Highway 183A, will be evaluated for how well they meet the established purpose and need for the proposed project. Any impacts owing to the toll road designation will be discussed in the environmental impact statement.

An initial public meeting for the proposed U.S. 183 project was held in 1990. However, the project progression was slowed shortly after that meeting due to resource and budget shortfalls. In 1995, the project was revived and another public meeting was held on May 22, 1996. At the meeting, mobility concerns within the U.S. Highway 183 corridor were raised and a proposed corridor for U.S. Highway 183A was shown. A Major Investment Study public initiation meeting was held on May 12, 1998, in Cedar Park, Texas, that provided more information on the modal alternatives for the corridor, alternative alignments being considered for the corridor and some of the potential impacts associated with each alternative.

In continuation of the scoping process for the proposed project, on November 10, 1998, the TTA will conduct another public meeting to discuss the proposed improvements within the U.S. Highway 183 corridor. The purpose of the public meeting will be to receive comments on the proposed project and possible alignments for the U.S. 183A alternative. The meeting will be held in the gymnasium of Giddens Elementary School, 1500 Timberwood Drive, Cedar Park, Texas 78613. From 6 to 7 p.m., displays showing the project corridor and possible alignments for the U.S. Highway 183A alternative will be

available for review. During this time, TTA staff will be available to answer questions. At 7 p.m. there will be a formal project presentation followed by a public comment period. All interested citizens are invited to attend this meeting.

A public hearing will be held after publication of the Draft MIS/EIS. Public notice will be given of the time and place of the hearing. The Draft MIS/EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing.

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 MIS/EIS should be directed to the FHWA or TTA at the addresses provided above.

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

Walter C. Waidelich,

District Engineer, Austin, Texas.

[FR Doc. 98-29526 Filed 11-3-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century; Implementation Information for Innovative Bridge Research and Construction Program Funds

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This document publishes implementation information on the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) enacted on June 9, 1998, for eligible candidate projects in Fiscal Years 1998 and 1999 concerned with the innovative bridge research and construction program. The FHWA is issuing this notice to specifically address the construction of bridges using innovative materials. Implementation information materials on this topic were issued to FHWA region and division offices on July 29, 1998. This material describes activities eligible for funding for the program, the application process, and criteria used to evaluate candidate projects. This notice further identifies all statutory and regulatory criteria applicable to the program.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For bridge program: Mr. George P. Romack, HNG-33, Office of Engineering, (202) 366-4606, or Mr. John Hooks, Office of Technology Applications, HTA-22, (202) 366-6712; for legal issues: Mr. Wilbert Baccus, HCC-32, Office of the Chief Counsel, (202) 366-1396, Federal Highway Administration, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, D.C. 20590. Office hours are from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

An electronic copy of this document may be downloaded using a modem and suitable communications software from the Government Printing Office Electronic Bulletin Board Service at (202) 512-1661. Internet users may reach the **Federal Register's** home page at: <http://www.nara.gpo.fedreg> and the Government Printing Office's database at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara>.

Background

The TEA-21 (Pub. L. 105-178, 112 Stat. 107) implementation material published in this notice is provided for informational purposes. Specific questions on any of the material published in this notice should be directed to the contact person named in the caption **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** for this program.

Publication of this implementation information for the innovative bridge research and construction program satisfies the requirement of section 9004(a) of the TEA-21 Restoration Act, Pub. L. 105-206, 112 Stat. 685 (1998).

(Authority: 23 U.S.C. 315 and 503; 49 CFR 1.48)

Issued on: October 28, 1998.

Kenneth R. Wykle,

Administrator, Federal Highway Administration.

The text of the FHWA implementation guidelines memorandum follows:

July 29, 1998.

(HNG-33)

Action: Request for Candidates

Innovative Bridge Research and Construction Program (*Reply Due:* September 1, 1998)

Director, Office of Engineering
Regional Administrators
Division Administrators

The purpose of this memorandum is to solicit candidate projects from the States for using innovative materials in the repair, rehabilitation, replacement and new construction of bridges. The TEA-21 establishes Title V—

Transportation Research and sets up substantial annual funding to demonstrate the application of innovative material technology for bridge construction. The new Section 503(b) provides for an Innovative Bridge Research and Construction program. Research, development and technology transfer portion of the program is funded at \$1 million per year, and the construction portion at a level of \$10 million in FY 1998 to a high of \$20 million in FY 2003. These figures will be adjusted to reflect any obligation limitations.

The seven goals of the program are specified in 503(b)(2), and emphasize new materials and construction techniques to reduce maintenance and life-cycle costs. The construction provision specifies funding to the States to pay the Federal share of the cost of repair, rehabilitation, replacement, and new construction of bridges using innovative materials. The TEA-21 allows the Federal share to vary and instructs the Secretary of Transportation to determine the Federal share (percentage) of the cost of a project under this section. Actual percentages will depend on the number of projects, the types of innovative technologies, and the cost of the candidate projects.

We are requesting your assistance to identify candidate bridge projects to allocate FY 1998 and FY 1999 funds to demonstrate innovative bridge materials. For the remaining years of the program, annual solicitations will be made sufficiently in advance to allow allocation by the beginning of the fiscal year. Please discuss the program with your State transportation departments to determine their interest in the program and solicit their candidate projects. Examples of innovative materials include high performance concrete, high performance steel, aluminum and fiber reinforced polymer composites. It is likely there are other innovative materials that your State has considered or would like to consider.

Preliminary engineering and construction are eligible work, although construction projects will be given priority consideration. Also, the program would support projects to develop design standards, specifications, and material applications that would lead to continuing use of innovative materials. Bridges on all public roads, including State and locally funded projects, are eligible. These funds may be used for the Federal share of the cost of the construction of the "innovative materials" portion of the project. A consideration in the selection will also be a State's willingness to provide performance data for a

reasonable period of time during and after construction. Examples of documentation during construction include photographs and written accounts of the methods and techniques used to incorporate the innovative material into the project.

Attached is an application form which is to be used for candidate projects. The State's application should describe the innovative material(s), how it is being used in the project, and how the project meets one or more of the program goals. The application should be completed and submitted along with supporting documents that provide a further description of the project including the scope of work. Please furnish your response by September 1, 1998.

In this initial call for candidate projects for the program, all project applications will be evaluated by the FHWA on a case-by-case basis and being [sic] guided by the goals set out in TEA-21. Thereafter, the FHWA will be working with States and industry partners to develop more definitive project selection methods and criteria for determining the appropriate Federal share of the project costs.

Any questions concerning this program should be addressed to George Romack of the Bridge Division at (202) 366-4606 or John Hooks of the Office of Technology Applications at (202) 366-6712.

Henry H. Rentz

APPLICATION

TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENT

INNOVATIVE BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

State _____
Project Type (New construction, replacement, rehabilitation, or repair) _____

NBI Structure No. _____
Location (e.g., county, city, route) _____

Structure Description (e.g., spans, length, width, design, material) _____

Innovative Material (Describe the material, how it is used and how the project meets one or more of the program goals) _____

Schedule for start of work (Month/year) _____

Cost Estimates

Total project cost _____
Cost of "innovative material" portion of construction project _____

Preliminary engineering cost, if requested _____ Cost of innovative material performance evaluation (e.g., a 2-year post-construction period) _____ Total funds requested _____

TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYMENT INNOVATIVE BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM FUNDING

Year	1998(TEA21)	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Authorization	\$10M	\$15M	\$17M	\$20M	\$20M	\$20M

- Section 5001 of the Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) authorized the sums shown to be available to the States for projects to demonstrate innovative materials relating to repair, rehabilitation, and construction of bridges.
 - The Federal share of project costs may vary and is to be determined by the Secretary.

Eligibility

- Funds are available for bridge projects that meet one or more of the seven program goals listed in Section 503(b)(2) of TEA-21.
 - The project may be on any public roadway, including State and locally funded projects.
 - Funds are available for preliminary engineering, construction and project performance evaluations costs.

Selection Criteria

- For FY 1998 and 1999 allocations, the FHWA will select candidate projects using the following criteria:
 - Projects which will meet one or more of the goals of the program
 - Projects which will incorporate materials and/or products that are available
 - Projects ready for or near the construction phase will be given priority consideration
 - Projects that leverage Federal funds with other significant public or private resources will given preference
 - Projects with designs that are repeatable or have wide spread application
 - For subsequent years, the FHWA will select candidate projects utilizing input from a panel of experts from the States and industry using the criteria above.

Schedule

- The following is the schedule for the program:
 - 8/98 Call for FY 1998-99 projects
 - 12/98 Selection of FY 1998-99 project
- The following schedule will be used for subsequent years for the program:
 - 4/99-02 Call for projects
 - 10/99-02 Selection of projects

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA-98-3983; Notice 2]

Mercedes-Benz of North America, Inc., Grant of Application for Decision of Inconsequential Noncompliance

Mercedes-Benz of North America, Inc. (Mercedes-Benz) of Montvale, New Jersey has determined that some 1998 Mercedes-Benz M-class vehicles fail to comply with 49 CFR 571.120, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 120, "Tire selection and rims for vehicles other than passenger cars," and has filed an appropriate report pursuant to 49 CFR Part 573, "Defect and noncompliance reports." Mercedes-Benz has also applied to be exempted from the notification and remedy requirements of 49 U.S.C. Chapter 301—"Motor Vehicle Safety" on the basis that the noncompliance is inconsequential to motor vehicle safety.

Notice of receipt of the application was published, with a 30-day comment period, on July 13, 1998, in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 37620). NHTSA received no comments on this application during the 30-day comment period.

Mercedes-Benz states that 35,357 vehicles were produced from the beginning of production in January 1997 through April 13, 1998, which do not meet the labeling requirements stated in FMVSS No. 120. Mercedes-Benz equipped the vehicles with tire information labels on the fuel filler door that specify the tire size, rim size, and cold inflation pressure. The information is formatted differently than required by FMVSS No. 120. The size of the letters and numerals is also smaller than the required minimum of 2.4 millimeters. The label should have been affixed to the hinge pillar, the door-latch post, the door edge that meets the latch post, or next to the driver's seating position. If these locations are impractical, the label shall be affixed to the inward-facing surface of the door next to the driver's seating position. However, if all of the preceding locations are not practical, the manufacturer can notify NHTSA, in writing, and request approval for an

alternate location in the same general location

Mercedes-Benz supported its application for inconsequential noncompliance with the following statements:

1. With regards to the content of the label, all the information required by FMVSS No. 120 is contained in the label including recommended tire size, rim size, and cold inflation pressure.

2. Although the height of the labeling is less than the required minimum of 2.4 mm, the letters in the labels are of sufficient size and color to be easily read.

3. With regards to the labeling format, Mercedes-Benz believes that placing the English units before the metric units is not a noncompliance that affects vehicle safety, because consumers in the U.S. are generally more familiar with English units of measurement than metric units.

4. Regarding the location of the tire information label, Mercedes-Benz believes that consumers interested in checking their tire pressure labels would likely perform this check at gas stations, convenience stores, or auto repair facilities. In some cases, this label's location serves as a reminder to check the tire pressure.

5. Based on the convenient location of the tire information label, the reference information in the owner's manual, and the maximum inflation pressure marked on the tire, Mercedes-Benz believes that the tire information label on the fuel filler door is an inconsequential noncompliance.

The purpose of FMVSS No. 120 is to provide safe operation of vehicles by ensuring that those vehicles are equipped with tires of appropriate size and load rating; and rims of appropriate size and type designation. Paragraph S5.3, Label information, of FMVSS No. 120 states that each vehicle shall show the appropriate tire information (such as: recommended cold inflation pressure) and rim information (such as: size and type designations) in the English language. This information must appear either on the certification label or a tire information label, lettered in block capitals and numerals not less