

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Last year's report may be found on USTR's Internet Home Page (www.ustr.gov) under the section on Reports. This year we have added the following African countries to the report: the Southern African Customs Union (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland (in addition to South Africa)); the West African Economic and Monetary Union (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo); and the Customs and Economic Union of Central Africa (Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Gabon).

In addition, the new Internet Tax Freedom Act has added a new section to the NTE relating to U.S. electronic commerce. Finally, in order to ensure compliance with the statutory mandate for reporting foreign trade barriers that are significant, we will focus particularly on those restrictions where there has been active private sector interest.

The information submitted should relate to one or more of the following ten categories of foreign trade barriers:

- (1) import policies (e.g., tariffs and other import charges, quantitative restrictions, import licensing, and customs barriers);
- (2) standards, testing, labeling, and certification (including unnecessarily restrictive application of phytosanitary standards, refusal to accept U.S. manufacturers' self-certification of conformance to foreign product standards, and environmental restrictions);
- (3) government procurement (e.g., "buy national" policies and closed bidding);
- (4) export subsidies (e.g., export financing on preferential terms and agricultural export subsidies that displace U.S. exports in third country markets);
- (5) lack of intellectual property protection (e.g., inadequate patent, copyright, and trademark regimes);
- (6) services barriers (e.g., limits on the range of financial services offered by foreign financial institutions, regulation of international data flows, restrictions on the use of data processing, quotas on imports of foreign films, and barriers to the provision of services by professionals (e.g., lawyers, doctors, accountants, engineers, nurses, etc.));
- (7) investment barriers (e.g., limitations on foreign equity participation and on access to foreign government-funded R&D consortia, local content, technology transfer and export performance requirements, and restrictions on repatriation of earnings, capital, fees and royalties);

(8) anticompetitive practices with trade effects tolerated by foreign governments (including anticompetitive activities of both state-owned and private firms that apply to services or to goods and that restrict the sale of U.S. products to any firm, not just to foreign firms that perpetuate the practices;

(9) trade restrictions affecting electronic commerce (e.g., tariff and non-tariff measures, burdensome and discriminatory regulations and standards, and discriminatory taxation; and

(10) other barriers (i.e., barriers that encompass more than one category, e.g., bribery and corruption, or that affect a single sector).

As in the case of last year's NTE, we are asking that particular emphasis be placed on any practices that may violate U.S. trade agreements. We are also interested in receiving any new or updated information pertinent to the barriers covered in last year's report as well as new information. Please note that the information not used in the NTE will be maintained for use in future negotiations.

It is most important that your submission contain estimates of the potential increase in exports that would result from the removal of the barrier, as well as a clear discussion of the method(s) by which the estimates were computed. Estimates should fall within the following value ranges: less than \$5 million; \$5 to \$25 million; \$25 million to \$50 million; \$50 million to \$100 million; \$100 million to \$500 million; or over \$500 million. Such assessments enhance USTR's ability to conduct meaningful comparative analyses of a barrier's effect over a range of industries.

Please note that interested parties discussing barriers in more than one country should provide a separate submission (i.e., one that is self-contained) for each country.

Written Comments

All written comments should be addressed to: Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, Trade Policy Staff Committee, Office of the United States Trade Representative, 600 17th Street NW, Room 501, Washington, DC 20508.

All submissions must be in English and should conform to the information requirements of 15 CFR 2003. A party must provide ten copies of its submission which must be received at USTR no later than December 4, 1998.

If the submission contains business confidential information, ten copies of a confidential version must also be submitted. A justification as to why the information contained in the

submission should be treated confidentially must be included in the submission. In addition, any submissions containing business confidential information must be clearly marked "Confidential" at the top and bottom of the cover page (or letter) and of each succeeding page of the submission. The version that does not contain confidential information should also be clearly marked, at the top and bottom of each page, "public version" or "non-confidential."

Written comments submitted in correction with this request, except for information granted "business confidential" status pursuant to 15 CFR 2003.6, will be available for public inspection shortly after the filing deadline. Inspection is by appointment only with the staff of the USTR Public Reading Room and can be arranged by calling Brenda Webb (202) 395-6186. The Reading Room is open to the public from 9:30 a.m. to 12 noon, and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Frederick L. Montgomery,

Chairman, Trade Policy Staff Committee.

[FR Doc. 98-29506 Filed 11-3-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement: Williamson County, Texas

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that a Major Investment Study (MIS) and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared for a proposed U.S. Highway 183 corridor improvement project in Williamson County, Texas. The study corridor includes the existing U.S. Highway 183 alignment and the general area located east of existing U.S. Highway 183. The study limits extend from approximately Lakeline Boulevard, located north of RM 620 and south of the City of Cedar Park, to north of the City of Leander, south of the San Gabriel River.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Walter C. Waidelich, District Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, Room 826, Federal Building, 300 East 8th Street, Austin, Texas 78701. Stacey Benningfield, Texas Turnpike Authority, Texas Department of Transportation, 125 East 11th Street, Austin, Texas 78701-2483.

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.