

Annual Burden: 2,500.

Title: "Supplemental Information for PLP/SBA, Express Processing".

Type of Request: New Collection.

Form No: SBA Form 2093.

Description of Respondents: SBA Express Lenders.

Annual Responses: 10,000.

Annual Burden: 2,500.

Comments: Send all comments regarding these information collections to, Charles Thomas, Financial Analyst, Pilot Operations Branch, Office of Financial Assistance, Small Business Administration, 409 3rd Street SW, Suite 8300, Washington, DC 20416. Phone No.: 202-205-6656.

Send comments regarding whether these information collections are necessary for the proper performance of the function of the agency, accuracy of burden estimate, in addition to ways to minimize these estimates, and ways to enhance the quality.

Jacqueline K. White,

Chief, Administrative Information Branch.

[FR Doc. 98-32761 Filed 12-9-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8025-01-P

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

[Declaration of Disaster #3146]

State of Kansas; Amendment #3

In accordance with information received from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the above-numbered Declaration is hereby amended to include the Counties of Johnson, Leavenworth, Marion, and Wyandotte in the State of Kansas as a disaster area due to damages caused by severe storms and flooding beginning on October 30, 1998 and continuing through November 15, 1998.

In addition, applications for economic injury loans from small businesses located in the following contiguous counties may be filed until the specified date at the previously designated location: Atchison, Dickinson, and Saline Counties in the State of Kansas, and Cass, Clay, Jackson, and Platte Counties in the State of Missouri. Any counties contiguous to the above-named primary counties and not listed herein have been previously declared.

The number for economic injury in the State of Missouri is 9A5800.

All other information remains the same, i.e., the deadline for filing applications for physical damage is January 4, 1999 and for economic injury the termination date is August 5, 1999.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Nos. 59002 and 59008)

Dated: December 2, 1998.

Bernard Kulik,

Associate Administrator for Disaster Assistance.

[FR Doc. 98-32760 Filed 12-9-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8025-01-P

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

World Trade Organization (WTO)

AGENCY: Office of the United States Trade Representative.

ACTION: Solicitation of Public Comment Regarding U.S. Preparations for Multilateral Negotiations on Government Procurement Issues.

SUMMARY: The Trade Policy Staff Committee (TPSC) is providing notice of the U.S. intention to develop proposals and positions related to negotiations on government procurement issues under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Committee of Participants of the WTO Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) are engaged in negotiations on the potential improvement of that Agreement, as provided for in Article XXIV.7(b) of that Agreement. The current text of the GPA is available on the WTO world wide web site, at www.wto.org/wto/govt/agreem.htm. Currently, there are 26 participants in the GPA (see the supplementary information, below).

As previously noted in section IV of the TPSC's August 19, 1998 notice of preparations for the third Ministerial Conference of the WTO (**Federal Register**, Volume 63, number 160, pages 44500-44502), the TPSC is also developing proposals and positions related to WTO consultations and negotiations on transparency in government procurement under the ongoing WTO work program agreed at the December 1996 WTO Ministerial Conference in Singapore.

The TPSC invites public comment regarding the development of the agenda, scope, content and timetables for these negotiations. The Administration seeks views on the broadest possible range of issues for consideration, including the content of international rules relating to government procurement and specific U.S. market access interests. The deadline for written comments is Friday, January 15, 1999.

Decisions on the potential improvement of the GPA will be based on consensus among the 26 participants to the Agreement. Decisions related to the development of a potential WTO Agreement on Transparency in

Government Procurement will be based on consensus among WTO Members. This solicitation is intended to facilitate the Administration's preparation of U.S. proposals and positions for these negotiations, and acceptance of such proposals by participants.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For procedural questions on the provision of public comments, contact Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, Trade Policy Staff Committee, Office of the United States Trade Representative, (202) 395-3475. For questions relating to the substance of WTO negotiations on transparency in government procurement or of negotiations on the improvement of the GPA, contact John Ellis, Director for Government Procurement, at 202/395-3063.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. The WTO Working Group on Transparency in Government Procurement

At the December 1996 WTO Ministerial Conference in Singapore, WTO members agreed to "establish a working group to conduct a study on transparency in government procurement practices, taking into account national policies, and, based on this study, to develop elements for inclusion in an appropriate agreement." Taking into account the significant progress that has been made to date in the study phase of the Working Group's mandate, the trade ministers of the United States, the European Union, Japan, and Canada have called for the conclusion of a WTO agreement on transparency in government by the time of the Third WTO Ministerial Conference, scheduled for late 1999 in the United States.

II. The WTO Government Procurement Agreement (GPA)

The GPA, which entered into force on January 1, 1996, is a "plurilateral" agreement included in Annex 4 to the WTO Agreement. As such, it is not part of the WTO "single undertaking" and its Membership is limited to WTO Members that specifically signed it in Marrakesh or that subsequently accede to it. The GPA's current Membership include the United States, the member states of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom), the Kingdom of the Netherlands with respect to Aruba, Canada, Hong Kong China, Israel, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Norway, Singapore, and Switzerland. Iceland,

Panama and Chinese Taipei are in the process of negotiating accession. Under their protocols of accession to the WTO, Bulgaria, Mongolia and Slovenia have committed to join the GPA.

The GPA is the successor to the first international Agreement on Government Procurement, also known as the Government Procurement Code, which was negotiated during the 1975-1979 Tokyo Round and entered into effect on January 1, 1981. The GPA made important improvements to the Code, including prohibition on the use of offsets (unless specifically provided for in the GPA annex) and a requirement that each Party establish independent review bodies to rule on bid challenges. The GPA also provided significantly greater market access coverage, including the addition of commitments relating to a wide range of service sectors and the inclusion of sub-central (i.e., state) governments and government-owned enterprises. State procurement entities of 37 U.S. states are currently covered by the GPA.

The WTO Secretariat estimates that the value of government procurement opportunities covered under the GPA exceeds \$400 billion annually. The export opportunities for U.S. products and services are immense, ranging from basic agricultural and other commodities to sophisticated services and manufactured goods and technologies.

To ensure that the rules of GPA remain up to date and to maintain progress in creating new trade opportunities in this area, Article XXIV.7 of the GPA specifically called for renewed negotiations within three years of the entry into force of the Agreement, i.e., by January 1, 1999. Many current GPA participants view these negotiations as an opportunity to simplify the Agreement in a way that will make it more accessible to a wider range of international participants.

A. Modalities for Negotiations

At its June 1998 meeting, the Committee of GPA Participants agreed to proceed with the negotiations called for under Article XXIV.7 on the following basis:

(1) The Committee will aim to complete negotiations on the simplification and improvement of the Agreement by the third WTO Ministerial at the end of 1999, with a view, in particular, to increasing the attractiveness of the Agreement to new members; and

(2) The Committee will, in parallel, continue work on the removal of discriminatory measures and practices incorporated in the individual members'

annexes to the Agreement and on the expansion of the market access coverage.

The Committee agreed that Participants' formal proposals on the simplification and improvement of the Agreement should be submitted to the Committee no later than April 1999.

B. Substantive Issues

Issues for the review process that have been highlighted to date by GPA participants, and on which public comment is solicited, include:

(1) Whether the text of the GPA should be re-organized or simplified in order to make the Agreement more understandable to officials responsible for its implementation, while maintaining its effectiveness in ensuring open and competitive procurement procedures;

(2) Whether the Agreement should be updated to accommodate electronic communications and other emerging technologies used in modern procurement systems, while ensuring equitable access for potential suppliers with different technological capabilities;

(3) Whether the use of electronic communications and other emerging technologies allows for greater flexibility in the minimum time periods for submission of bids established under the Agreement, while ensuring that all international bidders have adequate time to participate;

(4) Whether the GPA's statistical reporting requirements can be simplified, while preserving participants' ability to effectively monitor implementation of the Agreement;

(5) Whether there should be greater flexibility for developing country participants in implementing GPA requirements and whether GPA participants' procuring entities should be more flexible in assessing developing country suppliers' bids on covered procurements;

(6) Whether specific conditions and exceptions to GPA participants' current market access commitments (in Appendix 1 to the Agreement) should be removed in order to provide more uniform and understandable GPA market access coverage; and

(7) Whether GPA participants' market access commitments should be expanded to cover additional goods and service sectors and additional central and sub-central government entities.

In the context of the GPA review process, the TPSC also seeks public comments on:

(1) Any specific GPA-participant procurement entities or markets not currently covered by the Agreement

which, if covered, might be expected to offer significant new trade opportunities for U.S. suppliers and workers; and

(2) Any policies or practices of GPA participants or covered procuring entities which unfairly restrict U.S. suppliers' ability to participate in procurements covered by the Agreement, including discriminatory technical requirements and offset measures such as those listed in the footnote to Article XVI of the GPA.

Public Comments Requested

The TPSC invites written comments on U.S. objectives with respect to the various categories of issues identified above, including the agenda, scope, content and timetables for work and negotiations. Comments submitted should clearly indicate the category or categories of issues outlined in the submission.

Submission of Written Comments

Those persons wishing to submit written comments should provide ten (10) copies (in English) no later than January 15, 1999, to Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, Trade Policy Staff Committee, Office of the United States Trade Representative, Room 122, 600 17th Street Northwest, Washington, D.C., 20508. Comments should state clearly the position taken and should describe the specific information supporting that information.

If the submission contains business confidential information, ten copies of a confidential version, and ten copies of a public version that does not contain confidential information, must 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 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 connection with this request, except for information granted "business confidential" status pursuant to 15 CFR 2003.6, will be available for public inspection in the USTR Reading Room, Room 101, Office of the United States Trade Representative, 600 17th Street NW, Washington, DC. An appointment to review the file may be made by calling Brenda Webb at (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. 98-32862 Filed 12-9-98; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 3190-01-M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Coast Guard

[CGD08-98-072]

Houston/Galveston Navigation Safety Advisory Committee

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of charter renewal.

SUMMARY: The Secretary of Transportation has renewed the charter for the Houston/Galveston Navigation Safety Advisory Committee (HOGANSAC) to remain in effect for a period of two years from October 1, 1998, until October 1, 2000. HOGANSAC is a federal advisory committee constituted under 5 U.S.C. App. 1. Its purpose is to provide consultation and advice on matters relating to the transit of vessels and products to and from Galveston Bay, Texas, and the ports of Galveston, Texas City and Houston.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Captain Wayne D. Gusman, Executive Director of HOGANSAC, telephone (713) 671-5199, or Commander Paula Carroll, Executive Secretary of HOGANSAC, telephone (713) 671-5164.

Dated: November 19, 1998.

Paul J. Pluta,
Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District.
[FR Doc. 98-32819 Filed 12-9-98; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4910-15-M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement: Baltimore County, MD

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an environmental impact statement will be prepared for a proposed highway project in Baltimore County, Maryland.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. George K. Frick, Jr. Assistant Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, The Rotunda

Suite 220, 711 West 40th Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21211, Telephone: (410) 962-4342.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the Maryland State Highway Administration, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for a proposal to provide improved highway access to the Middle River Employment Center (MREC) in Baltimore County, Maryland. The Middle River Employment Center is a designated growth area within Baltimore County intended for industrial and commercial development. The undeveloped portions of the MREC are not accessible at present. A roadway to access these properties is needed in order for the planned development of these properties to occur. The proposed roadway will provide more direct access to interstate commerce routes, promoting the economic growth of the existing businesses within the MREC.

A full range of alternates, which address the need to improve access to the MREC while minimizing impacts to environmental resources, are being considered. The project limits are from existing MD 43 and US 40 to MD 150, a distance of approximately three miles. Alternatives which have been retained for detailed study include a no-build alternative, as well as several build alternatives, all proposing a four-lane, partially access controlled roadway on new location. Modifications and improvements to the existing roadway network were initially considered. However, these improvements were unable to provide the access necessary to adequately promote the development of the MREC without extensive residential relocations and impacts to community facilities.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens and citizen groups who have previously expressed or are known to have an interest in this proposal. It is anticipated that a Public Hearing will be held in the Spring of 1999. The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to a Public Hearing. Public notice will be given of the availability of the Draft EIS for review and of the time and place of this hearing. An Alternates Public Workshop was held in June 1998.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestion are invited from all interested parties.

Comments or questions concerning these proposed actions and EIS should be directed to the FHWA at the address 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 of Federal programs and activities apply to this program).

Issued on: December 4, 1998.

George K. Frick, Jr.,
Assistant Division Administrator, Baltimore, Maryland.

[FR Doc. 98-32856 Filed 12-9-98; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 4910-22-M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement; Bernalillo County, NM

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Revised notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public of a revision to the project boundaries of the Gibson East Transportation Corridor Study. The western terminus of this project has been changed from Interstate 25 to Louisiana Boulevard and the eastern terminus has been changed from Interstate 40 to Central Avenue. The original corridor was 12.9 kilometers or 8.0 miles in length. The revised corridor is 6.1 kilometers or 3.8 miles in length. This revision represents logical termini for the proposed improvements since it basically connects the existing segment from Interstate 25 to Louisiana Boulevard with the existing segment from Central Avenue to Interstate 40. An Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared for the proposed transportation project in Bernalillo County.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gregory D. Rawlings, Environmental Specialist, Federal Highway Administration, 604 W. San Mateo Road, Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505, Telephone: (505) 820-2027.

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.gov/fedreg> and the Government Printing Offices database at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara>