

to submit comments. The FHWA believes that an additional 30 days will permit interested persons reasonable time to provide meaningful comments.

Volume III describes the analytical framework used to evaluate a set of alternative TS&W scenarios selected for review by the DOT. The impacts of five different scenarios have been assessed and compared to the status quo. The results of DOT's analysis are presented in Volume III. Those who have already submitted comments may supplement them.

DATES: Comments must be received by April 15, 1999, in order to be considered for inclusion in the final draft of Volume III.

ADDRESSES: Your signed, written comments must refer to the docket number appearing at the top of this document and you must submit the comments to the Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, D.C. 20590-0001. All comments received will be available for examination at the above address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Those desiring notification of receipt of comments must include a self-addressed stamped envelope or postcard.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Regina McElroy, Office of Transportation Policy Studies, HPTS, (202) 366-9216, or Mr. Charles E. Medalen, Office of the Chief Counsel, HCC-20, (202) 366-1354, FHWA, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, D. C. 20590-0001. 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

Internet users can access all comments received by the U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, by using the universal resource locator (URL): <http://dms.dot.gov>. It is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. Please follow the instructions online for more information and help.

An electronic copy of this document may be downloaded using a modem and suitable communications software from the Government Printing Office's 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 Office's database at: <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara>.

Availability of Copy

A copy of draft Volume III may be obtained by contacting Ms. April

McCrory, Office of Transportation Policy Studies, HPTS, facsimile: (202) 366-7696. It is also available on the FHWA home page at the following Internet address: <http://www.fhwa.dot/reports/tswstudy>.

Authority: 23 U.S.C. 315; 49 U.S.C. 301, 302, and 305; 49 CFR 1.48.

Issued on: March 8, 1999.

Gloria J. Jeff,

Deputy Administrator.

[FR Doc. 99-6153 Filed 3-11-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Environmental Impact Statement: Transportation Improvements Within the Riverview Corridor Study Area in the City of Saint Paul, Minnesota

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration, 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 FTA and Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority (RCRRA) intend to study and evaluate alternative transportation system changes in the Riverview Corridor study area in the City of Saint Paul, Minnesota, in an Environmental Impact Statement.

DATES: Public scoping interviews with key community stakeholders were held in November and December, 1998, and January and February, 1999, to receive information on the scope, alternatives and transportation problems in the corridor. Interagency and public scoping and information meetings will be held on March 25, 1999, from 10 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., respectively. The locations of both meetings are wheelchair-accessible. Sign language interpreters for the hearing impaired can be arranged with advance notice of seven business days. Please contact the RCRRA office (651-266-2762) for further information and for directions to the meeting locations.

Scoping Interviews with 60 stakeholders were held as follows:

November 1998:

November 24-25, 1998

December 1998:

December 7-8, 1998

December 21-22, 1998

January 1999:

January 4-28, 1999

February 1999:

February 8-12, 1999

Interagency Scoping Meeting will be held at the following location:

Thursday, March 25, 1999, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., West Seventh Community Center, Gymnasium, 265 Oneida Street, St. Paul, MN 55102.

Public Scoping Meeting will be held at the following location: Thursday, March 25, 1999, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., West Seventh Street Recreation Center, Gymnasium, 265 Oneida Street, St. Paul, MN 55102.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope of analysis and impacts to be considered should be sent by April 24, 1999 to: Ms. Kathryn DeSpiegelaere, Director, Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority, Suite 665 RCGC West, 50 West Kellogg Boulevard, Saint Paul, MN 55102.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Paul Fish, Director, Planning & Program Development, FTA Region 5, 200 West Adams Street, Suite 2410, Chicago, IL 60606, Telephone: (312) 353-2789.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: RCRRA, in consultation with the Metropolitan Council and the Minnesota Department of Transportation, has decided to conduct a Major Investment Study (MIS) to assist local decision-making, even though the separate MIS requirement was eliminated by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) legislation. The transportation improvements are being defined in the MIS for the study area. The MIS includes the NEPA scoping process, the identification and evaluation of multi-modal transportation facility and/or service alternatives, and, if appropriate the selection of a preferred design concept and scope in the study area. Subsequently, alternative transportation facility alignments and designs that are consistent with the selected concept and scope may be addressed in an EIS for the study area. It is important to note that a final decision to prepare an EIS has not been made at this time. This decision will be made at the end of the Major Investment Study and will depend upon the nature of the selected concept and its expected impacts.

I. Scoping

The public scoping process was initiated by the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority on November 24, 1998, based upon approximately 60 interviews with individuals representing the local residential communities, businesses and other interests within the study area. This process was continued through February 1999. Additional meetings have been scheduled to ensure that all interested parties in the corridor and the

adjacent community are provided an opportunity to participate in the process of determining the scope of the study.

Two scoping meetings will be held at different hours on the same day to facilitate attendance by interested agencies and the general public. An interagency scoping meeting will be held on March 25, 1999, from 10:00 am to 12:00 p.m. at the West Seventh Community Center, and a general public scoping meeting will be held on March 25 from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the same location. FTA and RCRRA invite all interested individuals, organizations, and federal, state, and local public agencies to participate in the scoping process defining the alternatives to be evaluated in the MIS and identifying any significant social, economic or environmental issues related to the alternatives.

FTA and RCRRA invite interested individuals, organizations, and public agencies to participate in the scoping process by attending the scoping meetings and participating in establishing the purpose, alternatives, time frame, and analysis approach, as well as an active public involvement program. The public is invited to comment on the public involvement approach, the alternatives to be addressed, the modes and technologies to be evaluated, the alignments and termination points to be considered, the environmental, social, and economic issues related to the alternatives, and the evaluation approach to be used to select a locally preferred alternative.

People with special needs should call Kathy DeSpiegelaere at 651-266-2762. The buildings for the scoping meetings are accessible to people with disabilities.

To ensure that a full range of issues is addressed and all significant issues are identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions should be directed to Ms. Kathryn DeSpiegelaere at the address provided above.

II. Description of Study Areas and Project Need

The study area being analyzed for this MIS is the Riverview Corridor, which generally follows the Mississippi River between the eastern edge of the Saint Paul downtown area, the Fort Snelling site, the Minneapolis Saint Paul International Airport, and the Mall of America. The corridor includes two major roadways, West 7th Street and Shepard Road, which traverse the study area running parallel with the Mississippi River floodplain, and a

railroad alignment located between the roads.

The Riverview Corridor study area can be described as a long, narrow corridor aligned in a southwesterly to northeasterly direction. The study area limits are generally the Mississippi River on the south, West 7th Street on the north, Arcade Street at 7th Street on the northeast, and the Minneapolis Saint Paul International Airport and Mall of America on the southwest. The Riverview Corridor study area covers approximately 20 square miles in the City of Saint Paul, the City of Minneapolis, and the City of Bloomington. Potential alignments for crossing the Mississippi River and connecting with the airport and Mall of America are located in the cities of Minneapolis and Bloomington and on federal lands where Fort Snelling and the adjacent Minneapolis Saint Paul International Airport are located.

There are several issues that have been identified in the Riverview Corridor study area that relate to transportation. These include mobility limitations, redevelopment activity within the study area, projected growth of residential population, changing demographics in the local population that would correlate with an increased proportion of transit captive residents, projected growth of employment, lack of east-west connections along the corridor, lack of an efficient connection from the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport to the Saint Paul Central Business District (CBD), congestion (especially along I-35E and State Highway 5), and pedestrian and vehicular safety.

III. Alternatives

It is expected that the public scoping process and written comments will be a major source of candidate alternatives for consideration in the study. The types of transportation alternatives suggested in a prior study for consideration in the Riverview Major Investment Study include: No-Build, Transportation Demand Management (TDM), Transportation Systems Management (TSM), Busway Alternatives, and Light Rail Transit Alternatives.

1. No-Build Alternative—Existing and planned transit services and programmed new transportation facilities to the year 2020.

2. Transportation Demand Management (TDM)—Strategies to reduce automobile usage such as carpooling programs, parking fee increases and employer-based programs.

3. TSM Alternative—Low cost improvements, such as enhanced bus service, or signal coordination or ramp

metering to enhance the capacity of the existing roadway system.

4. Busway Alternative—Exclusive lanes for buses to move transit riders more quickly.

5. Light Rail Transit Alternative—Light rail transit service that would connect the Saint Paul CBD with the Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport and Mall of America, and eventually link to other proposed busway and/or light rail lines as part of an integrated regional transit system.

The previous study of the Riverview Corridor also concluded that the following alignments should be examined for transportation improvements in the study area: West Seventh Street Busway; Canadian Pacific Railroad Corridor Busway; Canadian Pacific Railroad Corridor Light Rail Transit; and West Seventh Street Light Rail Transit. Based on public input received during scoping and subsequent technical analyses, variations of the above alternatives and other transportation-related improvement options will be considered for the study area.

IV. Probable Effects/Potential Impacts for Analysis

Issues and impacts to be considered during the study analyses include potential changes to: the physical environment (air quality, noise, water quality, aesthetics, etc.); the social and manmade environment (land use, development, neighborhoods, etc.); vehicular circulation, parking and in-street operation of buses and rail; parklands and historic resources; transportation system performance; capital, operating and maintenance costs; available financial resources; and positive or negative financial impact on the region.

Evaluation criteria will include consideration of the local goals and objectives established for the study area, measures of effectiveness identified during scoping, criteria established by FTA for "New Start" transit projects, consistent with the applicable Federal, State of Minnesota, and local standards, criteria, regulations, and policies. Mitigation measures will be explored for any adverse impacts that are identified as part of the analyses.

V. Procedures

In accordance with the regulations and guidance established by CEQ, as well as with 23 CFR 450 and 23 CFR 771 of the FHWA/FTA planning and environmental regulations and policies, the MIS and possible Draft EIS (DEIS) will include an evaluation of the social, economic, and environmental impacts

of the alternatives. The MIS will also comply with the requirements of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) and with the Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. After its publication, the MIS and DEIS will be available for public and agency review and comment. If a DEIS is prepared, a public hearing will be held. On the basis of the MIS and DEIS, and the comments received, RCRRA and the MPO will select a locally preferred alternative for a major investment strategy. The locally preferred alternative will then be reaffirmed by the MPO for inclusion into the Transportation Policy Plan for the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area (regional transportation plan) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The MIS shall lead to specification of the project's mode, the design concept and scope in sufficient detail to meet the requirements of the US Environmental Protection Agency's transportation conformity regulations [40 CFR 93 and 23 CFR 450.322(b)(8)]. RCRRA and the MPO will then seek approval from FTA to continue with Preliminary Engineering and the preparation of the Final EIS.

Issued on: March 8, 1999.

Joel P. Ettinger,

Regional Administrator, Federal Transit Administration, Chicago, Illinois.

[FR Doc. 99-6152 Filed 3-11-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-57-U

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 33712 (Sub-No. 1)]

Union Pacific Railroad Company— Trackage Rights Exemption—The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board.

ACTION: Notice of Exemption.

SUMMARY: The Board, under 49 U.S.C. 10502, exempts the trackage rights described in STB Finance Docket No. 33712¹ to permit the trackage rights to

¹ On February 1, 1999, UP filed a notice of exemption under the Board's class exemption procedures at 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(7). The notice covered the agreement by The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF) to grant temporary overhead trackage rights to UP over 235.5 miles of BNSF's rail line between milepost 885.2 at Kern Junction, CA, to milepost 1120.7 at Stockton Tower, CA. See *Union Pacific Railroad Company—Trackage Rights Exemption—The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company*, STB Finance Docket No. 33712 (STB served Feb. 11, 1999). The trackage rights agreement

expire on March 31, 1999, in accordance with the agreement of the parties.

DATES: This exemption will be effective on March 26, 1999. Petitions to reopen must be filed by March 22, 1999.

ADDRESSES: An original and 10 copies of all pleadings referring to STB Finance Docket No. 33712 (Sub-No. 1) must be filed with the Office of the Secretary, Surface Transportation Board, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, a copy of all pleadings must be served on petitioner's representative Joseph D. Anthofer, Esq., 1416 Dodge Street, #830, Omaha, NE 68179.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Joseph H. Dettmar (202) 565-1600. [TDD for the hearing impaired (202) 565-1695.]

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Additional information is contained in the Board's decision. To purchase a copy of the full decision, write to, call, or pick up in person from: DC NEWS & DATA, INC., Suite 210, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20006. Telephone: (202) 289-4357. [Assistance for the hearing impaired is available through TDD services (202) 565-1695.]

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

Decided: March 5, 1999.

By the Board, Chairman Morgan, Vice Chairman Clyburn and Commissioner Burkes.

Vernon A. Williams,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 99-6150 Filed 3-11-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Fund Availability under the VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program

AGENCY: Department of Veterans Affairs.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Veterans Affairs is announcing the availability of funds for applications for assistance under the grant component of VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program. This Notice contains information concerning the program, application process and amount of funding available.

DATES: An original completed and collated grant application (plus four

is scheduled to expire March 31, 1999. The trackage rights operations under the exemption became effective on February 8, 1999.

completed collated copies) for assistance under the VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program must be received in Mental Health Strategic Healthcare Group, Washington, DC, by 4:30 PM Eastern Time on May 10, 1999. Applications may not be sent by facsimile (FAX). In the interest of fairness to all competing applicants, this deadline is firm as to date and hour, and VA will treat as ineligible for consideration any application that is received after the deadline. Applicants should take this practice into account and make early submission of their material to avoid any risk of loss of eligibility brought about by unanticipated delays or other delivery-related problems.

FOR A COPY OF THE APPLICATION PACKAGE, CONTACT: Program Officials at their toll-free number 1-877-332-0334 between 8:30 AM and 4:00 PM (Eastern Time), Monday through Friday. For a document relating to the VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program, see the final rule codified at 38 CFR Part 17.700.

SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION: An original completed and collated grant application (plus four copies) must be submitted to the following address: Mental Health Strategic Healthcare Group (116), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420. Applications must be received in the Mental Health Strategic Healthcare Group by the application deadline.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Roger Casey, VA Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program, Mental Health Strategic Healthcare Group (116), Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20420; 1-877-332-0334 (this is a toll-free number).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This Notice announces the availability of funds for assistance under VA's Homeless Providers Grant and Per Diem Program. This program is authorized by Public Law 102-590, the Homeless Veterans Comprehensive Service Programs Act of 1992. Funding applied for under this Notice may be used for (1) remodeling or alteration of existing buildings; (2) acquisition of buildings, acquisition and rehabilitation of buildings; (3) new construction. Applicants may apply for more than one type of assistance.

Grant applicants seeking per diem assistance should indicate this request on the application submitted for a grant. Applicants who are awarded grants will not be required to complete a separate application for per diem assistance. VA