

in Mexican procurement procedures subject to the NAFTA. In the NAFTA Negotiating Group on Government Procurement, the United States has joined Canada in seeking clarification on this issue and in urging Mexico to ensure that its procurement authorities comply with the relevant NAFTA commitments.

C. Free Trade Area of the Americas ("FTAA")

The United States is presently involved in discussions for creating a new free trade area, the FTAA. As an active participant in the Negotiating Group on Government Procurement, and as the discussions involving government procurement is in the very early stages, the United States is generally interested in (1) concluding a text embodying the principles of transparency and due process in government procurement, leading to a recommendation for agreement at the October 1999 FTAA Ministerial meeting to implement the results of this work by December 1999; (2) achieving agreement on a set of commitments which will ensure non-discrimination in government procurement within a scope to be negotiated, to be implemented as part of the conclusion of the FTAA; and (3) achieving agreement on the basic elements of a common procurement reporting system.

V. Other Trade-Distorting Practices

A. Bribery and Corruption

Among the most consistent complaints the Administration receives from U.S. industry and labor representatives is that bribery and corruption compromise U.S. market access in many foreign markets. This is particularly true for big ticket infrastructure projects for which preparation of a bid package alone can cost millions of dollars. U.S. firms often find that they are bidding on projects with little or no certainty as to whether the offered technology and price are going to be the primary considerations in the award of contracts. Despite their concerns, however, many U.S. firms have in the past been hesitant about coming forward publicly with cases in which they have seen bribery and corruption influence contract awards, because of fears that they may experience a commercial backlash with respect to future contracts.

These circumstances call for government-to-government initiatives to root out bribery and corruption in international procurement markets. The Administration is aggressively pursuing this objective in a wide range of

international fora. The recent entry into force of the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions, which obligates its 34 parties to impose criminal sanctions on the offering and payment of bribes in procurement markets and other international commercial transactions, represents a major step forward. The United States and 33 other countries have signed the OECD Convention.

Furthermore, twenty-five members of the Organization of American States ("OAS"), including the United States, have signed the OAS Inter-American Convention Against Corruption, which obligates its parties to impose criminal sanctions, and provides for international legal cooperation in combating corrupt practices in international business transactions. The Administration looks forward to early ratification of the OAS Convention.

B. Offsets in Defense Trade

When purchasing defense systems from U.S. defense prime contractors, many U.S. trading partners require compensation in the form of offsets as a condition of purchase in either government-to-government or commercial sales of defense articles and/or defense services. Offsets include mandatory co-production, licensed production, subcontractor production, technology transfer, countertrade, and foreign investment. Offsets may be directly related to the weapon system being exported, or they may take the form of compensation unrelated to the exported item, such as foreign investment or countertrade.

Prime contractors view offset arrangements as a necessity for success in the international marketplace. However, offset requirements cause prime contractors to select subcontractors based on their being located in the country requiring the offset versus best value, thereby adversely affecting potential U.S. subcontractors. Originally designed to enhance allied national security, offsets increasingly have become economic development tools for the countries that demand them. Furthermore, there has been a recent trend to fulfill offset requirements with non-defense products versus defense products.

Charlene Barshefsky,

United States Trade Representative.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Amtrak Reform Council; Notice of Meeting

AGENCY: Amtrak Reform Council.

ACTION: Notice of Meeting.

SUMMARY: As provided in Section 203 of the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act of 1997, the Amtrak Reform Council (ARC) gives notice of a meeting of the Council. The Council will discuss its 1999 work program and schedule and consider action on a conflict of interest guidelines for non-government members of the Council. The meeting will also consider matters raised by individual Council members. The Council's business meeting will precede a one-day seminar on May 18, 1999, sponsored by the Council on Intercity Rail Passenger Services—Past, Present and Future. (FR 5/6/99).

DATES: The Council meeting is scheduled from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Monday, May 17, 1999.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held in Room 9210, Department of Transportation, Nassif Building, 400 7th St. SW Washington, DC. Persons in need of special arrangements should contact the person listed below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Deirdre O'Sullivan, Amtrak Reform Council, Room 7105, JM-ARC, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590, or by telephone at (202) 366-0591; FAX: 202-493-2061.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The ARC was created by the Amtrak Reform and Accountability Act of 1997 (ARAA), as an independent commission, to evaluate Amtrak's performance and to make recommendations to Amtrak for achieving further cost containment, productivity improvements, and financial reforms. In addition, the ARAA requires: that the ARC monitor cost savings resulting from work rules established under new agreements between Amtrak and its labor unions; that the ARC provide an annual report to Congress that includes an assessment of Amtrak's progress on the resolution of productivity issues; and that after two years the ARC has the authority to determine whether Amtrak can meet certain financial goals specified under the ARAA and, if not, to notify the President and the Congress.

The ARAA provides that the ARC consist of eleven members, including the Secretary of Transportation and ten others nominated by the President or Congressional leaders. Each member is to serve a five year term.

Issued in Washington, DC May 6, 1999.

Thomas A. Till,

Executive Director.

[FR Doc. 99-11904 Filed 5-11-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Coast Guard

[CGD07-99-008]

Bridge of Lions; Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway, St. Augustine, FL

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of public hearing; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Coast Guard together with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), will hold a public hearing to receive information concerning the environmental and navigational impacts of alternate bridge designs being considered for the replacement or rehabilitation of the Bridge of Lions. The bridge is located on State Road A1A where it crosses the Atlantic Intracoastal Waterway (AIWW), mile 777.9, at St. Augustine, Florida. The hearing will allow interested parties to present comments and information concerning the bridge alternates under consideration.

DATES: The hearing will start at 7 p.m. on Monday, June 7, 1999. Comments must be received by July 7, 1999.

ADDRESSES: The hearing will be held at the St. Johns County Administration Building, 4010 Lewis Speedway Road, St. Augustine, Florida. Written comments may be submitted to, and will be available for examination between 7:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays, at the office of the Commander (oan), Seventh Coast Guard District, Bridge Section, Brickell Plaza Federal Building, 909 SE First Avenue, Miami, Florida 33131-3050. Please submit all comments and attachments in an unbound format, no larger than 8 by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. Persons wanting acknowledgement of receipt of comments should enclose a stamped, self-addressed postcard or envelope.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. N.E. Mpras, Chief, Office of Bridge Administration, Commandant (G-OPT), U.S. Coast Guard, 2100 Second Street, SW, Washington, DC 20593 (202 267-0368); Commander Eugene Gray, U.S. Coast Guard, Chief, Aids to Navigation and Waterways Management Branch,

Seventh Coast Guard District, Miami, FL (305) 536-5621; Mr. Joel Glenn, District Environmental Management Engineer, Florida Department of Transportation, Lake City, FL (904) 752-3300; or Mr. Mark Bartlett, Program Operations Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, Tallahassee, FL (850) 942-9598.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

The Bridge of Lions is a historic, sub-standard two-lane structure across the AIWW. The Coast Guard is concerned about the restrictive horizontal clearance that the existing bridge and fender system now imposes on commercial tug and barge traffic on the AIWW. These navigational concerns must be addressed sufficiently to allow the Coast Guard to accept an application for a proposed bridge replacement or rehabilitation at this location on the AIWW. The Coast Guard has been involved in temporary remedial measures to insure the safety of navigation through the existing bridge structure while plans are being prepared for a new or rehabilitated bridge at the reach of the AIWW. These measures include the placement of temporary mooring dolphins upstream and downstream of the bridge to provide tugs with tows a place to moor while waiting for slack water conditions to make safe passage of the structure. These temporary mooring dolphins remain in place at the time of this public hearing but the Coast Guard does not consider them a suitable long-term solution.

The FHWA is lead federal agency for the environmental documentation for this project. The Coast Guard has been involved as a cooperating agency during the preparation of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The DEIS identifies no preferred alternate for implementation. The selection of a preferred alternative will be made only after a thorough evaluation of the merits of each. The Coast Guard, in cooperation with the FDOT, owner of the bridge, and the FHWA, welcomes your comments on the Bridge of Lions project study. A U.S. Coast Guard Bridge Permit approving the location and clearances of the alternative eventually selected for construction is required before construction begins. Accordingly, it is extremely important to receive all information on the alternatives, which may present serious problems for navigation and bridge safety.

Procedural

Any person who wishes may appear and speak or present evidence at this public hearing. Persons planning to speak at the hearing should notify Mr. Joel Glenn or Mr. Bill Henderson with the Lake City office of the Florida Department of Transportation, or the Commander (oan), Seventh Coast Guard District, Bridge Administrator, at the telephone numbers listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** any time prior to the hearing, indicating the amount of time required. Written statements and exhibits may be submitted in place of or in addition to oral statements and will be made a part of the hearing record. Written statements and exhibits may be delivered before or during the hearing, or they may be submitted for up to 30 days following the date of the hearing to the Coast Guard office listed under **ADDRESSES**. The DEIS is available in print format in FDOT offices as well as all St. Johns County, Florida public libraries. It is the official document sent to all governmental agencies for the final round of comments on whether to rehabilitate or replace the existing bridge.

Information on Services for Individuals with Disabilities

For information about facilities or services for individuals with disabilities, or to request special assistance at the meeting, contact Commander Eugene Gray, U.S. Coast Guard, Chief, Aids to Navigation and Waterways Management Branch, Seventh Coast Guard District at the number under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** As soon as possible.

Authority: 33 CFR 115.60.

Dated: May 5, 1999.

Norman T. Saunders,

Rear Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard, Commander, Seventh Coast Guard District.

[FR Doc. 99-11927 Filed 5-11-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-15-M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Driver History Initiative Projects; Fiscal Year 1999 Funding

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of solicitation.

SUMMARY: This notice solicits proposals from States for projects to improve the timeliness, accuracy, and completeness of reporting and recording of commercial motor vehicle (CMV) traffic