

force with respect to the United States. The purpose of the review is to determine whether any act, policy, or practice of a country that has entered into a telecommunications trade agreement is not in compliance with the terms of such agreement, or otherwise denies to U.S. firms, within the context of the terms of such agreements, mutually advantageous market opportunities.

Beginning in the second quarter of 1998 and after concluding a number of satisfactory interconnection agreements with early new entrants to the German telecommunications market, Deutsche Telekom (DT) appears to have slowed the pace of interconnection negotiations and imposed tougher rates, terms and conditions for subsequent prospective entrants. All new entrants have no option but to interconnect with the DT network to access the German market, and Germany committed to assure non-discriminatory and cost-oriented interconnection rates, terms and conditions by adopting the WTO Reference Paper as part of its obligations under the WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement.

The 1999 review under section 1377, completed on March 30, 1999, established that the delay in assuring non-discriminatory and cost-oriented interconnection rates, terms, and conditions raises serious doubts about Germany's compliance with its WTO commitments. The USTR noted that regulatory proceedings in Germany during April-May 1999 were expected to set important precedents in determining interconnection rates, terms, and conditions for all competitors to Deutsche Telekom. These proceedings related to (1) a complaint by a U.S. carrier, Econophone and, (2) a proposal for new tariff surcharges by Deutsche Telekom. The USTR announced it would monitor the outcome of these proceedings, which have now concluded to determine whether Germany is acting in accordance with its WTO obligations, and to determine whether to pursue WTO dispute settlement action thereafter if the outcome of the proceedings was not consistent with those obligations.

Therefore, the USTR seeks comments on Germany's compliance with its specific commitments under the WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement or with other WTO obligations, e.g., the WTO General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), including the Annex on Telecommunications, that affect market opportunities for U.S. telecommunications products and services.

### **WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement**

The GATS contains general obligations that apply to all Members and services whether or not listed in WTO Members' schedules and specific obligations that apply only to services scheduled by a Member. The Fourth Protocol to the GATS is the legal instrument embodying seventy WTO members' basic telecommunications services commitments under the GATS. The Fourth Protocol is generally referred to as the WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement. The agreement entered into force on February 6, 1998.

The WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement encompasses commitments in three areas: market access, national treatment, and pro-competitive regulatory principles (contained in the WTO Reference Paper). Germany committed to provide open market access for local, long-distance and international service and service suppliers of any other Member under the terms, limitations and conditions agreed and specified in its WTO services schedule. With respect to national treatment, Germany committed to ensure treatment no less favorable to U.S. services or service suppliers than the treatment provided to services or service suppliers of Germany. Finally, the pro-competitive regulatory principles, set forth in the WTO Reference Paper and incorporated in Germany's (and other members') schedule, committed it to establish an independent regulatory body, ensure interconnection at non-discriminatory and cost-oriented rates, maintain measures to prevent anti-competitive practices such as cross-subsidization, and mandate transparency of government regulations and licensing.

The USTR seeks comment on whether Germany has made the necessary legislative or regulatory changes to implement its commitments, or permits acts, policies, or practices in its markets that do not appear to be in compliance with these commitments. In addition, the USTR seeks comments on whether Germany permits acts, policies, or practices that do not appear to be in compliance with other WTO obligations, e.g., the GATS, that affect market opportunities for telecommunications products and services of the United States.

### **Public Comment: Requirements for Submissions**

The USTR requests comments on the operation and effectiveness of the WTO Basic Telecommunications Agreement

with respect to Germany. All comments must be in English, identify on the first page of the comments the telecommunications trade agreement(s) discussed therein, be addressed to Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, TPSC, ATTN: Section 1377 Comments, Trade Policy Staff Committee, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and be submitted in 15 copies by noon on Wednesday, June 16, 1999.

All comments will be placed in the USTR Reading Room for inspection shortly after the filing deadline, except business confidential information exempt from public inspection in accordance with 15 CFR 2003.6. Confidential information submitted in accordance with 15 CFR 2003.6, must be clearly marked "BUSINESS CONFIDENTIAL" in a contrasting color ink at the top of each page on each of the 15 copies, and must be accompanied by 15 copies of a nonconfidential summary of the confidential information. The nonconfidential summary will be placed in the USTR Public Reading Room.

An appointment to review the comments may be made by calling Brenda Webb at (202) 395-6186. The USTR 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, and is located in Room 101.

**Frederick L. Montgomery,**

*Chairman, Trade Policy Staff Committee.*

[FR Doc. 99-14132 Filed 6-3-99; 8:45 am]

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## **DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

### **Office of the Secretary**

### **Announcement of Public Forum on Risk Assessment**

**AGENCY:** Office of the Secretary, DOT.

**ACTION:** Announcement of Public Forum on Risk Assessment.

**TIME AND DATE:** 1:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m., June 16, 1999.

**PLACE:** Room 10234, Nassif Building, Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590.

**STATUS:** Open to public with attendance limited to space available.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the forum is to have an exchange of ideas and to start a dialogue that will better enable the Department to analyze its rules. We do not want comments on specific rules or proposals, although it would be appropriate to use an existing rule to illustrate a point.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Transportation will be hosting a public forum on risk assessment in rulemaking. Expert panelists for this forum will include representatives from business, labor and government. The moderator of the forum will present a series of issues to the panel for discussion; the audience will also be encouraged to ask questions or make comments. The forum will address various issues such as problems with adequately describing the hazard or risk a regulation is trying to avoid; properly using and describing the evidence of the risk, the uncertainties involved; and the value and cost of peer review. This forum is the second of three planned public forums this year. In May, the Department hosted a forum on economic analysis, and later on this year we are planning a forum on small entities.

**REGISTRATION:** Participants are requested to register their intent to attend this forum meeting by sending e-mail to bob.klothe@ost.dot.gov. Put the words "Risk Assessment Registration" in the Subject line and the participant's name, address, phone number, and affiliation in the body of the message. If you do not have Internet access, you can register by calling 202-366-4723 or by writing to the contact person below. Please include your name, address, and phone number in your letter/postcard. Also, remember that space is limited and registration is on a first-come-first-served basis.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Robert Klothe, Office of General Counsel (C-50), Department of Transportation, Room 10424, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Phone: (202) 366-4723 (voice), (202) 755-7687 (TDD); Email: bob.klothe@ost.dot.gov.

Issued in Washington, DC, this 28th day of May, 1999.

**Neil Eisner,**

*Assistant General Counsel for Regulation and Enforcement.*

[FR Doc. 99-14164 Filed 6-3-99; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Highway Administration

#### Environmental Impact Statement: Chemung County, New York

**AGENCY:** Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent.

**SUMMARY:** The action to be evaluated by this Environmental Impact Statement is the reconstruction of the U.S. Route 17

through the Town and Village of Horseheads (the Southern Tier Expressway) in Chemung County, New York. This proposed action would improve capacity of Route 17 by bringing it up to Interstate highway design standards and provide for the separation of local and regional traffic.

#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Peter White, Regional Director, New York State Department of Transportation, Region 6, 107 Broadway, Hornell, New York 14843, (607) 324-8404 or Harold J. Brown, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, New York Division, Leo W. O'Brien Federal Building, 9th Floor, Clinton Avenue and North Pearl Street, Albany, New York 12207, (518) 431-4127.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) will evaluate various alternatives which will consider the upgrading of U.S. Route 17 from Exit 52 to Exit 54 in the Town and Village of Horseheads, Chemung County, New York to Interstate standards. Each build option would include the reconfiguration/reconstruction of the existing roadway to meet Interstate standards while accommodating local high volume traffic flows and local access. Additionally, there would be new expressway and ramp construction, pavement rehabilitation/reconstruction, bridge and culvert rehabilitation/replacement, drainage, lighting and signalization. The proposed project limits extend along NYS Route 17 from Exit 52 (NYS Route 14) easterly to Exit 54 (NYS Route 13) approximately one mile.

The Proposed Action is anticipated to result in a balanced transportation system that will supply sufficient capacity, improved mobility and access, meet current/future traffic demand, eliminate current bridge deficiencies, reduce or eliminate vehicular conflicts/accidents, separate local and regional traffic flows, as well as provide improved local service through the Town and Village of Horseheads.

Alternatives under consideration include:

- No build or the null alternative;
- Separation of local and expressway traffic through the Village of Horseheads and the upgrade of Route 17 to a limited access expressway;
- Development of a half or full diamond interchange at Route 13, and
- The development of collector-distributor roads along Route 17 between Exit 52 and Exit 54.

The environmental, socio-economic, and engineering viability implications of each alternative will be examined. The NO Action alternative will also be analyzed as a base line for gauging the impacts of the build alternates.

Input from Federal, State and local Governments, local agencies, private organizations, and the community will be solicited during the development of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A public Environmental Scoping meeting and a formal public hearing will be scheduled. The Environmental Scoping, meeting will be held on June 30, 1999 at the Horseheads High School from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. with a presentation at 7 p.m. Public notice will be given to identify the time and place for the public hearing. The Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing.

Comments, questions and suggestions pertaining to the proposed action are invited from interested parties to ensure that all significant issues are identified and addressed. Comments should be directed to the FHWA or the NYSDOT 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.)

**Authority:** 23 U.S.C. 315; 23 CFR 771.123.

Issued on May 24, 1999.

**Douglas P. Conlan,**

*District Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, Albany, New York.*

[FR Doc. 99-14124 Filed 6-3-99; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Transit Administration

[Docket No. FTA-99-5750]

#### Notice of Request for the Extension of Currently Approved Information Collection

**AGENCY:** Federal Transit Administration, DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the intention of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to request the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to extend the following currently approved information collection:

Rail Fixed Guideway Systems; State Safety Oversight.