

hemisphere. At its first meeting in October 1998, the Committee approved an open invitation soliciting views from the hemisphere's public. The open invitation was placed on the FTAA website and countries agreed to use national mechanisms to disseminate the invitation further. In the United States, the invitation was disseminated through a variety of means, including press releases, letters to advisory committees and public meetings.

Prior to the Toronto Ministerial Meeting, the Committee prepared a report for the Ministers describing the submissions it received from the public. This report has been published on the official FTAA website (www.ftaa-alca.org). Executive summaries of the submissions have also been published on the Department of State website (www.state.gov/www/issues/economic/current_issues.html).

Joint Committee of Experts on Electronic Commerce

At the 1998 meeting in San Jose, the trade ministers noted the rapid expansion of Internet usage and electronic commerce in the hemisphere. In order to increase and broaden the benefits to be derived from the electronic marketplace, they agreed to establish the aforementioned Joint Government-Private Sector Committee of Experts on Electronic Commerce to make recommendations in this area. The TPSC published a **Federal Register** notice on August 5, 1998 (63 FR 42090) requesting comments on the operation of the Joint Committee. Prior to the Toronto Ministerial meeting, the government and private sector experts from throughout the Western Hemisphere prepared a report with over 40 recommendations on how to increase and broaden the benefits of electronic commerce. The Joint Committee's report has been published on the official FTAA website (www.ftaa-alca.org).

2. Advice From the U.S. International Trade Commission Regarding Market Access

On March 15, 1999, the U.S. Trade Representative, pursuant to Section 332(g) of the Tariff Act of 1930, requested that the U.S. International Trade Commission ("Commission") provide advice to the President, with respect to each item listed in the HTSUS where tariffs will remain in effect after full implementation of the results of the Uruguay Round and subsequent WTO agreements (such as the Information Technology Agreement), as to the probable economic effect of modification of tariffs on industries producing like or directly competitive

articles and on consumers, based on three scenarios, two of which pertain to the WTO, and the third of which pertains to the FTAA. Those scenarios are: (1) The effects resulting from changes in dutiable imports from all U.S. trading partners if all tariffs were reduced by at least 50 percent, with tariffs of 5 percent reduced to zero; (2) the effects resulting from changes in dutiable imports from all U.S. trading partners if tariffs were eliminated; and (3) the effects resulting from tariff elimination on dutiable imports from FTAA trading partners alone.

3. Public Comments

In conformity with the regulations of the Trade Policy Staff Committee (15 CFR part 2003), the Chairman of the TPSC invites the written comments of interested parties on all aspects of the FTAA negotiations. This includes comments regarding the possible effects of elimination of tariffs on dutiable imports from FTAA countries (scenario 3).

Prior to initiation of negotiating group activity, the TPSC requested public comments (63 FR 128, July 6, 1998) regarding U.S. positions and objectives with respect to each of the negotiating groups. On April 14, 1999, the TPSC announced that it would seek additional public comments in the future on issues related to the FTAA, including the economic effects of the removal of duties and nontariff barriers to trade among FTAA participating countries (64 FR 18469).

The TPSC is now seeking public comments on any aspect of the FTAA negotiations, including the economic effects of the removal of duties and nontariff barriers to trade among FTAA participating countries.

Those persons wishing to submit written comments, should submit twenty (20) typed copies, no later than noon, Monday, February 7, 2000, to Gloria Blue, Executive Secretary, Trade Policy Staff Committee, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Room 122, 600 Seventeenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20508. Comments should state clearly the position taken and should describe with particularity the evidence supporting that position. Any business confidential material must be clearly marked as such on the cover page (or letter) and succeeding pages. Such submissions must be accompanied by a nonconfidential summary thereof.

Nonconfidential submissions will be available for public inspection at the USTR Reading Room, Room 101, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, 600 Seventeenth Street, N.W., 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 10 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.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement: Council Bluffs, IA

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 viaduct and roadway project in Council Bluffs, Pottawattamie County, Iowa.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Philip Taylor, Assistant Transportation Engineer, Federal Highway Administration, Iowa Division Office, 105 6th Street, Ames, Iowa 50010, Telephone: (515) 233-7307. Harry S. Budd, Director, Office of Project Planning, Iowa Department of Transportation, 800 Lincoln Way, Ames, Iowa 50010, Telephone: (515) 239-1391. Mr. Greg Reeder, City Engineer, Council Bluffs Public Works Department, 209 Pearl Street, Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503 Telephone: (712) 328-4635.

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'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>

Background

The FHWA, in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) and the City of Council Bluffs, Iowa will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for the proposed construction of a viaduct on Avenue G over the Union Pacific and Chicago, Central and Pacific railroad corridor that bisects Council Bluffs, Iowa. The proposed project begins at 16th and Avenue G and extends east to 8th Street. From 8th and

Avenue G the proposed project will consider improved roadway connections to Kanesville Boulevard. The total length of the project is approximately 1.6 km (1 mile).

The existing rail corridor is crossed by an over capacity, 4-lane viaduct constructed in the early 1950's and several at-grade crossings. The proposed viaduct crossing is considered necessary to provide for existing and projected traffic demand and to improve public safety in this sector of the City of Council Bluffs.

Alternatives under consideration include: (1) Taking no action; (2) improvement of existing roadway corridors; and (3) a new connecting roadway corridor. The "new" roadway scenario will consider various alignments.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have interest in this proposal. Public involvement will be sought throughout the analysis of this proposal. In addition, a public hearing will be offered. A scoping meeting will be held for identifying significant issues to be addressed in the environmental impact statement. Public notice will be given of the time and place of all public meetings. The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review 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 and questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be directed to the FHWA, Iowa DOT, or the City of Council Bluffs at the addresses provided under the caption **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.**

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, highway Planning and Construction. The regulation implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation of Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)

Authority: 23 U.S.C. 315; 49 CFR 1.48)

Dated: December 14, 1999.

Bobby Blackmon,

Division Administrator.

[FR Doc. 99-33612 Filed 12-27-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-U

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement, Kittitas County, WA

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that a programmatic environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared for a proposed highway project in Kittitas County, Washington.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Gene K. Fong, Division Administrator, Federal Highway Administration, 711 South Capital Way, Suite 501, Olympia, WA 98501-0943, telephone: (360) 753-9480; or Leonard Pittman, Regional Administrator, Washington State Department of Transportation, 2809 Rudkin Road, Union Gap, WA 98909, telephone: (509) 575-2530.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), will prepare an EIS for a proposal to improve a 13 mile portion of Interstate 90 (I-90) immediately east of Snoqualmie Pass in the Cascade Mountains, from Hyak (MP 54) to Easton Hill (MP 67).

The proposed improvements are intended to restore degraded highway surfaces, eliminate impediments to trucking, increase traffic capacity and design speed, and reduce closures due to avalanches and avalanche control activities. This highway is the major east-west corridor for truck-borne shipping in Washington; it is also the major east-west route for passenger automobile traffic. The proposed work is between 54 and 67 miles from Seattle. It is immediately east of Snoqualmie Pass in the Cascade Mountains, a popular destination for winter recreation within the state of Washington. I-90 in the Snoqualmie Pass area is subject to heavy traffic flows at all times of the year, with traffic-related slowdowns and stoppages an ongoing concern. Closures due to avalanches and avalanche control activities are common, and in the winter of 1998-1999, record snowfalls made closure frequent. Traffic stoppages on I-90 are costly to the state's economy. Potential issues of concern include fish and their habitat, wildlife habitat connectivity, wetlands, water quality, threatened and endangered species, existing management plans for forests and other areas, slope stability, cultural resources, public safety, and

socioeconomic impacts related to traffic flow.

Alternatives under consideration include: (1) Taking no action; (2) resurfacing the deteriorated concrete surface; (3) splitting eastbound from westbound lanes by building new westbound lanes along the opposite (south) side of Keechelus Lake from the existing east and westbound lanes, to rejoin at an undetermined distance southeast of the lake's outlet; (4) adding a third lane each way to connect with the existing 3-lane configuration at each end of the project; (5) straightening curves to increase design speeds, including one possible elevated section over part of an embankment in Keechelus Lake; (6) overpass and snowshed modification to provide adequate clearance for oversize loads; (7) increasing capacity of the existing snowshed to handle 5 snow chutes and protect all lanes. These alternatives are not necessarily exclusive, since some of them accomplish different purposes and may be used in combination with each other. Within the alternatives, there are possible subalternatives.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to the appropriate federal, state, local agencies affected Indian tribes, private organizations, and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have an interest in this project. A series of meetings with the public, interested community groups, and governmental agencies will be held beginning in February. In addition, a public hearing will be held after the release of the Draft EIS to receive public and agency comments. Public notice will be given of the time and place of the future meetings and hearing. The Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing.

To ensure that the full range of issues to this proposed project 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 EIS should be directed to FHWA at the address or phone number provided above. (Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program No. 20.205, Highway Research, Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)