

copies of DEIS available for public and agency review and comment 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 or questions concerning this proposed action and the Environmental Impact Statement should be directed to the FHWA at the address provided above.

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

John R. Mack,

District Engineer, Austin, Texas.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Environmental Impact Statement: Transportation Improvements Within the Desire Corridor in New Orleans, LA

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The FTA is issuing this notice to advise interested agencies and the public that an environmental impact statement may be prepared for transportation improvements in the Desire Corridor in New Orleans, Louisiana.

DATES: *Comment Due Date:* Written comments on the scope of the alternatives and impacts to be considered should be sent to Ed Bayer, RTA Manager of Planning, by September 11, 1998. *Scoping Meetings:* A public scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, September 24, 1998, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., and an interagency scoping meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 1, 1998, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. See **ADDRESSES** below. **ADDRESSES:** Written comments on the scope should be sent to Ed Bayer, Manager of Planning, Regional Transit Authority (RTA), 6700 Plaza Drive, New Orleans, Louisiana 70127-2677. Scoping meetings will be held at the following locations:

Public Scoping

Thursday, September 24, 1998, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m., McDonough School

#15 (Cafeteria), 721 St. Philip Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70112

Interagency Scoping

Tuesday, September 1, 1998, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Regional Planning Commission, 333 St. Charles Avenue, Suite 1100, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mrs. Peggy Crist, Director of Planning and Program Development, Federal Transit Administration Region 6, 524 East Lamar Boulevard, Suite 175, Arlington, Texas 76011-5704; Telephone: (817) 860-9663.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FTA, in cooperation with the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), may prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) for proposed transportation improvements in the New Orleans Vieux Carré (French Quarter) and adjacent neighborhoods. The transportation improvements are being defined in conjunction with a Major Investment Study (MIS) which will include the NEPA scoping process, the identification and evaluation of concept and scope alternatives, and the selection of a preferred design concept and scope alternative or alternatives. Subsequently, alternative alignments and designs that are consistent with the selected concept and scope may be addressed in an EIS. 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

A public scoping meeting will be held by RTA on Thursday, September 24, 1998, between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. in the cafeteria of McDonough School #15, 721 St. Philip Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70112. FTA and RTA invite interested individuals, organizations, and public agencies to attend the scoping meeting and participate in establishing the purpose, alternatives, time framework, and analysis approach, as well as an active public involvement program. The public is invited to comment on 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 impacts to be analyzed, and the evaluation approach to be used to select a locally preferred alternative. People with special needs should call the Desire Corridor MIS hotline at (504) 945-8025. The building for the scoping

meeting is accessible to people with disabilities.

An interagency scoping meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 1, 1998, from 9:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the Regional Planning Commission, 333 St. Charles Avenue, Suite 1100, New Orleans, Louisiana 70130. Federal, state, and local public agencies are invited to attend.

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

II. Description of Study Area and Its Transportation Needs

The Desire Corridor is located in the historic center of New Orleans, extending approximately three miles from Canal Street, bordering the central business district, eastward to the Industrial Canal, a major commercial waterway connecting the Mississippi River to the Intracoastal Waterway and Lake Pontchartrain. The Corridor is approximately one-half mile wide, from the riverfront north to Rampart Street/St. Claude Avenue. It includes the historic Vieux Carré (French Quarter), a world-renowned tourist center with related commercial activities, and two distinct residential areas, the Faubourg Marigny, and the Bywater neighborhoods. It is the home of the U.S. Navy Support Activity Center and the soon-to-be-completed New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts (NOCCA), and is adjacent to the Louis Armstrong performing arts center and St. Claude Medical Center (hospital).

Until 1948/49, the Corridor was served by the Desire and St. Claude streetcar lines, subsequently converted to bus lines. The area is currently served or crossed by the Riverfront streetcar line, nine bus routes, and a number of private shuttle bus operations and taxicab services. These services operate on narrow streets throughout the Corridor, or on a limited number of major arterials at the perimeter of the Corridor.

The French Quarter is the most congested area of the city and the region, with high volumes of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and limited on-street and off-street parking. These conditions, combined with the major festivals and conventions throughout the year, create a unique transportation environment for residents, employees, and visitors.

III. Alternatives

It is expected that the scoping meeting and written comments will be a major source of candidate alternatives for consideration in the study. The following describes the No-Build, Enhanced Bus/Transportation Systems Management (TSM), Busway/High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV), and Streetcar Build Alternatives that are suggested for consideration in the Desire Corridor MIS:

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

2. Enhanced Bus/TSM Alternative—Changes in existing bus routes to provide better service and low-cost transportation improvements, such as bus prioritization at signalized intersections and special bus lanes.

3. Busway/High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Alternative—Exclusive lanes for buses and/or carpools to move people faster.

4. Streetcar Alternative—A new Desire streetcar line, possibly following a historic streetcar alignment through the French Quarter or along Rampart Street/St. Claude Avenue, or on a new alignment along the riverfront or following existing streets through the eastern portion of the Corridor.

Based on public input received during scoping, variations of the above alternatives and other transportation-related improvement options, both transit and non-transit, will be considered for the Desire Corridor.

IV. Probable Effects

Issues and impacts to be considered during the study include potential changes to: The physical environment (air quality, noise, water quality, aesthetics, etc.); the social environment (land use, development, neighborhoods, etc.); parklands and historic resources; transportation system performance; capital operating and maintenance costs; financial resources available and financial impact on the RTA. The entire Corridor is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, so potential impacts on standing structures and historic districts (i.e., noise, vibration, trees, etc.) will be important. Vehicular/pedestrian circulation, parking and in-street operation of buses and streetcars are key considerations.

Evaluation criteria will include consideration of the local goals and objectives established for the study, measures of effectiveness identified during scoping, and criteria established by FTA for "New Start" transit projects.

Issued on: August 4, 1998.

Blas M. Uribe,

Deputy Regional Administrator.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Research and Special Programs Administration

Potential Computer Problems Related to the Year 2000 (Y2K)

AGENCY: Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice; issuance of advisory bulletin.

RSPA is issuing an advisory bulletin to owners and operators of Hazardous Liquid and Natural Gas Pipelines. The bulletin advises the industry about the potential for Year 2000 (Y2K) computer-related problems.

ADDRESSES: This document can be viewed on the Office of Pipeline Safety (OPS) home page at: <http://ops.dot.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Roger Little, (202) 366-4569.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

Office of Pipeline Safety regulations do not require operators to automate their safety-related functions; however, many pipeline operators rely on computers for these needs. Some computer systems may fail in the Year 2000 because the programs, hardware, and data files may misread the digits "00" as 1900 rather than 2000.

Until recently, the computer industry was not focused on the change in the millennium and the two extra digits required to show the change to the year 2000. The date fields for most computer programs were designed with six digits: two each for the year, month, and day; "19" was implied. In the Year 2000, some computers will record the year "00" and will interpret it as the year "1900." Some hardware may also contain components that do not recognize the new millennium. These date calculations may be embedded in controllers that operate pipeline equipment. There is the possibility that a Year 2000 (Y2K) problem could cause this equipment to malfunction. In most cases, operators must evaluate their system-by-system operations to determine if there is a Y2K problem in their hardware or software. Most pipeline operators are aware of the potential for Y2K computer-related problems and have already taken steps to address the issue.

II. Advisory Bulletin (ADB-98-01)

To: Owners and Operators of Hazardous Liquid and Natural Gas Pipelines

Subject: Potential Failure of Computer Systems Controlling Pipeline Operations.

Purpose: Inform system owners and operators of the need to evaluate their computer hardware and software for potential problems relating to Year 2000 (Y2K).

Advisory: Recent information has identified a computer problem that may affect pipeline operations. Computers may interpret the date "2000" as 1900, which could result in the shutdown or interruption of any computer operated system. The Office of Pipeline Safety urges all pipeline owners and operators who have not already done so to address this issue because of the risk that it may interfere with their operations.

The Office Of Pipeline Safety is working with the Oil and Gas Sector Workgroup of the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion to help assess Y2K readiness among the oil and gas industries and offer assistance by coordinating outreach activities, identifying points of contact within trade associations, and developing a forum for sharing information. Pipeline operators who have not implemented a plan for assessing their Y2K readiness should do so as soon as possible.

Pipeline industry trade associations can offer assistance on this issue. The American Petroleum Institute (API), the Natural Gas Council (NGC), and the Gas Industry Standards Board (GISB) have agreed to serve as umbrella organizations for the oil and gas sector; they will coordinate Y2K information for the industry and workgroup use. The President's Council on Y2K has a web page at <http://www.y2k.gov> that provides an update on the Council's activities and other useful information.

The industry is encouraged to seek advice from and share information and practical solutions with the three umbrella organizations and the industry trade association representatives on the Oil and Gas Y2K Workgroup (listed below). Contact Roger Little with the Office of Pipeline Safety at (202)-366-4569 or your state pipeline safety organization if you have questions regarding this advisory.

Umbrella Organizations

American Petroleum Institute, Kendra Martin, Phone: (202) 682-8517, Fax: (202) 962-4730, E-mail: MARTINK@API.ORG.
Natural Gas Council, Skip Horvath, Phone: (202) 216-5920, Fax: (202)