and the second on October 21, 1998, to provide the public an opportunity to discuss the proposed action. A public hearing will also be held on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Public notice will be given of the time and place of the hearing. The Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing. A Scoping Meeting is scheduled for November 23, 1998, at 9:00 a.m. at the Kent County Road Commission.

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 EIS should be directed to the FHWA at the address provided above.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 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.)

Issued on: November 3, 1998.

Norman R. Stoner,

Assistant Division Administrator, Lansing, Michigan.

[FR Doc. 98–30268 Filed 11–10–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–22–M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

[FHWA Docket No. FHWA–98–4622]

National Corridor Planning and Development Program and Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program—Implementation of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice; request for comments; solicitation of applications for FY 1999 grants.

SUMMARY: This document provides implementation guidance on sections 1118 and 1119 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA–21), Pub. L. 105–178. These sections established the National Corridor Planning and Development Program (NCPD program) and the Coordinated Border Infrastructure Program (CBI program). The NCPD program and the CBI program are funded by a single funding source. These programs provide funding for planning, project development, construction and operation of projects that serve border regions near Canada and Mexico and high priority corridors throughout the United States. States and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are, under the NCPD program, eligible for discretionary grants for: corridor feasibility; corridor planning; multistate coordination; environmental review; and construction. Border States and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are, under the CBI program, eligible for discretionary grants for: transportation and safety infrastructure improvements, operation and regulatory improvements and coordination and inspection improvements in a border region.

DATES: Grant applications should be received by FHWA Division Offices on January 11, 1999. Specific information required in grant applications is provided in Section III of this notice. Comments on program implementation should be received on or before April 12, 1999. The additional time is provided so that any applicants can use the first 60 days to fully concentrate on preparing grant applications and, subsequently, to use information developed during that time to formulate comments in the following 90 days. The FHWA will consider comments received in developing the FY 2000 solicitation of grant applications. More information on the type of comments sought by the FHWA is provided in Section II of this notice.

ADDRESSES: Your signed, written comments on program implementation for FY 2000 and beyond should 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, DC 20590–0001. All comments received will be available for examination at the above address between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Those desiring notification of receipt of comments should include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or postcard.

Applications for FY 1999 grants under the NCPD and CBI programs should be submitted to the FHWA Division Office in the State of the applicant.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Martin Weiss, Intermodal and Statewide Programs Division, HEP–10, (202) 366–5010; or Diane Mobley (for the NCPD program), Office of the Chief Counsel, HCC–31, (202) 366–1366; or Grace Reidy (for the CBI program), Office of the Chief Counsel, HCC–31, (202) 366–6226; Federal Highway Administration, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington D.C. 20590.

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 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''.

In addition, a number of documents and links concerning the NCPD and CBI programs are available though the home page of the Corridor/Border Programs: ''http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep10/corbor/corbor.html''.

Background

Sections 1118 and 1119 of the TEA–21 establish the NCPD and CBI programs; respectively. These programs respond to substantial interest in both subjects dating from, at least as early as, 1991. In that year, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) designated a number of high priority corridors. Subsequent legislation modified the corridor descriptions and designated additional corridors. Citizen and civic groups were formed to promote many of these corridors as, for example, a means to accommodate international trade. Similarly, since 1991, a number of studies have identified infrastructure and operation deficiencies near the U.S. borders with Canada and Mexico. Also various groups, some international and/or intergovernmental, were formed to study opportunities to improve infrastructure and operations.

The NCPD and CBI programs are funded by a single funding source. The combined authorized funding for these two programs is $140 million in each year from FY 1999 to FY 2003 (a total of $700 million). However, obligations will be limited each year by the requirements of Section 1102 (Obligation Ceiling) of the TEA–21.

Under the NCPD program, funds are available to States and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) for coordinated planning, design, and construction of corridors of national

significance, economic growth, and international or interregional trade. Under the CBI program, funds are available to border States and MPOs for projects to improve the safe movement of people and goods at or across the border between the United States and Canada and the border between the United States and Mexico. In addition, the Secretary may transfer up to a total of $10 million of combined program funds, over the life of the TEA–21, to the Administrator of General Services for the construction of transportation infrastructure necessary for law enforcement in border States. Such transfers will be made outside the provisions of this notice, based on funding requested and supporting information furnished by the Administrator of General Services.

The Federal share for these funds is 80% plus the sliding scale adjustment in States with substantial public lands. The period of availability for obligation is the fiscal year for which the funds are authorized and the 3 years following. States which receive an allocation of funds under these programs will, at the same time, receive an increase in obligation authority equal to the allocation. For FY 1999, there will be no targets for each of the two programs (e.g., x% for the NCPD program and y% for the CBI program). However, based on the wide interest in all facets of both programs, the FHWA does expect to allocate substantial funding in FY 1999 for projects from both the NCPD and CBI programs.

This notice includes three sections and one attachment:

Section I—Notice of program implementation
Section II—Request for comments on program implementation in FY 2000 and beyond
Section III—Solicitation of applications for FY 1999 grants
Attachment 1—Summary sheet

Section I—Notice of Program Implementation

The FHWA is implementing both the NCPD and CBI programs with the same goals: These are:

1. Respect both the letter and the intent of existing statutes.
2. Minimize administrative additions to statutory requirements.
3. Minimize grant application paperwork.
4. Maximize administrative control of grants by FHWA field personnel rather than FHWA Headquarters personnel.
5. Encourage substantive coordination of grant applications and grant administration by State and local officials.
6. Encourage appropriate private/public, State/local, intermodal, interregional, multistate and multinational coordination.
7. Encourage grant applications that have realistic objectives and time horizons.

Outreach, Coordination and Cooperation

In addition to the goals noted above, the implementation of this program has been based on various other sources of information. The first source of input, both verbal and written, were the comments made by elected officials and the general public during the course of the DOT's outreach activities following the passage of TEA–21. Written comments were those received by the public docket associated with the overall TEA–21 outreach program. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) established Docket No. OST–98–4146 for such comments. Verbal comments were those provided by people at three outreach sessions which focused specifically on the NCPD and CBI programs. These sessions were held: in San Diego, CA on August 25, 1998; in Detroit, MI on August 27, 1998; and, in Houston, TX on October 8, 1998. Internet users may access summaries of these sessions from the home page of the TEA–21 outreach session at: ''http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/tea21/outreach.htm''.

The second source of input were the comments made by a working group comprised of persons in various offices in the FHWA and other offices in the DOT.

The third source of input was information provided during other discussions between FHWA staff and a variety of public sector and private sector officials who have contributed program related information and/or voiced concerns since the passage of TEA–21.

Eligibility—NCPD Program

Projects eligible for funding include:

1. Feasibility studies.
2. Comprehensive corridor planning and design activities.
3. Location and routing studies.
4. Multistate and intrastate coordination for corridors.
5. Environmental review or construction after review by the Secretary of a development and management plan for the corridor or useable section of the corridor (hence called ''corridor plan'').

The FHWA considers work in the pre-feasibility stage of a project, e.g., development of metropolitan and State plans and programs, as not eligible for support with federal aid under Section 1118 funds (although funds authorized by other portions of the TEA–21 are eligible for such support), but project development planning is eligible for support.

The FHWA construes the phrase 'environmental review', as used above, as being the portion of the environmental documentation (e.g., EA/FONSI, EIS) process requiring formal interagency review and comment. Thus, even without review of the corridor plan, work needed to produce the pre-draft EIS and to revise the draft would be eligible for support with federal aid under Section 1118. However, work subsequent to FHWA signature of the draft EIS (or equivalent) would not be eligible for such support until review of the corridor plan. Subsequent to such a review, work on a final EIS and any other necessary environmental work would be eligible for funding under this section.

Eligibility for funds from the NCPD program is limited to high priority corridors identified in Section 1105(c) of the ISTEA, as amended, and any other significant regional or multistate highway corridors selected by the Secretary after consideration of the criteria listed for selecting projects for NCPD funding. Fund allocation to a corridor does not constitute designation of the corridor as a high priority corridor. The FHWA has no statutory authority to make such a designation.

Eligibility—CBI Program

Projects eligible for funding include:

1. Improvements to existing transportation and supporting infrastructure that facilitate cross border vehicle and cargo movements.
2. Construction of highways and related safety and safety enforcement facilities that will facilitate vehicle and cargo movements related to international trade.
3. Operational improvements, including improvements relating to electronic data interchange and use of telecommunications, to expedite cross border vehicle and cargo movements.
4. Modifications to regulatory procedures to expedite cross border vehicle and cargo movements.
5. International coordination of planning, programming, and border operation with Canada and Mexico relating to expediting cross border vehicle and cargo movements.
6. Activities of Federal inspection agencies.

The statute requires projects to be in a border region. The FHWA considers projects within 100 km (62 miles) of the

U.S./Canada or U.S./Mexico border to be in a border region.

Selection Criteria for the NCPD Program Funding

The statute identifies the following criteria to be used in identifying corridors, in addition to those statutorily designated for eligibility. These criteria will be used for selecting projects for funding:

1. The extent to which the annual volume of commercial vehicle traffic at the border stations or ports of entry of each State: has increased since the date of enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); and is projected to increase in the future.
2. The extent to which commercial vehicle traffic in each State has increased since the date of enactment of the NAFTA; and is projected to increase in the future.
3. The extent to which international truck-borne commodities move through each State.
4. The reduction in commercial and other travel time through a major international gateway or affected port of entry expected as a result of the proposed project including the level of traffic delays at at-grade highway crossings of major rail lines in trade corridors.
5. The extent of leveraging of Federal funds provided under this subsection, including: use of innovative financing; combination with funding provided under other sections of the TEA–21 and Title 23 U.S.C.; and combination with other sources of Federal, State, local or private funding including State, local and private matching funds.
6. The value of the cargo carried by commercial vehicle traffic, to the extent that the value of the cargo and congestion impose economic costs on the Nation's economy.
7. Encourage or facilitate major multistate or regional mobility and economic growth and development in areas underserved by existing highway infrastructure.

Specific aspects of the NCPD program require the FHWA to interpret these criteria. Based on the goals noted above in Section I., the FHWA intends to use a flexible interpretation. For example, while the date of the enactment of NAFTA was December 8, 1993, traffic data which provides an average for the calendar year 1993 could be used for the pre-NAFTA information. For another example, since businesses use both imported and domestically produced materials in a constantly changing component mix to produce higher valued products, and because, interregional trade is noted as part of the purpose of the section, either interstate traffic or interregional traffic could be used as a surrogate for ''international truck-borne commodities''. Similarly, where determining the value of cargo carried by commercial vehicle traffic would be impossible without using proprietary information, a reasonable surrogate could be based on the vehicle traffic multiplied by an imputed value for various classes of cargo.

Selection Criteria for the CBI Program Funding

The selection criteria in the statute are:

1. Expected reduction in commercial and other motor vehicle travel time through an international border crossing as a result of the project.
2. Improvements in vehicle and highway safety and cargo security related to motor vehicles crossing a border with Canada or Mexico.
3. Strategies to increase the use of existing, underutilized border crossing facilities and approaches.
4. Leveraging of Federal funds including use of innovative financing, combination of such funds with funding provided under other sections of the TEA–21 and combination with other sources of Federal, State, local or private funding.
5. Degree of multinational involvement in the project and demonstrated coordination with other Federal agencies responsible for the inspection of vehicles, cargo, and persons crossing international borders and their counterpart agencies in Canada and Mexico.
6. Improvements in vehicle and highway safety and cargo security in and through the gateway or affected port of entry concerned.
7. The extent to which the innovative and problem solving techniques of the proposed project would be applicable to other border stations or ports of entry.
8. Demonstrated local commitment to implement and sustain continuing comprehensive border or affected port of entry planning processes and improvement programs.

As in the NCPD program criteria, the FHWA intends to use a flexible interpretation of the CBI program selection criteria. For example, because local (e.g., county, municipal) agencies sometimes have very small capital improvement budgets, that local commitment for continuing planning and improvement will be considered in the context of local program cooperation with State projects in the border regions as well as in the context of local financial support for such projects.

Selection Criteria Common to all Discretionary Programs

The concept of equity was very important in the development of TEA–21. Therefore, national geographic distribution among all discretionary programs and congressional direction or guidance will be considered by the Administrator in the selection of projects for discretionary funds.

Evaluation Considerations for both the NCPD and the CBI Program

To adequately evaluate the extent to which selection criteria noted above have been met by individual projects, the FHWA will consider the following in each grant application:

1. Likelihood of expeditious completion of a useable project or product.
2. Size, in dollars, of the program grant request in comparison to likely accomplishments (e.g., grant requests that exceed about 10% of the available NCPD and CBI program funding in a given year would be expected to be subject to extra scrutiny to determine whether the likely consequences would be commensurate with that level of funding).
3. Clarity and conciseness of the grant application in submission of the required information.
4. State priorities and endorsement of, or opposition to, projects by other States, MPOs and other public and private agencies or organizations, as well as the status of the project on the State transportation improvement program (STIP) and the metropolitan transportation improvement program (TIP).
5. The extent to which the project may be eligible under both the NCPD and the CBI program.

Section II—Request for Comments on Program Implementation in FY 2000 and Beyond

The NCPD and the CBI programs are new. Furthermore, they represent a substantial public investment. Consequently, in addition to evaluating the overall program based on information in the grant applications, the FHWA is also specifically requesting comments on how program implementation can be improved. The Docket number noted in the beginning of this notice should be referenced. Comments may be on any aspect of the program. The FHWA is particularly interested in comments on discretionary determinations of the agency and in suggestions, consistent with the statute, that will result in more complete realization of the goals noted in the

beginning of Section I of this notice. Lastly, the FHWA requests comments on how applicants can develop useful performance measures to evaluate project implementation.

Section III—Solicitation of Applications for FY 1999 Grants

As noted above, applications for FY 1999 grants are to be sent to the Division office in the State of the applicant or to the Division office in the lead State, where a project is in more than one State.

When sending in applications, the States and MPOs must understand that any qualified projects may or may not be selected; it may be necessary to supplement NCPD and CBI program funds with other Federal-aid and/or other funds to complete a useable project or product and allocations of FY 1999 funds will be made considering the degree to which proposed projects are viable and implementation schedules are realistic.

There is no prescribed format for project submission. However, the following information should be addressed in the application to properly evaluate the candidate projects. Applications that do not include the following information may be considered incomplete:

1. State (if a multi state or multi MPO project list the lead State/MPO and participating States/MPO) and, if applicable, congressional high priority corridor number(s);
2. County(ies) or Parish(es);
3. U.S. Congressional District(s) and name of U.S. Representative(s) in the District(s);
4. Project Location; including a map(s) with U.S., State and local numbered routes and other important facilities clearly identified;
5. Project Objectives;
6. Proposed Work; identifying which specific element(s) or work corresponds to each of the list of eligible items noted above is addressed and disaggregating the work into phases, if applicable;
7. Planning and Coordination Status; identifying whether the project is included, or expected to be included, in State and MPO plans and programs (e.g., STIPs and TIPs); discussing consistency with plans and programs developed by empowerment zone and enterprise community organizations; discussing consistency with plans developed for compliance with the Clean Air Act; and, discussing coordination with inspection agencies and with Canada and Mexico, as applicable;
8. Traffic/Safety Information and Projections; addressing the applicable statutory criteria;
9. Financial Information and Projections; (e.g., total estimated cost of improvements to corridor or border facility, previous funding, commitment of other funds) addressing the applicable statutory criteria;
10. Infrastructure Condition Information; addressing the applicable statutory criteria;
11. Information Regarding Ownership; including whether it is private or public, operating authority and maintenance responsibility for all facilities to be improved as part of the project;
12. Other Information; addressing the applicable statutory criteria (e.g., implementation schedule);
13. Amount of NCPD Program and/or CBI Program Funds; requested as well as written confirmation of the source and amount of non-Federal funds that make up the non-Federal share of the project. If the State is willing to accept partial funding, this also should be indicated;
14. Future Funding Requests; related to the project anticipated under these programs or other discretionary programs;
15. The Priority; the State (or lead State) assigns to this project (e.g., priority one, priority two, etc.) relative to other projects located in the State for which applications are being submitted based on this notice;
16. Public Endorsements/expectations of the project or opposition; to the project by public and private organizations who expect to use the work to be funded by the grant as well as those who expect to benefit or be adversely affected, directly or indirectly, from such work;
17. Corridor plan; for those grant applications for the NCPD program where the work to be funded includes environmental review or construction;
18. Performance measures; which the applicant intends to use to evaluate implementation process in the project; and,
19. Summary Sheet; covering basic project information (see Attachment 1).

Attachment 1—Format for Summary Sheet

Application for NCPD or CBI discretionary funds:

Grantee: List full name of agency.

U.S. Representative/Senator(s): List full names.

Governor/Mayor(s): List full names.

Project: Short name and brief description of project (e.g., This project provides for widening by one lane in each direction of * * * extending from * * * in the vicinity of * * * to * * * in the vicinity of * * * a distance of * * *. This improvement will serve * * * and * * * will result in major safety/time savings * * * to * * *).

FHWA funds requested: Exclude non federal share.

Other funds committed: Specify source and amounts.

Other support: List agencies providing substantive assistance.

Other important information: (e.g., improved access to Indian Reservation, expected improvement to local economy, specify phase of project or corridor development, specify ongoing projects that will be coordinated with this one, identify environmental features, construction scheduling—all if appropriate).

(Authority: 23 U.S.C. 315; 49 CFR 1.48, Sections 1118, 1119 of Pub. L. 105–178)

Issued on: November 4, 1998.

Kenneth R. Wykle,

Federal Highway Administrator.

[FR Doc. 98–30236 Filed 11–9–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Joint Partnership Program; Public Meeting

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration, Department of Transportation.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces a public meeting, open to all interested parties, to discuss and comment on the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) new Joint Partnership Program (JPP). The purpose of the meeting is to outline the JPP, to receive comments and suggestions on the Program from meeting attendees, and to answer questions.

DATES: The meeting will take place on November 13, 1998, from 8 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held in room 2201 at the Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, D.C. 20590.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. A.M. (Tony) Yen, Office of Research, Demonstration and Innovation, Federal Transit Administration (TRI–2), at (202) 366–4047 or Donald R. Durkee, Office of Technology, Federal Transit Administration (TRI–20), at (202) 366–0942.

Issued on: November 5, 1998.

Gordon J. Linton,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 98–30207 Filed 11–10–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–57–M