**(SSA)**

Social Security Administration, DCFAM, Attn: Frederick W. Brickenkamp, 1–A–21 Operations Bldg., 6401 Security Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21235.

To receive a copy of any of the forms or clearance packages, call the SSA Reports Clearance Officer on (410) 965–4145 or write to him at the address listed above.

Dated: May 21, 1998.

**Frederick W. Brickenkamp,**

*Reports Clearance Officer, Social Security Administration.*

[FR Doc. 98–14263 Filed 5–28–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4190–29–P

## DEPARTMENT OF STATE

### Bureau of Public Affairs

**[Public Notice #2826]**

### Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation Notice of Charter Renewal and Meeting

The Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation renewed its charter on March 18, 1998. This Advisory committee will continue to make recommendations to the Historian and the Department on all aspects of the *Foreign Relation's* program as well on the Department of State's responsibility under the statute to open its 30-year old and older records for public review at the National Archives and Record Administration. The Committee consists of nine members drawn from among historians, political scientists, archivists, international lawyers and other social scientists who are distinguished in the field of U.S. Foreign Relations.

The Committee will meet next in the Department of State, 2201 ''C'' Street NW, Washington, DC, June 23–24, 1998, in Conference Room 1205. Procedures for declassification of Department records and problems relating to the preparation of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* documentary series will be discussed at the meeting.

The Committee will meet in open session from 9 a.m. through Noon on Tuesday, June 23, 1998. The remainder of the Committee's sessions from 1:45 p.m. on Tuesday, June 23, 1998 until 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 24, 1998 will be closed in accordance with Section 10(d) of the Foreign Advisory Committee Act (Pub. L. 92–463). The agenda calls for discussions involving consideration of matters not subject to public disclosure under 5 U.S.C. 552b(c)(1), and the public interest requires that such activities be withheld from disclosure.

Entry to the building is controlled and will be facilitated by advance arrangements. Members of the public desiring access to the open session should, by Thursday, June 18, 1998, notify Gloria Walker, (202) 663–1124, Office of the Historian, of their name, Social Security number, date of birth, professional affiliation, address, and telephone number in order to arrange admittance. This includes both government and non-government admittance. All attendees must use the ''C'' Street entrance. One of the following valid ID's will be required for admittance: any U.S. driver's license with photo, a passport, or a U.S. Government agency ID.

Questions concerning the meeting should be directed to William Z. Slany, Executive Secretary, Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation, Department of State, Office of the Historian, Washington, DC, 20520, telephone (202) 663–1123, (e-mail *pahistoff@panet.us-state.gov*).

Dated: May 14, 1998.

**William Z. Slany,**

*Executive Secretary, Office of the Historian.*

[FR Doc. 98–14262 Filed 5–28–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710–11–M

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Railroad Administration

### Notice of the Initiation of a Railroad Research and Development Grant Program in Cooperation with Academic Research Institutions

**AGENCY:** Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

**ACTION:** Notice of initiation of grant program and funds availability.

**SUMMARY:** FRA announces the initiation of a railroad research and development grant program in cooperation with academic research institutions (''Program''). This Program is intended to foster long-range enhancement of FRA's program of research in support of rail transportation by developing cooperative research relationships between the FRA and selected university research organizations. The FRA seeks, via this announcement, to identify specific academic research institutions (broadly referred to hereinafter as universities) that may have expertise useful in complementing the established research program of FRA's Office of Research and Development (OR&D). Selected universities will be expected to buttress FRA's current research program that now operates principally in coordination with non-academic entities.

#### Funding Authority and Related Information

This program is being undertaken utilizing funds in the Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 1998 (Pub. L. 105–66), dated October 27, 1997. FRA anticipates awarding a small number of grants (whose combined value is not to exceed approximately $1,000,000, in the aggregate, in Fiscal Year 1998) for approved university research. Applicants are also encouraged to consider sharing the cost of their proposed projects or identifying in-kind contributions. The FRA intends to focus the initial funding associated with this notice on various research and development (R&D) areas of interest relating to or under the general heading of rail safety. In the event future appropriated funds are authorized for the Program, FRA may, at its discretion, provide additional funding for research. Such future grants may focus on rail safety or other rail and adjunct transportation research areas, such as traffic control and intelligent transportation systems.

#### Eligible Participants

Accredited universities, colleges, major academic research institutions, and other public or private academic institutions of higher learning. All otherwise eligible entities must also have demonstrable specialized expertise in rail transportation research, and have a minimum of five years of railroad or rail-related research experience. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Institutions (MIs) fitting this description are encouraged to apply. However, no portion of this Program will be set aside exclusively for HBCUs and MIs.

#### Exchanges and Points of Contact

Exchanges of information between interested parties and the Government, prior to submission of an application for consideration under the Program, are strongly encouraged. Such informal exchanges may provide prospective applicants with preliminary information on the Government's level of interest in prospective works or projects or on the availability of funds. Any exchanges of information must be consistent with all applicable statutory or regulatory procurement integrity requirements. Technical inquiries regarding this notice may be directed to: Dr. Magdy El-Sibaie,

Office of Research and Development, Mail Stop 20, 400 7th St. S.W., Washington, DC 20590, TEL 202–632–3259, FAX 202–632–3854. Requests for forms and administrative questions regarding this solicitation may be directed to: Ms. Jill Shohet, Office of Research and Development, Mail Stop 20, 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590, TEL 202–632–3284, FAX 202–632–3854, e-mail: Jill.Shohet@FRA.DOT.GOV.

**Program Applications**

To be considered for inclusion in the grouping of selected ''pre-qualified'' universities and subsequent award of grants/cooperative agreements to be awarded under the Program, eligible applicants must submit a Program Application. Program Applications—which consist of two sections: University Profile and Proposed Research Projects (from the Areas of Interest)—may be obtained by submitting a written or electronic request (facsimile requests will be honored) to the administrative point of contact identified above, Ms. Shohet. Requests for application forms may be submitted as of the date of (electronic or printed) publication of this Notice.

**Evaluation and Selection Process**

Applications will be evaluated/selected by FRA using a three-step process. In the first step, applications will be evaluated (using the information from Application Section I—University Profile) to assess the applicant's eligibility (as an accredited institution of higher learning), demonstrated specialized expertise in rail transportation research (e.g., technical capabilities and depth of experience of key personnel or principal investigators), and experience in railroad or rail-related research, all as evidenced by cited research contracts/grants, published papers or dissertations related to railroad technology, railroad research and test facilities and/or staff with actual railroad experience of five or more years of railroad research. Applicants having satisfactory eligibility, background and experience requirements will then be advanced to the second step, and applications will be reviewed within the context of proposed projects (from Application Section II—Proposed Research Projects). Each proposed project—from the Areas of Interest—will be evaluated based on the following criteria (which are listed in descending order of relative importance): (1) Its overall scientific and/or technical merit; (2) The degree to which it may improve upon or advance railroad safety; (3) The likelihood for its near term adoption and implementation of possible recommendations; (4) The degree with which the proposed project fits into the FRA's overall research objectives; and (5) The reasonableness and realism of the proposed cost, and the availability of funds (to include due consideration for proposed cost-sharing (cash or in-kind contributions) by the applicant). Applicants having advanced from the first step and whose applications contain one or more proposed projects determined by FRA to have fully satisfied the evaluation/selection criteria in the second step, will be advanced to the third step of evaluation/selection. In the third and final step, all applicants will be ranked in order of preference, which for the purposes of this Program will mean a rank order listing of applicants who, in the FRA's judgement, have the highest to the lowest rated qualifications and the most to the least probability for success under the Program (with due consideration to background, personnel, experience and facilities or other resources identified), and the degree to which one or more of their proposed projects are of interest to the FRA as potential grant or cooperative agreement awards (with due consideration to the stated project evaluation criteria). From this order of rank listing, FRA will establish a group of selected universities (initially numbering eight or fewer) that will thereafter be considered ''pre-qualified'' to perform solicited or approved research projects. At the conclusion of the evaluation/selection process, FRA will notify all applicants of the agency's determination and their status (i.e., acceptance or non-acceptance into the Program). Applicants not selected under the cutoff in the third step, but meeting the minimum requirements under steps one and two, will have their applications retained by FRA for one year for possible future consideration as replacements or add-ons to the initial pre-qualified grouping of selected universities.

**Future Program Awards**

Any subsequent grant or cooperative agreements entered into under the Program will be on an individual award basis. Pre-qualification will not guarantee selected universities that any FRA research projects or funding will be forthcoming at any time during the period of Program affiliation. However, FRA will only fill actual Program requirements for work through those universities in the pre-qualified grouping selected hereunder. Solicitation of actual requirements for work identified by FRA or requests for project proposals initiated by the FRA, will be at the sole discretion of the FRA, and may be conducted on a fully competitive (i.e., for the purposes of this Program, open to all pre-qualified universities), partially competitive (i.e., for the purposes of this Program, open to two or more pre-qualified universities), or sole source basis (i.e., for the purposes of this Program, limited to a single pre-qualified university). The method of in-house solicitation (i.e., competitive or non-competitive) and subsequent choice for award will be based on FRA's preliminary assessments of the pre-qualified university(s)'s qualifications and capabilities (with regards to the work requirement or project being solicited), past performance under the Program, and its determination on the suitability and probability for success of any one or more pre-qualified universities, and on the availability of funding. Research projects may also be proposed (without a solicitation from the FRA) by pre-qualified universities any time during the period of Program affiliation. Research projects proposed by pre-qualified universities will be considered by FRA employing the same selection criteria used under this Notice in evaluating the initial proposal(s) submitted for consideration for both inclusion in the pre-qualified grouping/Program and as probable future projects. (See the five selection criteria under the heading ''Evaluation and Selection Process.'') FRA may use projects initially proposed in the selection process, as well as those subsequently proposed by pre-qualified universities, as the basis for solicitation of more in-depth technical and/or cost proposals, the submission of formal applications for assistance (e.g, SF 424—Application for Federal Assistance, SF 424A—Budget Information (Non-Construction Programs), etc.) and subsequent award of financial assistance. The determination to approve or disapprove, and fund or not fund a research project proposed by a pre-qualified university is at the sole and final discretion of the FRA. Each approved project will stand independently as a separate award. The specific terms and conditions of potential awards will be identified in the solicitation. Generally speaking, by entering into a financial assistance agreement, pre-qualified universities/prospective recipients will be subject to 49 CFR, part 19—Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations, OMB Circular A–21—Cost Principles for Educational

Institutions, and OMB Circular A–133—Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations. Unless a university loses its eligibility to participate (e.g., Government debarment or suspension (non-procurement)), or the Government has other sufficient cause for termination, or the parties mutually agree to dissolve the pre-qualified status, pre-qualified universities will be considered to be affiliated with the Program and will remain eligible to receive FRA grant/cooperative agreement awards, as described above, for a period of up to three years from the date of notification of acceptance into the Program.

**Areas of Interest**

The following are areas of current FRA research interest. The subjects listed here identify the breadth of FRA research activities in support of its safety mandate. Applicants should prepare and submit as part of their application, proposed projects in one or more of the listed areas of interest for which they are qualified to perform.

**Note:** Applicants may propose more than one project per area of interest, but the total number of all proposed projects may not exceed five.

Proposed projects may in and of themselves serve as the basis for initial solicitations and awards following the FRA's evaluation of applications and selection of pre-qualified universities. Each project proposal should be a brief, yet comprehensive and fully descriptive overview of the project. Each project proposal should be five pages or less, one-sided, 10- to 12-point type or font, single spaced, and numbered. To facilitate evaluation, project proposals should be formatted using the basic outline set forth in Section II of the application form. (To obtaine a copy of the application form, see information under the heading ''Exchanges and Points of Contact.'')

*1. Modeling and Simulation of Vehicle/Track Interaction*

This research activity involves the development of a comprehensive computer program for modeling and simulating railway vehicle/track systems with an emphasis on the dynamic performance of both vehicle and track and their interaction through the wheel/rail interface. The primary goal is to enhance the government capability for modeling and simulating the dynamic performance of a user-defined vehicle/track system. This computer program will be used by the FRA and other government and regulatory agencies in rail related safety studies and in accident investigations, among other uses.

*2. Smart Transducers and Monitoring Devices for Railroad Safety Inspection*

This research activity focuses on the development of software and hardware tools for the deployment of smart transducers and devices for monitoring the safety of track and rolling stock. Emphasis will be on intelligent sensors and associated logic that are capable of frequent and economic inspection of track and rolling stock and communicating safety hazards in the form of exceptions to remote sites. In addition to innovations in sensor technologies, complementary pattern recognition algorithms, based on methods such as neural networks and statistical techniques, shall be explored. The objective of this research will be to improve the quality and efficiency of track and rolling stock safety inspection.

*3. Advanced Techniques for Detecting and Repairing Weak Track Spots*

This research activity is for the development of automated techniques for identifying spots along the track structure that suffer from rapid deterioration in geometry and/or strength. Such weak track spots often develop along track due to many factors, such as weak subgrade, poor drainage, and poor ballast conditions, resulting in high track maintenance costs. The often resulting rapid rate of track geometry and/or strength deterioration may produce a safety hazard. Research efforts should also consider the development of methods and techniques for an economic and effective repair of such weak spots based on the diagnosed track condition.

*4. Automated Track Bed Subsurface Evaluation*

Track subsurface layers (ballast, sub-ballast, and subgrade) are key factors in the overall track performance and rate of degradation. Poor subsurface conditions can lead to adverse redistribution of loads with the track system, which could in turn lead to overloading of some track components and premature elements failures, or even collapse of the track roadbed. This uneven degradation of components results in costly maintenance, and adversely affects track safety. Thus, although ballast, sub-ballast, and subgrade are key track components that warrant monitoring, these subsurface conditions are not amenable to the current visual methods. In addition, there is no practical methodology currently available for rapid subsurface data acquisition for the evaluation of the engineering properties of soil, accurate determination of location and extent of deteriorated conditions. The principal objectives of this activity are automated data acquisition for soil classification and evaluation of its engineering properties, and the measurement of other pertinent parameters such as in-situ density and moisture content. In this regard, new emerging technologies such as ground penetrating radar may offer the promise of significant improvement by using nondestructive evaluation (NDE) techniques. If successful in accomplishing these objectives, the study would improve the effectiveness of track maintenance, and contribute significantly to the ongoing predictive track degradation model development.

*5. Reliability Design and Analysis*

Tank car accidents, tank car structural failures in components of railroad tank cars suggest that measures of reliability should be better defined. Subsequently, detailed reliability assessment of individual components and component subsystems should be performed that will lead to improved accident performance. Although catastrophic failure is easily recognized, tank car performance as a safe packaging of hazardous materials may deteriorate over time and elements contributing to this deterioration (per-existing defects, corrosion, cracks, pitting, etc.) need documentation. This research activity will focus on the development of a methodology to assess the failure mode. It may consist of parameters needed to establish structural integrity requirements based on value engineering analysis, previous failure experiences and studies. The methodology will consider establishing a level of reliability of a tank car design for the intended service. The development of a methodology that considers expected life, failure rates and hazard functions and which can combine these variables into an overall tank car ''strength'' function can be extremely useful. The results of such an assessment can quantitatively provide the tank car owner with information that may be used to define boundaries of reliability, allowing the tank car owner to implement guidelines for maintenance and use that lead to improved safety performance. This research activity is also concerned with reliability and safety performance aspects of other types of railroad cars and railroad operations and maintenance practices.

*6. Epidemiology of Post-Accident Stress in Locomotive Engineers*

It is well established that individuals who are involved in serious accidents or other situations involving loss of life undergo post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD has been documented in police officers, firemen, and rescue workers, and, because of the debilitating effects of PTSD, mandatory counseling is often provided for individuals who are involved in traumas. Informal discussions with locomotive engineers indicates that during the course of a career most locomotive engineers experience a traumatic grade crossing accident. At present there is no industry approach to PTSD in locomotive engineers, although anecdotal information suggests that safety may be compromised if counseling is not provided. However, the number of locomotive engineers who experience PTSD is not known, and consequently the need for resources to address this problem is also not known. This project will determine the descriptive epidemiology (incidence and prevalence) of PTSD in locomotive engineers so that the magnitude of the problem can be scientifically established.

## Application Submission and Deadline

In preparing application submissions, applicants are reminded to carefully read this entire Notice and to comply with all content, format and time requirements. An original and four (4) copies of each application should be submitted to the following address: Ms. Jill Shohet, Office of Research and Development, Mail Stop 20, 400 7th St. SW, Washington, DC 20590. Neither electronic nor facsimile submissions will be accepted. Applications will be reviewed as they are received. For applicants to receive full consideration, applications must be received by the FRA at the above address on or before July 17, 1998.

Dated: May 26, 1998.

**James T. McQueen,**

*Associate Administrator for Railroad Development.*

[FR Doc. 98–14251 Filed 5–28–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–06–P

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

## National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

**[Docket No. NHTSA 98–3875]**

## Reports, Forms, and Recordkeeping Requirements

**AGENCY:** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Request for public comment on proposed collections of information.

**SUMMARY:** This document describes three collections of information for which NHTSA intends to seek OMB approval. Under new procedures established by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, before seeking OMB approval to collect information from the public, Federal agencies must solicit public comment on proposed collections of information, including extensions and reinstatements of previously approved collections. Each of the collections for which this document requests comment has been previously approved.

**DATES:** Comments must be received on or before July 28, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments must refer to the docket and notice numbers cited at the beginning of this notice and be submitted to NHTSA's new Docket Management Facility, located on the Plaza Level of the Nassif Building at the U.S. Department of Transportation, Room PL–01, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590–0001. Please identify the proposed collection of information for which a comment is provided, by referencing its OMB Clearance Number. The DOT Docket is open to the public from 10 am to 5 pm, Mondays through Fridays.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Complete copies of each request for collection of information may be obtained at no charge from Mr. Michael Robinson, NHTSA Information Collection Clearance Officer, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Room 6123, Washington, DC 20590. Mr. Robinson's telephone number is (202) 366–9456. Please identify the relevant collection of information by referring to its OMB Clearance Number.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, before an agency submits a proposed collection of information to OMB for approval, it must publish a document in the **Federal Register** providing a 60-day comment period and otherwise consult with members of the public and affected agencies concerning each proposed collection of information. The OMB has promulgated regulations describing what must be included in such a document. Under OMB's regulations (at 5 CFR 1320.8(d)), an agency must ask for public comment on the following:

(i) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility;

(ii) The accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used;

(iii) How to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and

(iv) How to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses.

In compliance with these requirements, NHTSA asks public comment on the following proposed collections of information:

### 49 CFR Part 552

### Petitions for Rulemaking, Defect and Noncompliance Orders

*Type of request*—Extension of existing clearance.

*OMB Clearance Number*—2127–0046.

*Form Number*—This collection of information uses no standard forms.

*Requested Expiration Date of Approval*—Three years after date of expiration of existing clearance.

*Summary of the Collection of Information*—49 U.S.C. section 30162 specifies that any ''interested person may file a petition with the Secretary of Transportation requesting the Secretary to begin a proceeding'' to prescribe a motor vehicle safety standard under 49 U.S.C. chapter 301, or to decide whether to issue an order under 49 U.S.C. section 30118(b). 49 U.S.C. 30111 gives the Secretary authority to prescribe motor vehicle safety standards. 49 U.S.C. section 30118(b) gives the Secretary authority to issue an order to a manufacturer to notify vehicle or equipment owners, purchasers, and dealers of the defect or noncompliance and to remedy the defect or noncompliance.

Section 30162 further specifies that all petitions filed under its authority shall set forth the facts which it is claimed establish that an order is necessary and briefly describe the order the Secretary should issue.

To implement these statutory provisions, NHTSA promulgated part