

collection requirements in a "user friendly" format to improve the use of such information; and (iii) accurately assess the resources expended to retrieve and produce information requested. See 44 U.S.C. 3501.

Pursuant to 44 U.S.C. 3507(a) and 5 CFR 1320.5(b), 1320.8(b)(3)(vi), FRA informs all interested parties that it may not conduct or sponsor, and a respondent is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Authority: 44 U.S.C. 3501-3520.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on December 18, 1996.

Al Duncan,

Director, Office of Information Technology and Productivity Improvement, Federal Railroad Administration.

[FR Doc. 96-32666 Filed 12-23-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-06-P

Research and Special Programs Administration

[Notice Number 96-1]

Announcement of Availability of the Surface Transportation Research and Development Plan, Third Edition; Request for Comments

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

ACTION: Notice of Report Availability; Request for Comments.

SUMMARY: The Department of Transportation (DOT) announces the publication of the third edition of the Surface Transportation Research and Development Plan (R&D Plan), copies of which are available from the contact listed below or on the World Wide Web at the INTERNET address listed below. In addition, the Department invites comments to assist it in the preparation of the fourth edition of this report.

Under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), DOT is required to prepare the R&D Plan for its near- and long-term surface transportation research and development (R&D) activities. The Department has begun preparation of the fourth edition, which will be the last required under ISTEA.

DATES: Comments on the report should be postmarked no later than January 23, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Comments on changes, suggestions for improvement, or specific issues to include in the fourth edition of the report should be sent to: Norm Paulhus, Senior Technical Advisor (DRT-1), Research and Special

Programs Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 400 7th Street, SW Room 8417, Washington, DC 20590. Comments must be signed, and should include the name, address, and telephone number of the point of contact. One additional copy of the comments should be sent to Kevin Green at the address listed below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kevin Green, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, Kendall Square, DTS-24, Cambridge, MA 02142. Telephone: (617)-494-2106. Internet: green@volpe1.dot.gov. Copies of the third edition may be obtained from Mr. Green. The complete text of the third edition of the R&D Plan is also available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.volpe.dot.gov/pblctns.htm>.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

This notice announces the publication of, and solicits comments on, the third edition of the R&D Plan. The report presents details of the Department's near-term surface transportation R&D programs, and presents a strategic long-term outlook for surface transportation R&D. The report is prepared under authority provided in Section 6009(b) of the ISTEA, which expires in 1997. In preparing the fourth edition of the R&D Plan, the Department will consider public comments and suggested changes raised during review of the third edition.

Purpose

DOT is committed to promoting a safe and efficient transportation system that enhances the U.S. economy and contributes to a secure and healthy environment. In January 1994, the Department issued its Strategic Plan, which established the Department's mission and core responsibilities, and identified several strategic goals for implementing that mission in an era of limited resources.

The R&D Plan is directed at the development of the technologies needed to produce convenient, safe, and affordable modes of transportation. Many of these technologies are also mentioned in the DOT Strategic Plan, and as such the document is a first step towards a science and technology strategy to support the transportation industry. The R&D Plan also establishes sixteen longer-term R&D emphasis areas to provide for the next generation of surface transportation systems.

The general requirement for the R&D Plan is set forth in ISTEA. It describes the time periods which must be addressed, the issues to be covered, and

the level of detail to be included, at a minimum, in the R&D Plan.

The Department has begun preparing the fourth edition of the R&D Plan, which will be the last called for by ISTEA. As such, the fourth edition could provide an important point of reference for decision making related to R&D provisions of any subsequent legislation. The Department, therefore, encourages public review and comment on the third edition of the R&D Plan, and will consider those comments in preparing the fourth edition.

The Department is particularly interested in receiving public comment on the following issues:

- The Department seeks comment on the strategic vision presented in the second section of the third edition of the R&D Plan. Does it ask the right questions about key trends and challenges for the future? Does it extend far enough into the future? Does it establish a reasonable set of expectations? Does it propose long-term R&D efforts that provide a strategic response to long-term challenges?

- The Department also seeks comment regarding potential measures of performance that could be used to assess the quality of surface transportation R&D programs, the extent to which they achieve their objectives, and the extent to which they ultimately shape the surface transportation system.

Issued this 18th day of December 1996, in Washington, D.C. by:

D.K. Sharma,

Administrator, Research and Special Programs Administration.

[FR Doc. 96-32701 Filed 12-23-96; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-60-P

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 33314]

Nebraska, Kansas & Colorado Railnet, Inc.—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—Lines of the Burlington Northern Railroad Company

Nebraska, Kansas & Colorado Railnet, Inc. (NKCR), a noncarrier newly-created to become a Class III railroad, has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.31 to acquire and operate five rail lines which are currently owned and operated by the Burlington Northern Railroad Company (BN) as follows: (1) between Flynn, NE (milepost 3.3), and Almena Junction, KS (milepost 29.6), a distance of approximately 26.3 miles; (2) between Oronoque Junction, KS (milepost 47.3), and Oberlin, KS (milepost 78.0), a distance of approximately 30.7 miles; (3) between west of Orleans Junction,