

the **Federal Register** pursuant to the authority indicated below.

Comment closing date: June 28, 1998.

(49 U.S.C. 30118 and 30120; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 501.8)

Issued on: May 14, 1998.

**L. Robert Shelton,**

*Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.*

[FR Doc. 98-13520 Filed 5-20-98; 8:45 am]

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**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**Surface Transportation Board**

[STB Finance Docket No. 33567]

**Albany & Eastern Railroad Company—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company**

Albany & Eastern Railroad Company (AERC), a noncarrier, has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1150.31 to acquire from The Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Company (BNSF), and to operate 17.40 miles of rail line between MP-14.50, at or near Lebanon, and MP-31.90, at or near Foster, in Linn County, OR.<sup>1</sup> AERC also is acquiring incidental trackage rights over Union Pacific Railroad Company's (UP) rail line between MP-688.96, at or near Lebanon, and MP-691.52, at or near Albany, and over BNSF's line between MP-0.0, at Albany, and MP-0.89, east of Albany, in Linn County, OR, a total of 13.62 miles. The incidental trackage rights will permit AERC to interchange traffic with BNSF at its Albany yard.

The transaction was expected to be consummated on or shortly after May 8, 1998.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke will not automatically stay the transaction.

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to STB Finance Docket No. 33567, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, one copy of each pleading must be served on Fritz R. Kahn, Suite 750 West, 1100 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, DC 20005-3934.

<sup>1</sup> AERC will acquire the track, ties, and other improvements, and a permanent, irrevocable easement to operate on this line, but not the real estate.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "WWW.STB.DOT.GOV."

Decided: May 14, 1998.

By the Board, David M. Konschnik, Director, Office of Proceedings.

**Vernon A. Williams,**

*Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 98-13593 Filed 5-20-98; 8:45 am]

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**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

**Surface Transportation Board**

[STB Docket No. AB-494X]

**Akron Barberton Cluster Railway Company—Abandonment Exemption—in Summit County, OH**

Akron Barberton Cluster Railway Company (ABCR) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon 4.14 miles of its line of railroad from Valuation Station 440 + 00 at Main Street to Valuation Station 658 + 63 at Seiberling Avenue, in Summit County, OH. The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Codes 44301, 44305, 44300 and 44311.

ABCR has certified that: (1) no local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) any overhead traffic on the line can be rerouted over other lines; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to this exemption, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment shall be protected under *Oregon Short Line R. Co.—Abandonment—Goshen*, 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on June 20, 1998, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental

issues,<sup>1</sup> formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),<sup>2</sup> and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by June 1, 1998. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by June 10, 1998, with: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW, Washington, DC 20423. A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: Christopher E. V. Quinn, Oppenheimer Wolff & Donnelly, Two Prudential Plaza, 45 Floor, 180 North Stetson Avenue, Chicago, IL 60601.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*.

ABCR has filed an environmental report which addresses the abandonment's effects, if any, on the environment and historic resources. The Section of Environmental Analysis (SEA) will issue an environmental assessment (EA) by May 26, 1998. Interested persons may obtain a copy of the EA by writing to SEA (Room 500, Surface Transportation Board, Washington, DC 20423) or by calling SEA, at (202) 565-1545. Comments on environmental and historic preservation matters must be filed within 15 days after the EA becomes available to the public.

Environmental, historic preservation, public use, or trail use/rail banking conditions will be imposed, where appropriate, in a subsequent decision.

Pursuant to the provisions of 49 CFR 1152.29(e)(2), ABCR shall file a notice of consummation with the Board to signify that it has exercised the authority granted and fully abandoned the line. If consummation has not been effected by ABCR's filing of a notice of consummation by May 21, 1999, and there are no legal or regulatory barriers to consummation, the authority to abandon will automatically expire.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "WWW.STB.DOT.GOV."

Decided: May 8, 1998.

<sup>1</sup> The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. See *Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines*, 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

<sup>2</sup> Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at \$1000. See 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).

By the Board, David M. Konschnik,  
Director, Office of Proceedings.

**Vernon A. Williams**

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 98-13093 Filed 5-20-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4915-00-P

## UNITED STATES INFORMATION AGENCY

### College and University Partnerships Program for Russian Regional Investment Initiative in Samara Oblast

**ACTION:** Request for proposals.

**SUMMARY:** The Office of Academic Programs of the United States Information Agency's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs announces an open competition for an assistance award program. Accredited, post-secondary educational institutions meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may apply to develop a partnership with a specified institution of higher education from Russia in specified fields. Non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in IRS regulation 26 CFR 1.501(c) may also apply to facilitate a partnership between a U.S. college or university with one of the foreign institutions.

USIA seeks proposals from US universities, or NGOs representing US universities, to develop partnerships with one of the two following Russian institutions of higher learning: with the Samara State Aerospace University's International Marketing Institute in the field of public administration; or with the Togliatti Academy of Business and Banking in the field of business education.

Participating institutions exchange faculty and administrators for a combination of teaching, lecturing, faculty and curriculum development, collaborative research, and/or outreach, for periods ranging from one week (for planning visits) to an academic year. The FY 98 program will also support the establishment and maintenance of Internet and/or e-mail communication facilities as well as interactive distance learning programs at foreign partner institutions. Applicants may propose other project activities not listed above that are consistent with the goals and activities of the College and University Partnerships Program.

The program awards up to \$150,000 for a two-year period to defray the cost of travel and per diem with an allowance for educational materials and some aspects of project administration. Grants awarded to organizations with

less than four years of experience in conducting international exchange programs will be limited to \$60,000. USIA anticipates awarding two grants in the amount of \$150,000 each.

Overall grant-making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Pub. L. 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries \* \* \*; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations \* \* \* and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program cited above is provided through the Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets Support Act of 1992 (Freedom Support Act). Programs and projects must conform with Agency requirements and guidelines outlined in the Solicitation Package. USIA projects and programs are subject to the availability of funds.

**Announcement Title and Number:** All communications with USIA concerning this RFP should refer to the College and University Partnerships Program for Russian Regional Investment Initiative in Samara Oblast and reference number E/ASU-98-09.

**Deadline For Proposals:** All copies must be received at the U.S. Information Agency by 5 p.m. Washington, DC time on Friday, July 17, 1998. Faxed documents will not be accepted at any time. Documents postmarked by the due date but received at a later date will not be accepted.

**Approximate program dates:** Grants should begin on or about September 1, 1998.

**Duration:** September 1, 1998-August 30, 2000.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:** Office of Academic Programs; Advising, Teaching, and Specialized Programs Division; Specialized Programs Branch, (E/ASU) room 349, U.S. Information Agency, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547, telephone: (202) 619-4126, fax: (202) 401-1433, internet: jcebra@usia.gov to request a Solicitation Package containing more detailed award criteria; all application forms; and guidelines for preparing proposals, including specific criteria for preparation of the proposal budget.

**To Download A Solicitation Package Via Internet:** The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from USIA's website at <http://www.usia.gov/education/rfps>. Please read all information before downloading.

**To Receive A Solicitation Package Via Fax on Demand:** The entire Solicitation Package may be received via the Bureau's "Grants Information Fax on Demand System", which is accessed by calling 202/401-7616. Please request a "Catalog" of available documents and order numbers when first entering the system.

Please specify USIA Program Officer Jonathan Cebra on all inquiries and correspondence. Interested applicants should read the complete **Federal Register** announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the RFP deadline has passed, Agency staff may not discuss this competition in any way with applicants until the Bureau proposal review process has been completed.

**Submissions:** Applicants must follow all instructions given in the Solicitation Package. The original and 10 copies of the application should be sent to: U.S. Information Agency, Ref.: E/ASU-98-09, Office of Grants Management, E/XE, Room 326, 301 4th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20547.

Applicants must also submit the "Executive Summary" and "Proposal Narrative" sections of the proposal on a 3.5" diskette, formatted for DOS. This material must be provided in ASCII text (DOS) format with a maximum line length of 65 characters. USIA will transmit these files electronically to USIA Moscow for its review, with the goal of reducing the time it takes to get post's comments for the Agency's grants review process.

### Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of American political, social, and cultural life. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including, but not limited to ethnicity, race, gender, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, and physical challenges. Applicants are strongly encouraged to adhere to the advancement of this principle both in program administration and in program content. Please refer to the review criteria under the "Support for Diversity" section for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal. Pub. L. 104-319 provides that