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Mail: Docket Management Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590-0001.

Hand Delivery or Courier: U.S. Department of Transportation, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

James A. Cheatham, james.cheatham@dot.gov, 202-366-6221, Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty, Federal Highway Administration, Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC, 20590. Office hours are from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Assessment of Transportation Planning Agency Needs, Capabilities, and Capacity.

Background: FHWA will collect information on the current state of the practice, data, methods, and systems used by state, metropolitan, regional, local, and tribal transportation planning entities to support their required planning process in accordance with Title 23 United States Code 134 and 135. This includes, but is not limited to, information to support transportation research, capacity building, data collection, planning, travel modeling, and performance management. This also includes information about how data is shared between planning agencies and how it is processed and used in the planning context. Questionnaires will be sent to State DOT headquarters and districts, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Planning Organizations, and Tribal Governments. FHWA anticipates that one representative from each agency will take approximately 30 minutes to complete up to 4 questionnaires each year. The questionnaires will be administered via the Internet and invitations to participate in the questionnaire will be distributed via email.

This information, once compiled, will allow the FHWA to better understand the existing capabilities that agencies across the country have in support of the planning process and the readiness they possess to handle new and ongoing challenges. As a result of the collected information, FHWA will focus its efforts

and resources on providing targeted and meaningful support for planning and readiness nationwide. Additionally, FHWA will ensure that excellent planning practices are identified will be shared broadly across the country.

Respondents: Respondents are representatives of State DOT headquarters and districts, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Planning Organizations, and Tribal Governments.

Respondents: 950 respondents annually.

Frequency: 4 per year for 3 years.

Estimated Average Burden per

Response: Approximately 30 minutes.

Estimated Total Annual Burden

Hours: Up to 1,900 hours annually.

Public Comments Invited: You are asked to comment on any aspect of this information collection, including: (1) Whether the proposed collection is necessary for the FHWA's performance; (2) the accuracy of the estimated burden; (3) ways for the FHWA to enhance the quality, usefulness, and clarity of the collected information; and (4) ways that the burden could be minimized, including the use of computer technology, without reducing the quality of the collected information. The agency will summarize and/or include your comments in the request for OMB's clearance of this information collection.

Authority: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995; 44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended; and 49 CFR 1.48.

Issued on: June 22, 2012.

Steven Smith,

Chief, Information Technology Division.

[FR Doc. 2012-15921 Filed 6-27-12; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

**Environmental Impact Statement:
Ouachita Parish, LA**

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared for a proposed bridge and highway project in Ouachita Parish, Louisiana.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Carl M. Highsmith, Project Delivery Team Leader, Louisiana Division, Federal Highway Administration, 5304 Flanders Drive, Suite A, Baton Rouge, LA 70808 Telephone: 225.757.7615.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), in cooperation with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD), will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a proposal to construct the LA 143—US 165 Connector and Ouachita River Bridge in Ouachita Parish, Louisiana.

The proposed project consists of a 1.8-mile highway north of the corporate limits of West Monroe connecting Louisiana Highway 143 (LA 143) to a new bridge crossing of the Ouachita River, and a 3.7-mile highway north of the Monroe city limits connecting the new bridge to U.S. Highway 165 (US 165). The southern connection intersects with US 165 at the Forsythe Avenue Extension and the future Kansas Lane Connector. The northern connection intersects with US 165 at Fink's Hideaway Road.

The LA 143—US 165 Connector and Ouachita River Bridge project is designed to reduce traffic congestion on existing Ouachita River bridge crossings north of Interstate 20, link rural transportation facilities, and provide a segment of independent utility for a future, complete roadway loop around the cities of Monroe and West Monroe in an effort to move people and goods more efficiently across the Ouachita River and within rural portions of Ouachita Parish.

The bridge location and new highway alignments were developed in the Stage 0 Feasibility Report prepared in July 2008 and supported by the Ouachita Council of Governments Monroe Urbanized Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2035 Study. Two build alternatives proposed in the Stage 0 Report, along with the No Build alternative, will be evaluated in the EIS. An additional build alternative may also be developed for evaluation in the EIS depending upon social, economic, and environmental considerations made known through formal scoping meetings that will be held upon initiation of the project. Incorporated into and studied with the various build alternatives will be design variations of grade and alignment and a Level I Toll Study.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to the appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have an interest in this proposal. Federal agencies with jurisdiction by law with regard to social, economic, and environmental impacts of this proposal will be requested to be a Cooperating Agency in this matter in accordance

with 40 Code of Federal Regulations 1501.6. In addition to scoping meetings, numerous public involvement initiatives, including public meetings, newsletters, and stakeholder and local official briefings, will be held throughout the course of study. A Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review prior to a public hearing. Public notice will be given, in local newspapers, of the availability of the Draft EIS and the time and place of all public meetings and 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 EIS should be directed to the FHWA at the address provided above.

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

Issued on: June 21, 2012.

Charles W. Bolinger,
Division Administrator, Baton Rouge,
Louisiana.

[FR Doc. 2012-15662 Filed 6-27-12; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Surface Transportation Environment and Planning Cooperative Research Program (STEP)

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: Section 5207 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) established the Surface Transportation Environment and Planning Cooperative Research Program (STEP). The FHWA anticipates that the STEP or a similar program to provide resources for national research on issues related to planning, environment, and realty will be included in future surface transportation legislation. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2013, the FHWA expects to seek partnerships with other Federal agencies and tribes, State and local governments, and nongovernmental stakeholders that can leverage limited research funding in the STEP with other

stakeholders and partners in order to increase the total amount of resources available to meet the Nation's surface transportation research needs. The purpose of this notice is to announce the STEP implementation strategy for FY 2013 and to request suggested lines of research for the FY 2013 STEP via the STEP Web site at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/step/index.htm> in anticipation of future surface transportation legislation.

DATES: Suggestions for lines of research should be submitted to the STEP Web site on or before September 26, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gabe Rousseau, Acting Director, Office of Human Environment, (202) 366-8044, Gabe.Rousseau@dot.gov or Seetha Srinivasan, Office of the Chief Counsel, (202) 366-4099; Federal Highway Administration, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC 20590. Office hours are from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

This document may be viewed online through the Federal eRulemaking portal at: <http://www.regulations.gov>. Electronic submission and retrieval help and guidelines are available on the Web site. It is available 24 hours each day, 366 days this year. Please follow the instructions. An electronic copy of this document may also be downloaded from the Office of the Federal Register's home page at: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register> and the Government Printing Office's Web page at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys>.

Background

Section 5207 of SAFETEA-LU (Pub. L. 109-59, Aug. 10, 2005), established the STEP in Section 507 of Title 23, United States Code. The FHWA anticipates that the STEP or a similar program to provide resources for national research on issues related to planning, environment, and realty will be included in future surface transportation legislation. The general objective of the STEP is to improve understanding of the complex relationship between surface transportation, planning, and the environment.

The SAFETEA-LU provided \$16.875 million per year for FY 2006-2009 to implement this cooperative research program. Due to obligation limitations, rescissions, and congressional designations of Title V Research in SAFETEA-LU, an average of \$14.5 million of the authorized \$16.875

million was only available each fiscal year to help implement the cooperative research program.

The STEP is the primary source of funds for FHWA to conduct research and develop tools and technologies to advance the state of the practice regarding national surface transportation and environmental decisionmaking. In FY 2013, the FHWA expects to seek partnerships with other Federal agencies and tribes; State and local governments; and nongovernmental transportation and environmental stakeholders. These partnerships can help leverage limited research funding in the STEP and increase the total amount of resources available to meet the Nation's surface transportation research needs.

The FY 2013 STEP will support the implementation of a national research agenda that includes:

- (1) Enhancing knowledge of strategies and tools available to accelerate project delivery while improving environmental outcomes;
- (2) Conducting research to develop climate change mitigation, adaptation, and livability strategies;
- (3) Developing and supporting accurate models and tools for evaluating transportation measures and developing indicators of economic, social, and environmental performance of transportation systems to facilitate alternative analysis;
- (4) Developing and deploying research to address congestion reduction efforts;
- (5) Developing transportation safety planning strategies for surface transportation systems and improvements;
- (6) Improving planning, operation, and management of surface transportation systems and rights-of-way;
- (7) Enhancing knowledge of strategies to improve transportation in rural areas and small communities;
- (8) Strengthening and advancing State/local and tribal capabilities regarding surface transportation and the environment;
- (9) Improving transportation decisionmaking and coordination across international borders;
- (10) Improving state of the practice regarding the impact of transportation on the environment;
- (11) Conducting research to promote environmental streamlining/stewardship and sustainability;
- (12) Exchanging knowledge and strategies to improve performance-based planning and programming for transportation;