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LE PRÉSIDENT

By Hand Delivery to:
U.S. Department of Transportation
Docket Operations
M-30
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1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Paris, September 10th, 2009

RE: Docket no. FRA-2008-0140

Enclosed is SNCF's response to the Federal Railway Administration's (FRA's) Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI). SNCF is a worldwide leader in rail passenger services, with trains routinely, safely and cost-effectively operating at up to 200 mph. SNCF looks forward to working with the U.S. federal and state governments, and other interested and qualified stakeholders, to make the vision for high-speed rail in America a reality.

The United States is well-suited for high-speed rail. It has numerous large, densely-populated, metropolitan areas to and from which its population travels extensively (both for business and for leisure), that are separated by distances of between one and five hundred miles. In this range, when trip times come under three hours, trains can address very effectively the population's transportation needs. As evident in the many countries where HSR is fully operational, the public benefits of these services are considerable and are not confined to transportation benefits. Other significant rewards from HSR include economic stimulus, community enhancement and growth, environmental advancements, energy efficiencies and reduced dependence on foreign oil. HSR goes well beyond the upgrade of conventional rail – in many respects it is an entirely new system that contributes to the sustainable development of our planet.

SNCF has a longstanding and strong interest in participating in the development of HSR in the United States. We hope SNCF's commitment and ability to help the United States realize its great potential for successful HSR systems is evident in this Expression of Interest.

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While our interest and expertise is very broad, covering both HSR and conventional services, we have limited our RFEI response to four projects. This selection is not exclusive, and SNCF is open to participation in any area where its experience in the various fields of transportation can be useful. The corridors addressed in this Expression of Interest are :

- California, Florida and Texas. Our review and analysis of the available data regarding these three corridors lead us to the preliminary conclusion that HST 220 services will produce significant public benefits – benefits that will offset (almost twice) the public investment in the design and construction of the systems. In addition, our research indicates that once operational, revenues from these operations may be used, in part, to offset construction costs.
- The Chicago/Midwest Hub. Local and state authorities in and around this corridor intend to effect a dramatic improvement in the public transportation system. SNCF is convinced that HST 220 services are the solution for the Midwest. Our concept is a 1400-mile network that includes a by-pass line in Chicago, servicing 28 stations in 7 states. With the introduction of HSR, the 20 million inhabitants of the major metropolitan areas in this corridor would be able to reach the Chicago airports and Union Station in less than three hours. Public benefits would once again widely offset the public funds required. SNCF's plan for this corridor is compatible with and will complement the other projects planned for this area.

SNCF is qualified and prepared to be involved in any phase of one or all of these HSR projects – from concept design, to construction engineering, to operation and maintenance. We can also assist federal, state and local authorities in the development of these projects in any manner that is appropriate and will not preclude further involvement by SNCF.

One final point : consistent with the admonition contained in the FRA's RFEI notice – that there should be very limited need to submit trade secret, confidential or privileged information – SNCF has removed some important, highly confidential information from this submission. Please note, however, that we are prepared to share this information with the FRA under an exchange process that would assure its protection, and will contact the agency to discuss this matter in more detail.

We look forward to hearing from you and to participating in this exciting undertaking.


Guillaume PEPEY