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These exemptions are extended subject to the following conditions: (1) That each individual have a physical exam every year (a) by an ophthalmologist or optometrist who attests that the vision in the better eye continues to meet the standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), and (b) by a medical examiner who attests that the individual is otherwise physically qualified under 49 CFR 391.41; (2) that each individual provide a copy of the ophthalmologist's or optometrist's report to the medical examiner at the time of the annual medical examination; and (3) that each individual provide a copy of the annual medical certification to the employer for retention in the driver's qualification file and retain a copy of the certification on his/her person while driving for presentation to a duly authorized Federal, State, or local enforcement official. Each exemption will be valid for 2 years unless rescinded earlier by the FMCSA. The exemption will be rescinded if: (1) The person fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the exemption; (2) the exemption has resulted in a lower level of safety than was maintained before it was granted; or (3) continuation of the exemption would not be consistent with the goals and objectives of 49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136(e).

Basis for Renewing Exemptions

Under 49 U.S.C. 31315(b)(1), an exemption may be granted for no longer than 2 years from its approval date and may be renewed upon application for additional 2-year periods. In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136(e), each of the 16 applicants has satisfied the entry conditions for obtaining an exemption from the vision requirements (64 FR 27027, 64 FR 51568, 66 FR 63289, 67 FR 10475, 64 FR 40404, 64 FR 66962, 64 FR 54948, 65 FR 159, 65 FR 66286, 66 FR 13825). Each of these 16 applicants has requested timely renewal of the exemption and has submitted evidence showing that the vision in the better eye continues to meet the standard specified at 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10) and that the vision impairment is stable. In addition, a review of each record of safety while driving with the respective vision deficiencies over the past 2 years indicates each applicant continues to meet the vision exemption standards. These factors provide an adequate basis for predicting each driver's ability to continue to drive safely in interstate

commerce. Therefore, the FMCSA concludes that extending the exemption for each renewal applicant for a period of 2 years is likely to achieve a level of safety equal to that existing without the exemption.

Comments

The FMCSA will review comments received at any time concerning a particular driver's safety record and determine if the continuation of the exemption is consistent with the requirements at 49 U.S.C. 31315 and 31136(e). However, the FMCSA requests that interested parties with specific data concerning the safety records of these drivers submit comments by March 24, 2004.

In the past the FMCSA has received comments from Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) expressing continued opposition to the FMCSA's procedures for renewing exemptions from the vision requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10). Specifically, Advocates objects to the agency's extension of the exemptions without any opportunity for public comment prior to the decision to renew, and reliance on a summary statement of evidence to make its decision to extend the exemption of each driver.

The issues raised by Advocates were addressed at length in 66 FR 17994 (April 4, 2001). The FMCSA continues to find its exemption process appropriate to the statutory and regulatory requirements.

Issued on: February 17, 2004.

Pamela M. Pelcovits,

Director, Policy, Plans, and Regulations.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Environmental Impact Statement: Rail Corridor—Richmond, VA to Hampton Roads (via Williamsburg to Newport News, VA and via Petersburg to Norfolk, VA)

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

ACTION: Notice of intent to prepare an environmental impact statement.

SUMMARY: The FRA is issuing this notice to advise the public that FRA and the

Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Richmond to Hampton Roads High Speed Rail Corridor. The EIS will evaluate potential alternatives for higher-speed rail service in both the Richmond-Petersburg-South Hampton Roads Corridor and the existing Amtrak corridor from Richmond to Williamsburg to Newport News, providing rail connections to the Southeast, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions as part of the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) Corridor.

DATES: Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts considered should be sent to the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation by May 15, 2004, at the address below.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Christopher Bonanti, Environmental Program Manager, Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), 400 Seventh Street, SW., MS 20, Washington, DC 20590, telephone (202) 493-6383; or Mr. Alan Tobias, Manager of Passenger Rail Programs, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, P.O. Box 590, Richmond, VA, 23218-0590, telephone (804) 786-1063.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FRA, in cooperation with the VDRPT, will prepare a Tier I Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Richmond to Hampton Roads High Speed Rail Corridor. The project will evaluate potential alternatives and potential environmental impacts for higher-speed rail service within the project study area. The project study area generally follows the Richmond-Petersburg-South Hampton Roads Corridor and the existing Amtrak corridor from Richmond to Williamsburg to Newport News. This rail service would serve as an extension of the Southeast High Speed Rail (SEHSR) Corridor, providing rail connections to the Southeast, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions.

Multiple service and alignment alternatives exist within the project study area to connect the Hampton Roads region to the Main Street Station in Richmond, Virginia, which is the study terminus for intercity rail service connections to the Southeast, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. FRA and the VDRPT will address project issues and alternatives in environmental documentation prepared as part of the Alternatives Analysis and Tier I EIS.

This study will also address the greater travel shed in which this corridor will operate. Issues regarding schedule, operational and capacity constraints, and ridership will be examined.

The environmental process will have four basic goals: (1) Establish the purpose and need; (2) develop alternatives within the study corridor; (3) conduct a detailed evaluation of environmental impacts for the alternatives; and (4) select a locally preferred alternative (LPA).

The EIS will evaluate the following passenger rail alternatives: A no-build alternative, consisting of already planned improvements to the corridor, and build alternatives, consisting of a full range of passenger rail alternatives. The type, location, and need for ancillary facilities (e.g. railroad switching, signaling and maintenance buildings, etc.) will also be considered for each alternative. Scoping will be accomplished through correspondence with interested persons, organizations, and Federal, State and local agencies, and through public meetings.

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), a public scoping process will be initiated to identify corridor needs and alternatives. The scoping process will provide the basis for the evaluation of alternatives as part of the planning study, and the selection of a LPA and implementation program. The planning study will consider a variety of passenger rail options in the corridor based on input received during the scoping process. In addition to prudent alternatives developed as part of this study and those identified in previous planning exercises, feasible alternatives suggested during the scoping process will be considered.

Scoping and Comments: Scoping activities are being initiated at the outset of the planning studies, in advance of the EIS, to maximize the opportunity for public involvement in the consideration of alternatives and in reaching decisions about the transportation investments that will be advanced into the EIS phase of project development.

FRA and VDRPT encourage broad participation in the planning studies and EIS process during scoping and subsequent review of the resulting environmental documents. Comments and suggestions are invited from all interested agencies and the public at large to insure the full range of issues related to the proposed action and all reasonable alternatives are addressed and all significant issues are identified. Public agencies with jurisdiction are requested to advise the FRA and VDRPT of the applicable environmental review

requirements of each agency, and the scope and content of the environmental information that is germane to the agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed improvements. An agency scoping meeting has been scheduled for March 9, 2004, 1 p.m., at the following location: VDRPT, Central Conference Room, 1313 East Main Street, Suite 300, Richmond, Virginia.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies in Virginia. An interactive public involvement/information program will support the process. The program will involve newsletters, a telephone hotline and Web site, informational workshops, small group meetings, and other methods to solicit and incorporate public input throughout the planning process. The public scoping process runs concurrent with agency scoping and will commence with a public meeting in Richmond on March 9, 2004. Additional public scoping meetings will be held in Petersburg on March 10, Chesapeake on March 11, and Williamsburg on March 24. Notices for the public scoping meetings will be sent to individuals in the planning and EIS study areas and will be posted on official Web sites, and advertised in local communities.

Comments and questions concerning the proposed action should be directed to VDRPT or to the FRA at the addresses provided above. Additional information can be obtained by visiting the project Web site at www.rich2hrrail.info or calling the project hotline 1-877-RICH2HR (742-4247).

Issued in Washington, DC on February 17, 2004.

Mark E. Yachmetz,

Associate Administrator for Railroad Development.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

[Docket No. MARAD 2004 17127]

Information Collection Available for Public Comments and Recommendations

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the Maritime Administration's (MARAD's) intentions

to request approval for three years of a new information collection.

DATES: Comments should be submitted on or before April 23, 2004.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Kelly Farrell, Maritime Administration, 400 Seventh St., SW., Washington, DC 20590. Telephone: 202-366-9041, FAX: 202-366-7485; or E-Mail: kelly.farrell@marad.dot.gov. Copies of this collection also can be obtained from that office.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title of Collection: Elements of Request for Course Approval.

Type of Request: New collection.

OMB Control Number: 2133-New.

Form Numbers: None.

Expiration Date of Approval: Three years from date of approval by the Office of Management and Budget.

Summary of Collection of Information: Under this proposed voluntary collection, public and private maritime security training course providers may choose to provide the Maritime Administration (MARAD) with information concerning the content and operation of their courses. MARAD will use this information to evaluate whether the course meets the training standards and curriculum promulgated under Section 109 of the Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 (MTSA) (Pub. L. 107-295). Courses found to meet these standards will receive a course approval.

Need and Use of the Information: This information collection is needed to facilitate the approval of maritime security training courses that meet the standards and curriculum developed under the MTSA.

Description of Respondents: Respondents are public and private maritime security course training providers.

Annual Responses: 300.

Annual Burden: 3,000 hours.

Comments: Comments should refer to the docket number that appears at the top of this document. Written comments may be submitted to the Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. Comments also may be submitted by electronic means via the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov/submit>. Specifically address whether this information collection is necessary for proper performance of the functions of the agency and will have practical utility, accuracy of the burden estimates, ways to minimize this burden, and ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected. All comments received will be available for