

Rotunda—Suite 220, 711 West 40th Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21211. Telephone (410) 962-4440.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA in cooperation with the Federal Transit Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Maryland Department of Transportation, will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on a proposal to provide multi-modal transportation measures within the I-270/U.S. 15 corridor in Montgomery and Frederick Counties, Maryland for a distance of approximately 35 miles.

The proposed strategies consist of a combination of improvements to the existing corridor such as highway widening, and transportation management strategies, as well as additional multi-modal facilities including a busway, or light rail transit. The purpose of the proposed transportation improvements is to address the effect of regional growth and traffic congestion on transportation trends and safety operations.

The I-270/U.S. 15 Corridor provides a connection between the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and central and western Maryland, as well as to the midwest via I-70 and I-68. Current operating conditions within the I-270/U.S. 15 Corridor reflect severe traffic congestion at many locations within the project area. Congestion is expected to increase as continued growth in both population and employment occur over the next quarter century.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to 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. A public hearing is anticipated in the fall of 1998. Public notice will be given of the time and place of this hearing.

The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the public hearing. Scoping meetings for the public, agencies, and for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments have been conducted throughout the course of the project. No formal scoping meeting for this project is planned at this time.

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 Research, Planning And Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation of Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)

Issued On: December 3, 1997.

Renee Sigel,

Planning, Research and Environment Team Leader, Baltimore.

[FR Doc. 97-32316 Filed 12-9-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Notice of Application for Approval of Discontinuance or Modification of a Railroad Signal System or Relief From the Requirements of 49 CFR Part 236

Pursuant to Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 235 and 49 U.S.C. App. 26, the following railroads have petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) seeking approval for the discontinuance or modification of the signal system or relief from the requirements of 49 CFR part 236 as detailed below.

Rules Standards & Instructions Application (RS&I-AP)—No. 1102

Applicants

New Jersey Transit Rail Operations, Incorporated, Mr. Robert A. Randall, Vice President and General Manager—Rail, One Penn Plaza East, Newark, New Jersey 07105-2246.

Morristown and Erie Railway, Incorporated, Mr. Benjamin Friedland, President and General Manager, P. O. Box 2206, Morristown, New Jersey 07962-2206.

New Jersey Transit Rail Operations, Incorporated (NJTR) and the Morristown and Erie Railway, Incorporated (ME), jointly seek temporary relief from Section 236.566 of the Rules, Standards, and Instructions (49 CFR 236.566), to the extent that NJTR be permitted to operate two non-equipped ME locomotives in automatic cab signal territory, on the Morristown Line between Lower Hack, milepost 2.7 and Netcong, milepost 48.0; the Bergen County Line between Bergen Junction, milepost 3.1 and "BT," milepost 14.2; and the Boonton Line between Mountain View, milepost 21.3 and Denville, milepost 34.4, until such time as the locomotives can be equipped with automatic cab signal and automatic train control equipment, on or before June 30, 1998.

Applicant's justification for relief: NJTR is currently installing an automatic cab system on the associated trackage, and temporary relief is requested so that the other freight and passenger service can benefit at the earliest time, from the additional safety afforded by the cab signal and automatic train control systems.

Any interested party desiring to protest the granting of an application shall set forth specifically the grounds upon which the protest is made, and contain a concise statement of the interest of the protestant in the proceeding. The original and two copies of the protest shall be filed with the Associate Administrator for Safety, FRA, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590 within 45 calendar days of the date of issuance of this notice. Additionally, one copy of the protest shall be furnished to the applicant at the address listed above.

FRA expects to be able to determine these matters without oral hearing. However, if a specific request for an oral hearing is accompanied by a showing that the party is unable to adequately present his or her position by written statements, an application may be set for public hearing.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on December 1, 1997.

Grady C. Cothen, Jr.,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development.

[FR Doc. 97-32312 Filed 12-9-97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-06-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA-97-3190]

Notice of Receipt of Petition for Decision That Nonconforming 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 Passenger Cars Are Eligible for Importation

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of petition for decision that nonconforming 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 passenger cars are eligible for importation.

SUMMARY: This notice announces receipt by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of a petition for a decision that 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 passenger cars that were not originally manufactured to comply with all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards are eligible for importation into the United States because (1) They are substantially

similar to vehicles that were originally manufactured for importation into and sale in the United States and that were certified by their manufacturer as complying with the safety standards, and (2) they are capable of being readily altered to conform to the standards.

DATES: The closing date for comments on the petition is January 9, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments should refer to the docket number and notice number, and be submitted to: Docket Management, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, DC 20590. [Docket hours are from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.]

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: George Entwistle, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance, NHTSA (202-366-5306).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Under 49 U.S.C. 30141(a)(1)(A), a motor vehicle that was not originally manufactured to conform to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards shall be refused admission into the United States unless NHTSA has decided that the motor vehicle is substantially similar to a motor vehicle originally manufactured for importation into and sale in the United States, certified under 49 U.S.C. 30115, and of the same model year as the model of the motor vehicle to be compared, and is capable of being readily altered to conform to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Petitions for eligibility decisions may be submitted by either manufacturers or importers who have registered with NHTSA pursuant to 49 CFR Part 592. As specified in 49 CFR 593.7, NHTSA publishes notice in the **Federal Register** of each petition that it receives, and affords interested persons an opportunity to comment on the petition. At the close of the comment period, NHTSA decides, on the basis of the petition and any comments that it has received, whether the vehicle is eligible for importation. The agency then publishes this decision in the **Federal Register**.

Champagne Imports, Inc. of Lansdale, Pennsylvania ("Champagne") (Registered Importer 90-009) has petitioned NHTSA to decide whether 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 passenger cars are eligible for importation into the United States. The vehicles which Champagne believes are substantially similar are the 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 that were manufactured for importation into, and sale in, the United States and certified by their manufacturer, Daimler Benz,

A.G., as conforming to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

The petitioner claims that it carefully compared non-U.S. certified 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 passenger cars to their U.S. certified counterparts, and found the vehicles to be substantially similar with respect to compliance with most Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Champagne submitted information with its petition intended to demonstrate that non-U.S. certified 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 passenger cars, as originally manufactured, conform to many Federal motor vehicle safety standards in the same manner as their U.S. certified counterparts, or are capable of being readily altered to conform to those standards.

Specifically, the petitioner claims that non-U.S. certified 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 passenger cars are identical to their U.S. certified counterparts with respect to compliance with Standard Nos. 102 *Transmission Shift Lever Sequence*, . . . , 103 *Defrosting and Defogging Systems*, 104 *Windshield Wiping and Washing Systems*, 105 *Hydraulic Brake Systems*, 106 *Brake Hoses*, 109 *New Pneumatic Tires*, 113 *Hood Latch Systems*, 116 *Brake Fluid*, 124 *Accelerator Control Systems*, 201 *Occupant Protection in Interior Impact*, 202 *Head Restraints*, 204 *Steering Control Rearward Displacement*, 205 *Glazing Materials*, 207 *Seating Systems*, 209 *Seat Belt Assemblies*, 210 *Seat Belt Assembly Anchorages*, 212 *Windshield Retention*, 216 *Roof Crush Resistance*, 219 *Windshield Zone Intrusion*, and 302 *Flammability of Interior Materials*.

Additionally, the petitioner states that non-U.S. certified 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 passenger cars comply with the Bumper Standard found in 49 CFR Part 581.

Petitioner also contends that non-U.S. certified 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 passenger cars are capable of being readily altered to meet the following standards, in the manner indicated:

Standard No. 101 *Controls and Displays*: (a) substitution of a lens marked "Brake" for a lens with a noncomplying symbol on the brake failure indicator lamp; (b) installation of a seat belt warning lamp that displays the appropriate symbol; (c) recalibration of the speedometer/odometer from kilometers to miles per hour.

Standard No. 108 *Lamps, Reflective Devices and Associated Equipment*: (a) installation of U.S.-model headlamp assemblies; (b) installation of U.S.-model front and rear sidemarker/reflector assemblies; (c) installation of U.S.-model taillamp assemblies.

Standard No. 110 *Tire Selection and Rims*: installation of a tire information placard.

Standard No. 111 *Rearview Mirror*: replacement of the passenger side rearview mirror.

Standard No. 114 *Theft Protection*: installation of a warning buzzer microswitch and a warning buzzer in the steering lock assembly.

Standard No. 118 *Power Window Systems*: rewiring of the power window system so that the window transport is inoperative when the ignition is switched off.

Standard No. 206 *Door Locks and Door Retention Components*: replacement of the rear door locks and rear door lock buttons with U.S.-model components.

Standard No. 208 *Occupant Crash Protection*: (a) installation of a U.S.-model seat belt in the driver's position, or a belt webbing actuated microswitch inside the driver's seat belt retractor; (b) installation of an ignition switch actuated seat belt warning lamp and buzzer; (c) replacement of the driver's and passenger's side air bags and knee bolsters if these are not U.S.-model components. The petitioner states that the vehicles are equipped with combination lap and shoulder restraints that adjust by means of an automatic retractor and release by means of a single push button in each front designated seating position, with combination lap and shoulder restraints that release by means of a single push button in each rear outboard designated seating position, and with a lap belt in the rear center designated seating position.

Standard No. 214 *Side Impact Protection*: installation of reinforcing beams.

Standard No. 301 *Fuel System Integrity*: installation of a rollover valve in the fuel tank vent line between the fuel tank and the evaporative emissions collection canister.

Petitioner states that a vehicle identification number plate will be affixed to non-U.S. certified 1994-1997 Mercedes-Benz S500 passenger cars to comply with the requirements of 49 CFR Part 565.

Interested persons are invited to submit comments on the petition described above. Comments should refer to the docket number and be submitted to: Docket Management, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, DC 20590. It is requested but not required that 10 copies be submitted.

All comments received before the close of business on the closing date indicated above will be considered, and will be available for examination in the

docket at the above address both before and after that date. To the extent possible, comments filed after the closing date will also be considered. Notice of final action on the petition will be published in the **Federal Register** pursuant to the authority indicated below.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30141(a)(1)(A) and (b)(1); 49 CFR 593.8; delegations of authority at 49 CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Issued on: December 5, 1997.

Marilynne Jacobs, Director,

Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance.

[FR Doc. 97-32343 Filed 12-9-97; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA-97-3189]

Notice of Receipt of Petition for Decision That Nonconforming 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 Passenger Cars Are Eligible for Importation

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of receipt of petition for decision that nonconforming 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 passenger cars are eligible for importation.

SUMMARY: This notice announces receipt by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of a petition for a decision that 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 passenger cars that were not originally manufactured to comply with all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards are eligible for importation into the United States because (1) they are substantially similar to vehicles that were originally manufactured for importation into and sale in the United States and that were certified by their manufacturer as complying with the safety standards, and (2) they are capable of being readily altered to conform to the standards.

DATES: The closing date for comments on the petition is January 9, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments should refer to the docket number and notice number, and be submitted to: Docket Management, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, DC 20590. [Docket hours are from 10 am to 5 pm]

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: George Entwistle, Office of Vehicle Safety Compliance, NHTSA (202-366-5306).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Under 49 U.S.C. § 30141(a)(1)(A), a motor vehicle that was not originally manufactured to conform to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards shall be refused admission into the United States unless NHTSA has decided that the motor vehicle is substantially similar to a motor vehicle originally manufactured for importation into and sale in the United States, certified under 49 U.S.C. § 30115, and of the same model year as the model of the motor vehicle to be compared, and is capable of being readily altered to conform to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Petitions for eligibility decisions may be submitted by either manufacturers or importers who have registered with NHTSA pursuant to 49 CFR Part 592. As specified in 49 CFR 593.7, NHTSA publishes notice in the **Federal Register** of each petition that it receives, and affords interested persons an opportunity to comment on the petition. At the close of the comment period, NHTSA decides, on the basis of the petition and any comments that it has received, whether the vehicle is eligible for importation. The agency then publishes this decision in the **Federal Register**.

Champagne Imports, Inc. of Lansdale, Pennsylvania ("Champagne") (Registered Importer 90-009) has petitioned NHTSA to decide whether 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 passenger cars are eligible for importation into the United States. The vehicles which Champagne believes are substantially similar are the 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 that were manufactured for importation into, and sale in, the United States and certified by their manufacturer, Daimler Benz, A.G., as conforming to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

The petitioner claims that it carefully compared non-U.S. certified 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 passenger cars to their U.S. certified counterparts, and found the vehicles to be substantially similar with respect to compliance with most Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Champagne submitted information with its petition intended to demonstrate that non-U.S. certified 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 passenger cars, as originally manufactured, conform to many Federal motor vehicle safety standards in the same manner as their U.S. certified counterparts, or are capable of being readily altered to conform to those standards.

Specifically, the petitioner claims that non-U.S. certified 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 passenger cars are identical to their U.S. certified counterparts with respect to compliance with Standard Nos. 102 *Transmission Shift Lever Sequence . . .*, 103 *Defrosting and Defogging Systems*, 104 *Windshield Wiping and Washing Systems*, 105 *Hydraulic Brake Systems*, 106 *Brake Hoses*, 109 *New Pneumatic Tires*, 113 *Hood Latch Systems*, 116 *Brake Fluid*, 124 *Accelerator Control Systems*, 201 *Occupant Protection in Interior Impact*, 202 *Head Restraints*, 204 *Steering Control Rearward Displacement*, 205 *Glazing Materials*, 207 *Seating Systems*, 209 *Seat Belt Assemblies*, 210 *Seat Belt Assembly Anchorages*, 212 *Windshield Retention*, 216 *Roof Crush Resistance*, 219 *Windshield Zone Intrusion*, and 302 *Flammability of Interior Materials*.

Additionally, the petitioner states that non-U.S. certified 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 passenger cars comply with the Bumper Standard found in 49 CFR Part 581.

Petitioner also contends that non-U.S. certified 1994-1998 Mercedes-Benz S320 passenger cars are capable of being readily altered to meet the following standards, in the manner indicated:

Standard No. 101 *Controls and Displays*: (a) substitution of a lens marked "Brake" for a lens with a noncomplying symbol on the brake failure indicator lamp; (b) installation of a seat belt warning lamp that displays the appropriate symbol; (c) recalibration of the speedometer/odometer from kilometers to miles per hour.

Standard No. 108 *Lamps, Reflective Devices and Associated Equipment*: (a) installation of U.S.-model headlamp assemblies; (b) installation of U.S.-model front and rear sidemarkers/reflector assemblies; (c) installation of U.S.-model taillamp assemblies.

Standard No. 110 *Tire Selection and Rims*: installation of a tire information placard.

Standard No. 111 *Rearview Mirror*: replacement of the passenger side rearview mirror.

Standard No. 114 *Theft Protection*: installation of a warning buzzer microswitch and a warning buzzer in the steering lock assembly.

Standard No. 118 *Power Window Systems*: rewiring of the power window system so that the window transport is inoperative when the ignition is switched off.

Standard No. 206 *Door Locks and Door Retention Components*: replacement of the rear door locks and rear door locking buttons with U.S.-model components.