

(Civic Center Complex), 515 West First Street, Duluth, Minnesota. Interested parties are invited to present oral statements at the hearing.

The hearing will be an informal one and will be conducted in accordance with Rule 25 of the FRA Rules of Practice (49 CFR Part 211.25), by a representative designated by the FRA.

The hearing will be a nonadversary proceeding and, therefore, there will be no cross-examination of persons presenting statements. The FRA representative will make an opening statement outlining the scope of the hearing. After all initial statements have been completed, those persons wishing to make brief rebuttal statements will be given the opportunity to do so in the same order in which they made their initial statements. Additional procedures, if necessary for the conduct of the hearing, will be announced at the hearing.

Issued in Washington, D.C. on September 21, 1999.

Grady C. Cothen, Jr.,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development.

[FR Doc. 99-25213 Filed 9-27-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

[Docket MARAD-1999-6248]

Sea-Land Service, Inc., and U.S. Ship Management, Inc., Application for Approval of the Proposed Transfer of Maritime Security Program Operating Agreements (MA/MSP-29 Through MA/MSP-43)

By application completed September 21, 1999, Sea-Land Service, Inc. (Sea-Land), and U.S. Ship Management, Inc. (USSM) notified the Maritime Administration (MARAD) of the proposed transfer of 15 Maritime Security Program (MSP) Operating Agreements (MA/MSP-29 through MA/MSP-43) from Sea-Land to USSM, pursuant to section 652(j), Sub-title VI-B, Merchant Marine Act, 1936, as amended (1936 Act). The vessels originally subject to those contracts are also to be concomitantly transferred to USSM for operation. Sea-Land received the initial award of the MSP Operating Agreements on December 20, 1996.

The proposed transfer of MSP Operating Agreements MA/MSP-29 through MA/MSP-43 is part of a series of overall transactions whereby affiliates of the A.P. Moller Group (Maersk) will acquire the international container operations of Sea-Land. In all, 19 U.S.-

flag vessels will be transferred from Sea-Land to USSM, including the 15 associated with the MSP Operating Agreements.

With respect to the transfer of MSP Operating Agreements, section 652(j) of the 1936 Act provides that "A Contractor under an operating agreement may transfer the agreement (including all rights and obligations under the agreement) to any person eligible to enter into that Operating Agreement under this subtitle after notification of the Secretary [of Transportation] in accordance with regulations prescribed by the Secretary, unless the transfer is disapproved by the Secretary within 90 days after the date of Notification. A person to whom an Operating Agreement is transferred may receive payments from the Secretary under the agreement only if each vessel to be covered by the agreement after the transfer is an eligible vessel under section 651(b)."

In implementing the proposed transaction, it is asserted that under a U.S. citizen owner trust structure, the MSP Vessels will be bareboat chartered to USSM, which will time charter them to Maersk Line Limited (MLL), an affiliate of Maersk and a documentation U.S. citizen. USSM will manage and operate the vessels utilizing former Sea-Land operations employees. USSM will crew the vessels with U.S. citizens, utilizing the same unions presently representing seagoing employees on the MSP Vessels. The vessels will continue to operate in the same combination of world-wide container services as have been provided since 1995 by cooperation between Maersk and Sea-Land.

Sea-Land and USSM have requested that MARAD allow the proposed transfers to become effective in accordance with the application and pursuant to law. This notice invites comment on legal and policy issues that may be raised by the Sea-Land and USSM application, including the transfer of the 15 MSP Operating Agreements to USSM.

A redacted copy of the transfer application will be available for inspection at the Department of Transportation (DOT) Dockets Facility and on the DOT Dockets website (address information follows). Any person, firm, or corporation having an interest in this proposal, and desiring to submit comments concerning the application, may file comments as follows. You should mention the docket number that appears at the top of this notice. You should submit your written comments to the Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, Nassif

Building, Department of Transportation, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Comments may also be submitted by electronic means via the internet at <http://dmses.dot.gov/submit/>. All comments will become part of the docket. You may call Docket Management at (202) 366-9324. You may visit the docket room to inspect and copy comments at the above address between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., EDT, Monday through Friday, except holidays. An electronic version of this document is available on the World Wide Web at <http://dms.dot.gov>. Comments must be received no later than the close of business on October 13, 1999.

This notice is published as a matter of discretion, and the fact of its publication should in no way be considered a favorable or unfavorable decision on the application, as filed, or as may be amended. MARAD will consider any comments timely submitted, and take such action with respect thereto as may be deemed appropriate.

By Order of the Maritime Administration.

Dated: September 22, 1999.

Joel C. Richard,

Secretary, Maritime Administration.

[FR Doc. 99-25124 Filed 9-27-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-81-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Safety Performance Standards Program Meeting

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of NHTSA rulemaking status meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces a public meeting at which NHTSA will answer questions from the public and the automobile industry regarding the agency's vehicle regulatory program. **DATES:** The Agency's regular, quarterly public meeting relating to its vehicle regulatory program will be held on Thursday, December 16, 1999, beginning at 9:45 a.m. and ending at approximately 12:00 p.m. at the Tysons Westpark Hotel, McLean, VA. Questions relating to the vehicle regulatory program must be submitted in writing with a diskette (Wordperfect) by Thursday, November 18, 1999, to the address shown below or by e-mail. If sufficient time is available, questions received after November 18 may be answered at the meeting. The individual, group or company

submitting a question(s) does not have to be present for the question(s) to be answered. A consolidated list of the questions submitted by November 18, 1999, and the issues to be discussed, will be posted on NHTSA's web site (www.nhtsa.dot.gov) by Monday, December 13, 1999, and also will be available at the meeting.

ADDRESSES: Questions for the December 16, NHTSA Rulemaking Status Meeting, relating to the agency's vehicle regulatory program, should be submitted to Delia Lopez, NPS-01, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590, Fax Number 202-366-4329, e-mail dlopez@nhtsa.dot.gov. The meeting will be held at the Tysons Westpark Hotel, 8401 Westpark Drive, McLean, VA.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Delia Lopez, (202) 366-1810.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NHTSA holds a regular, quarterly meeting to answer questions from the public and the regulated industries regarding the agency's vehicle regulatory program. Questions on aspects of the agency's research and development activities that relate directly to ongoing regulatory actions should be submitted, as in the past, to the agency's Safety Performance Standards Office. The purpose of this meeting is to focus on those phases of NHTSA activities which are technical, interpretative or procedural in nature. Transcripts of these meetings will be available for public inspection in the DOT Docket in Washington, DC, within four weeks after the meeting. Copies of the transcript will then be available at ten cents a page, (length has varied from 80 to 150 pages) upon request to DOT Docket, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. The DOT Docket is open to the public from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. The transcript may also be accessed electronically at <http://dms.dot.gov>, at docket NHTSA-1999-5087. Questions to be answered at the quarterly meeting should be organized by categories to help us process the questions into an agenda form more efficiently. Sample format:

- I. RULEMAKING
 - A. Crash avoidance
 - B. Crashworthiness
 - C. Other Rulemakings
- II. CONSUMER INFORMATION
- III. MISCELLANEOUS

NHTSA will provide auxiliary aids to participants as necessary. Any person desiring assistance of "auxiliary aids" (e.g., sign-language interpreter, telecommunications devices for deaf persons (TDDs), readers, taped texts,

brailled materials, or large print materials and/or a magnifying device), please contact Delia Lopez on (202) 366-1810, by COB November 18, 1999.

Issued: September 21, 1999.

Stephen R. Kratzke,

Acting Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.

[FR Doc. 99-25086 Filed 9-27-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB-520]

Salt Lake City Railroad Company, Inc.—Adverse Abandonment—Line of Utah Transit Authority in Salt Lake City, UT

On September 8, 1999, Utah Transit Authority (UTA) filed an adverse application¹ under 49 U.S.C. 10903 requesting that the Surface Transportation Board (Board) find that the public convenience and necessity require or permit the abandonment by the Salt Lake City Southern Railroad Company, Inc. (SLCS), of a rail line from milepost 798.74 at Ninth South Street in Salt Lake City to the milepost 775.19 at the Salt Lake County/Utah County boundary line near Mount (including the 1.4-mile Lovendahl Spur connecting with the main line at milepost 790.52), a total distance of approximately 24.95 miles in Salt Lake County, UT. The line traverses United States Postal Service ZIP Codes 84101, 84115, 84107, 84047, 84070, 84092 and 84020, and includes the stations of Salt Lake City, Murray, Sandy, Draper and Mount, UT.

UTA states that it is filing the adverse application to remove the Board's jurisdiction over SLCS's common carrier operations and obligations. UTA says that it wants to replace SLCS with the Utah Railway Company (URC) as the operator of its line. URC has filed a notice of exemption to acquire and operate the line in *Utah Railway Company—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—Lines of Utah Transit Authority in Salt Lake City, UT*, STB Finance Docket No. 33785 (STB served Aug. 30, 1999) (64 FR 47229).

UTA, a noncarrier, acquired the underlying right-of-way and track from the Union Pacific Railroad Company. See *Utah Transit Authority—Acquisition Exemption—Line of Union Pacific Railroad Company*, Finance Docket No. 32186 (ICC served Dec. 31,

1992). UTA is apparently using the line for light rail passenger service. SLCS is operating freight service on the line under a permanent easement. See *Salt Lake City Southern Railroad Company, Inc.—Acquisition and Operation Exemption—Line Between Mount and Salt Lake City, UT*, Finance Docket No. 32276 (ICC served Apr. 23, 1993).

In a decision served in this proceeding on August 26, 1999, UTA was granted a waiver of some of the filing requirements of 49 CFR 1152 that were not relevant to its intended adverse abandonment application. However, UTA was required to provide information about the physical condition of the line.

The August 26 decision also noted that the continued viability of freight service would be a relevant issue in this abandonment proceeding. It was also indicated that the Board would be concerned if the common carrier obligation for continued freight service would be impeded by light rail passenger service or by any restrictions or limitations UTA has allegedly placed on freight operations. As a result, UTA was required to provide information in its application about how its light rail service affects freight service to shippers.

UTA was also granted a waiver of the environmental regulations in 49 CFR 1105.6(c)(6) and 1105.8(b)(3) because freight operation would be continued on the line by URC. The decision noted that, even though the proceeding is an abandonment of the line because SLCS holds a permanent easement to operate the line, environmental and historic reporting requirements would indeed be unnecessary for the adverse abandonment application if rail service will be continued by another operator.

In an application by a third party for a determination that the public convenience and necessity permit a line to be discontinued or abandoned, the issue before the Board is whether the public interest requires that the line in question be retained as part of the national rail system. By granting a third party application, the Board withdraws its primary jurisdiction over the line. Questions of the disposition of the line, including the adjudication of various claims of ownership or other rights and obligations, are left to the state or local authorities. *Kansas City Pub. Ser. Frgt. Operation—Exempt.—Aban.*, 7 I.C.C.2d 216, 224-25 (1990).

UTA has served notice of its application on shippers served by the line. Shippers can individually submit protests or comments on the proposal that will be considered by the Board in

¹ An abandonment of a railroad's service sought by a party other than the railroad is called an "adverse" abandonment.