

or gross vehicle weight) have the most significant impact and why?

9. How do Federal divisible load regulations affect SHV operations?

10. How do Federal weight limits affect the safety of SHVs? What would be the impacts of changes in weight limits on safety?

11. How do Federal weight limits affect infrastructure costs? What would be the impacts of changes in weight limits on pavement and bridge costs?

12. Are there any operating restrictions (speed, time of day, route) on SHVs operating under excess weight permits that would not apply to the same vehicle operating within Federal weight standards?

13. What opportunities exist to improve productivity while also improving safety and minimizing adverse impacts on pavements and bridges?

Phase 2: Analysis of Current SHV Operations

Many States have special weight provisions on non-Interstate highways for specific trucking operations such as dump trucking. Although not always the case, these special weight provisions are often extended to the Interstate System through grandfather rights. The analysis undertaken in this phase of the study will examine the economic, safety and infrastructure impacts of the current set of truck size and weight limits for SHVs, including divisible and non-divisible overweight permit provisions of the various States. This will be accomplished utilizing data gathered in the Phase I Outreach, as well as established data sources including the Truck Inventory and Use Survey (TIUS) collected by the Department of Commerce, and Trucks Involved in Fatal Accidents (TIFA), an enhancement of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration safety data compiled by University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute. Analytical tools used in the Department of Transportation's Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study will be used to assess infrastructure and safety issues.

State provisions for higher operating weights allow SHV operators to carry a given volume of commodity in fewer trips. This increase in productivity has the positive effects of reduced truck travel, which decreases fuel consumption and related emissions, and lower transportation costs per ton-mile.

Higher allowable operating weights of SHVs also impact the condition of highway infrastructure. Pavement damage per SHV vehicle mile traveled increases due to heavier axle loadings. Bridge stresses per SHV loading also

increase with the higher weights. Bridge stresses depend not only on the gross weight of the vehicle, but on the concentration of the load, or the bridge area supporting the load. Thus, a short wheelbased SHV will generally cause more bridge stress than longer wheelbased vehicles of the same gross weight and lower gross weight vehicles of the same wheelbase.

Increased SHV weights may also impact highway safety. Because they generally haul dense, bulky commodities on short wheelbases, vehicle handling characteristics may be affected. At higher weights, there may be an increase in rollover propensity from a higher center of gravity and reduced braking capability from a high gross weight to braking axle ratio.

This phase of the study will provide illustrative examples of the operational economics, infrastructure and safety impacts for States where SHVs routinely operate legally at weights in excess of the Federal standard. The effectiveness of various permit program fee structures in recovering additional infrastructure cost will be assessed and to the extent practical, the impact of these programs on illegal overweight operations. The analysis will utilize information collected during Phase 1 of the study supplemented with data from TIUS and TIFA and other analytical tools developed for the Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study.

Phase 3: Analysis of Weight Standards for SHVs

Based on the Phase 2 assessment of Federal and State weight limits and permitting practices and the current usage of SHVs, Phase 3 of the study will analyze the implications of alternative Federal axle load, gross vehicle weight, and bridge formula weight limits and alternative permitting practices as they apply to SHVs. Factors to be considered shall include transportation costs and other economic impacts, safety, and pavement, bridge, and other infrastructure impacts.

The method for Phase 3 analysis will be similar to that used in Phase 2, an illustrative case study of potential economic, infrastructure and safety impacts from increased weights for various types of SHVs in States where weights are currently determined by the Federal Bridge Formula and Federal axle limits. Many of the analytical tools developed for the Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study will be used in assessing impacts of alternative weight limits and permitting practices.

Authority: 23 U.S.C. 315; 23 U.S.C. 217 note; 49 CFR 1.48.

Issued on: December 16, 1999.

Kenneth R. Wykle,

Federal Highway Administrator.

[FR Doc. 99-33859 Filed 12-29-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

[Docket No. FRA-1999-6404]

Extension of Comment Period; Petition for Grandfathering of Non-Compliant Equipment National Railroad Passenger Corporation

On October 18, 1999, the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak) petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) for grandfathering of non-compliant passenger equipment manufactured by Renfe Talgo of America (Talgo) for use on rail lines between Vancouver, British Columbia and Eugene, Oregon; between Las Vegas, Nevada and Los Angeles, California; and between San Diego, California and San Luis Obispo, California. Notice of receipt of such petition was published in the **Federal Register** on November 2, 1999, at 64 FR 5920. Interested parties were invited to comment on the petition before the end of the comment period of December 2, 1999.

On December 2, 1999, FRA extended the comment period in this proceeding until December 15, 1999, following a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request that certain items in FRA files referenced in Amtrak's petition be made available for review (see 64 FR 68195; Dec. 6, 1999). Talgo has objected to release of certain of the requested information under FOIA exemption 4 (5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4)), which exempts from release trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a person that is privileged or confidential. On December 15, 1999, FRA further extended the comment period in this proceeding until 10:00 a.m. on December 27, 1999 to enable FRA to finalize its response to the FOIA request, and to permit the responder time to analyze the documents released by FRA (see 64 FR 71846; Dec. 22, 1999). Unfortunately, processing the FOIA request has taken longer than anticipated; FRA released documents on November 30, December 10, and December 21. FRA has redacted from the documents released information that is protected under FOIA exemption 4. On December 13, the FOIA requester again asked FRA to further extend the comment period so that the requester would have 15 days after receipt of all

of the requested documents to analyze the documents and prepare comments on the grandfather petition. FRA has agreed to this request and has extended the comment period to the close of business on January 10, 2000. FRA expects that further extensions of the comment period will not be necessary.

FRA has placed in the docket a copy of all the documents provided to the FOIA requester. FRA has also placed in the docket several documents that it received from Talgo that are relevant to the Amtrak petition. Two of these documents contain comments or corrections to the minutes of the June 17, 1999 meeting between FRA, Amtrak and Talgo; the minutes of this meeting was one of the documents released to the FOIA requester. Another document contains weld information pertaining to the Talgo equipment. The remaining documents contain design changes to the Talgo equipment requested by FRA. Talgo has requested confidential treatment, under exemption 4 of FOIA, for certain information in the documents. FRA has redacted from the Talgo documents information that is protected by exemption 4. Unredacted versions of all of the documents placed in the docket are available to agency staff and will be used in the agency's review of the Amtrak petition to the extent deemed necessary.

Comments received after January 10, 2000 will be considered to the extent possible.

Comments received after January 10, 2000 will be considered to the extent possible. Amtrak's petition, documents inserted in the docket, and all written communications concerning this proceeding are available for examination during regular business hours (9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) at DOT Central Docket Management Facility, Room PL-401 (Plaza Level), 400 Seventh, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590-0001. All documents in the public docket are also available for inspection and copying on the Internet at the docket facility's Web site at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

Issued in Washington, DC, on December 23, 1999.

Grady C. Cothen, Jr.,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development.

[FR Doc. 99-33926 Filed 12-29-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

[Docket MARAD-1999-6704]

Matson Navigation Company— Application for Approval of a Proposed Ocean Freight Service under the Fourth Exception to Section 506 of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936, as Amended.

Notice is hereby given that Matson Navigation Company (Matson) has requested approval of the Maritime Administration that a proposed ocean freight service is permitted under the Fourth Exception to Section 506 of the Merchant Marine Act, 1936, as amended, 46 App. U.S.C. 1156. The proposed service would use two of the following C-9 class vessels, MAHIMAH, MANOA, and MOKIHANA, which were built with the aid of construction-differential subsidy. As a result of receiving such assistance, those vessels must be operated in the U.S. foreign trade, except that the vessels may be operated "on a voyage in foreign trade on which the vessel may stop at the State of Hawaii." Matson proposes to operate the vessels in an itinerary which includes stops at Vancouver, B.C., Seattle, Oakland, and Honolulu, with no coastwise cargo to be carried between Seattle and Oakland. The C-9 vessels would be substituted for two of the six vessels Matson presently operates in its Hawaii service. Matson also operates a Pacific Coast Shuttle service with calls at Los Angeles, Seattle and Vancouver.

A redacted copy of the 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, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20590. Comments may also be submitted by electronic means via the internet at <http://dmses.dot.gov/submit>. 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., EST, 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 (15 days from publication), 2000.

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: December 27, 1999.

Joel C. Richard,

Secretary, Maritime Administration.

[FR Doc. 99-33934 Filed 12-29-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-81-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Finance Docket No. 33837]

CSX Transportation, Inc.—Trackage Rights Exemption—Norfolk Southern Railway Company

Norfolk Southern Railway Company (NS) has agreed to grant overhead trackage rights to CSX Transportation, Inc. (CSXT), to operate its trains, locomotives, cars and equipment with CSXT's own crews over NS's Track #A1 at Petersburg, VA, from the connection between CSXT and NS at or near milepost P004.85 to the connection with the industrial trackage of Chaparral Steel Corporation (CSC).

The transaction is scheduled to be consummated on or shortly after December 27, 1999.

The purpose of the trackage rights is to allow CSC to have two rail carriers serve its Petersburg facility. CSXT's trackage rights will be restricted to service to CSC, its existing and future subsidiary companies, or other supporting companies located on the industrial trackage of CSC, and the successor and assigns of those companies.

As a condition to this exemption, any employees affected by the trackage rights will be protected by the conditions imposed in *Norfolk and Western Ry. Co.—Trackage Rights—BN*, 354 I.C.C. 605 (1978), as modified in *Mendocino Coast Ry., Inc.—Lease and Operate*, 360 I.C.C. 653 (1980).

This notice is filed under 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(7). If it contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio*. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d)