

DATES: Comments should be submitted on or before November 3, 1998.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

James J. Zok, Associate Administrator for Ship Financial Assistance and Cargo Preference, MAR-500, Room 8126, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20590. Telephone 202-366-0364 or fax 202-366-7901. Copies of this collection can also be obtained from that office.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title of Collection: Customer Service Survey.

Type of Request: Approval of a new information collection.

OMB Control Number: 2133-

Form Number: MA-1016; MA-1017.

Expiration Date of Approval: Three years from the date of approval.

Summary of Collection of Information: Executive Order 12862 requires agencies to survey customers to determine the kind and quality of services they want and the level of their satisfaction with existing services. This collection covers MARAD forms used to carry out such surveys covering MARAD programs and services.

Need and Use of the Information: (1) Responses to the Customer Service Questionnaire are needed to obtain prompt customer feedback on the quality of specific services/products provided to the customer by MARAD. The information provided will be used to ascertain the customer's level of satisfaction. (2) Responses to the Program Performance Survey are needed to obtain customers' views on MARAD's major programs and activities with which the customers were involved during the preceding year. The information provided will be used by MARAD's senior management and MARAD's program managers to monitor the overall level of customer satisfaction and to identify areas for improvement in program service or product delivery.

Description of Respondents: Individuals/Entities directly served by MARAD.

Annual Responses: 8250 responses.

Annual Burden: 300 hours.

Comments: Signed written comments should refer to the docket number that appears at the top of this document and must be submitted to the Docket Clerk, U.S. DOT Dockets, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, D.C. 20590. Specifically, address whether this information collection is necessary for proper performance of the function of the agency and will have practical utility, accuracy of the burden estimates, ways to minimize this burden, and ways to enhance quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected. All comments received

will be available for examination at the above address between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m., e.t. Monday through Friday, except Federal Holidays. An electronic version of this document is available on the World Wide Web at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

Dated: September 1, 1998.

By Order of the Maritime Administrator.

Joel C. Richard,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 98-23909 Filed 9-3-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-81-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Denial of Motor Vehicle Defect Petition, DP98-005

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation.

ACTION: Denial of petition for a defect investigation.

SUMMARY: This notice sets forth the reasons for the denial of a petition submitted to NHTSA under 49 U.S.C. 30162, requesting that the agency commence a proceeding to determine the existence of a defect related to motor vehicle safety. The petition is hereinafter identified as DP98-005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. George Chiang, Office of Defects Investigation (ODI), NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Telephone: (202) 366-5206.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Mr. Jeff Glick of Seattle, Washington, submitted a petition dated May 14, 1998, requesting that an investigation be initiated to determine whether Model Year (MY) 1994 Ford Probe vehicles contain a defect related to motor vehicle safety within the meaning of 49 U.S.C. Chapter 301. The petition alleges that MY 1994 Ford Probes have a defective oil pump that can fail, and that such a failure can pose a safety hazard. In addition, the petitioner alleges that the oil pump contains a safety-related defect as described in Technical Service Bulletin (TSB) No. 96-21-3 issued by Ford Motor Company (Ford).

TSB No. 96-21-3 concerns the oil pump in MY 1993 through 1996 Ford Probe vehicles with a 2.0 liter engine (the subject vehicles). An uneven wear pattern on the oil pump control plunger can cause the plunger to stick and fail to properly regulate the oil pressure in the engine. If the oil pressure is too low, it may cause the hydraulic lash adjuster to bleed down. This will produce a

metallic "ticking" noise at idle. If the oil pressure is too high, the hydraulic lash adjusters may pump up, causing the cylinder head valves to stay open. This may be accompanied by rough running, missing, reduced power, and at times stalling. Ford modified the oil pump with an improved oil pump plunger to reduce the possibility of sticking. The new oil pump is used in MY 1997 and later MY Probes and as well as the replacement part for the subject vehicles. The new oil pump has part number F72Z-6600-AA.

A review of agency data files, including information reported to the Auto Safety Hotline by consumers, indicated that aside from the petition, there was a complaint report submitted by the petitioner in February of this year concerning loss of power and stalling, possibly due to failure or malfunction of the oil pump. The agency has received no other complaints regarding oil pump problems in the subject vehicles.

Ford provided information to ODI on July 30, 1998, stating that it has received 1,552 complaint reports concerning "ticking/clicking" or other engine noise concerns in the subject vehicles. (A total of 192,563 subject vehicles were produced in MY 1993-1996.) Ford reported only 48 alleged vehicle "stalling" or engine "dies" complaints that may be associated with the defective oil pump, and none report injuries or crashes.

The petitioner alleged that failure of the oil pump can cause a safety hazard because it can cause loss of engine power and stalling.

Based on the TSB, the problem may be noticed as an engine "ticking" noise. The petitioner affirms this symptom as well as the oil pressure gauge showing a high pressure reading. The noise and or high oil pressure gauge reading may alert the owner to bring the vehicle in for repair. The high ratio of reported engine noise "ticking/clicking" complaints (1,552) compared to those of "stalling" or "dies" (48) suggests that the problem often produces significant symptoms noticed by drivers, but only rarely leads to stalling.

The agency has analyzed the available information concerning the problem alleged in the petition, including the information obtained from the evaluation of the ODI and Ford complaints and an analysis of potential failure mode. While stalling may have a significant adverse effect on safety, particularly where the incidence rate is high or there is no warning, here the malfunctioning of the Ford oil pump plunger has not been shown to result in a substantial rate of stalling incidents

and is unlikely to have a significant adverse effect on safety.

In view of the foregoing, it is unlikely that NHTSA would issue an order for the notification and remedy of a safety-related defect in the subject vehicles at the conclusion of the investigation requested in the petition. Therefore, in view of the need to allocate and prioritize NHTSA's limited resources to best accomplish the agency's safety mission, the petition is denied.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30162(d); delegations of authority at CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Kenneth N. Weinstein,
Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance.

[FR Doc. 98-23860 Filed 9-3-98; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. MC-F-20928]

Coach USA, Inc.—Continuance in Control—Salt Lake Coaches, Inc.

AGENCY: Surface Transportation Board.

ACTION: Notice tentatively approving finance application.

SUMMARY: Coach USA, Inc. (Coach), a noncarrier that controls motor passenger carriers, has filed an application under 49 U.S.C. 14303 to continue in control of Salt Lake Coaches, Inc. (SLC), upon SLC becoming a motor passenger carrier. Persons wishing to oppose the application must follow the rules under 49 CFR part 1182, subparts B and C. The Board has tentatively approved the transaction, and, if no opposing comments are timely filed, this notice will be the final Board action. If opposing comments are timely filed, this tentative grant of authority will be deemed vacated, and the Board will consider the comments and any replies and will issue a further decision on the application.

DATES: Comments must be filed by October 19, 1998. Applicants may file a reply by November 3, 1998. If no comments are filed by October 19, 1998, this notice is effective on that date.

ADDRESSES: Send an original and 10 copies of any comments referring to STB Docket No. MC-F-20928 to: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, send one copy of comments to applicant's representatives: Betty Jo Christian and David H. Coburn, Steptoe & Johnson LLP, 1330 Connecticut Avenue, NW., Washington, DC 20036.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Beryl Gordon, (202) 565-1600. [TDD for the hearing impaired: (202) 565-1695.]

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Coach currently controls 54 motor passenger carriers,¹ and owns all of the stock of SLC, a noncarrier that intends to apply to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to register as an interstate motor passenger carrier, upon approval of this continuance in control application. Following registration with FHWA, SLC intends to commence charter and special operations in interstate commerce from a Salt Lake City, Utah base of operations. SLC also intends to provide intrastate services within Utah, including airport shuttle services. SLC will use for its interstate and intrastate services buses that it leases from another non-carrier Coach affiliate, Coach Leasing, Inc.

Coach states that its proposed continuance in control of SLC, once that entity becomes a carrier, will not materially reduce competitive options available to the traveling public. According to Coach, SLC will be a relatively small carrier and will face substantial competition from other bus companies and modes of transportation.²

Coach also states that granting the application will produce substantial benefits, including interest cost savings from the restructuring of debt and relatively low operating costs deriving from Coach's enhanced volume purchasing power. Specifically, Coach claims that SLC will benefit from the lower insurance premiums negotiated by Coach and from volume discounts for equipment and fuel. Coach indicates

¹ In addition to the instant application, Coach has three other pending control applications: *Coach USA, Inc.—Control—Kansas City Executive Coach, Inc. and Le Bus, Inc.*, STB Docket No. MC-F-20923 (STB served July 24, 1998), in which it seeks to acquire control of two additional motor passenger carriers; *Coach USA, Inc.—Control—Brunswick Transportation Company d/b/a The Maine Line; Mini Coach of Boston; Olympia Trails Bus Co., Inc.; Stardust Tours, Inc. d/b/a Gray Line Tours of Memphis; and Valen Transportation, Inc.*, STB Docket No. MC-F-20926 (STB served August 14, 1998), in which it seeks to acquire control of five additional motor passenger carriers; and *Coach USA, Inc.—Control—Chenango Valley Bus Lines, Inc.; Colonial Coach Corp.; GL Bus Lines, Inc.; Gray Line Air Shuttle, Inc.; Gray Line New York Tours, Inc.; Hudson Transit Corporation; Hudson Transit Lines, Inc.; and International Bus Services, Inc.*, STB Docket No. MC-F-20927 (filed July 31, 1998), in which it seeks to acquire control of eight additional motor passenger carriers.

² Coach states that many of the services that SLC will provide are currently being offered by another company controlled by Coach, K-T-Contract Services, Inc. (KT), and if the proposed transaction is granted and SLC is successfully registered by FHWA, SLC will assume control of those operations from KT, which will terminate its role in providing these particular services.

that it will provide SLC with centralized legal and accounting functions and coordinated purchasing services. In addition, Coach states that vehicle sharing arrangements will be facilitated through Coach to ensure maximum use and efficient operation of equipment and that, with Coach's assistance, coordinated driver training services will be provided, enabling SLC to allocate driver resources in the most efficient manner possible. Coach also states that the proposed transaction will benefit the employees of SLC.

Coach plans to acquire control of additional motor passenger carriers in the coming months. It asserts that the financial benefits and operating efficiencies will be enhanced further by these subsequent transactions. Over the long term, Coach states that it will provide centralized marketing and reservation services for the bus firms that it controls, thereby further enhancing the benefits resulting from these control transactions.

SLC is not currently a carrier and therefore is not at present rated by the U.S. Department of Transportation. Applicant certifies that: (1) It will maintain sufficient liability insurance; (2) SLC is not domiciled in Mexico or owned or controlled by persons of that country; and (3) approval of the transaction will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources. Additional information may be obtained from applicant's representatives.

Under 49 U.S.C. 14303(b), we must approve and authorize a transaction we find consistent with the public interest, taking into consideration at least: (1) The effect of the transaction on the adequacy of transportation to the public; (2) the total fixed charges that result; and (3) the interest of affected carrier employees. We find, based on the application, that the proposed transaction is consistent with the public interest and should be authorized.

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at "WWW.STB.DOT.GOV."

This action will not significantly affect either the quality of the human environment or the conservation of energy resources.

It is ordered:

1. The proposed continuance in control is approved and authorized, subject to the filing of opposing comments.

2. If timely opposing comments are filed, the findings made in this decision will be deemed as having been vacated.