Improvements to the corridor are considered warranted to improve mobility for local traffic and provide route continuity for I–49, which currently terminates at I–10 north of the urban area. Any improvement under consideration would be adequate to accommodate existing and projected traffic demand. Alternatives under consideration include (1) taking no action; and (2) constructing a fully controlled access highway on new alignment or existing alignment. Incorporated into and studied with the build alternative will be design variations of grade and alignment. A re-examination of four (EA–1 Elevated, RR–3, RR–4, and RR–5 Elevated) of the six alternatives developed in the preparation of the 1992 Draft EIS will be conducted. In addition, an at-grade alignment through the corridor study area with the main line going over at selected interchange and or grade separation locations will be developed and evaluated (At-Grade, Over at selected Interchange Locations). Alternatively, an at-grade alignment through the corridor study area with selected cross streets going over at interchange locations will also be developed and evaluated (At-Grade, with selected cross streets over at Interchange Locations). The Lafayette MPO has identified the following locations and cross streets to be considered for these alternatives; Willow Street, Mudd Avenue, Johnston Street, Pinhook Road, University Avenue and Kaliste Saloom Road The EA–1 Depressed and the RR–5 Depressed alternatives will not be re-examined, but they will be referenced to as alternatives considered but eliminated with an explanation of the reason for elimination, as well as a history of these alternatives and their analysis.

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 interest in this proposal. Public meetings will be held in Lafayette between March, 1998 and the conclusion of the study. In addition, a Public Hearing will be held. Public notices will be given with the time and place of the meetings and hearing. The Draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the formal public hearing. A formal agency scoping meting will be held.

To insure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and that all significant issues are identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be directed to Mr. William C. Farr at the address provided above.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program)

**Mr. William A. Sussmann,**

*FHWA Division Administrator, Baton Rouge, LA.*

[FR Doc. 98–9793 Filed 4–13–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–22–M

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Transit Administration

### Environmental Impact Statement on the Phase I Regional Rail Project, Raleigh-Durham, NC

**AGENCY:** Federal Transit Administration, DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

**SUMMARY:** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Research Triangle Regional Public Transportation Authority, locally known as Triangle Transit Authority or TTA, intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on the proposed regional rail transit project in Wake and Durham Counties, North Carolina.

The EIS will evaluate the following alternatives: A No-build alternative; a Transportation System Management alternative consisting of low to medium cost improvements to the facilities and operation of TTA and local bus services in addition to currently planned transit improvements; and the regional rail transit alignment (including line, sixteen stations and support facilities). Scoping will be accomplished through correspondence with interested persons, organizations, and Federal, State and local agencies, and through public and agency meetings.

**DATES:** *Comment Due Date:* Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts to be considered should be sent to the Triangle Transit Authority by May 15, 1998. See **ADDRESSES** below. *Scoping Meetings:* A public scoping meeting will be held on Monday, April 27, 1998 from 4 pm to 8 pm at the NC Biotechnology Center in Research Triangle Park. An agency scoping meeting will be held on Monday, April 27, 1998 at 9 am at the NC Biotechnology Center. See **ADDRESSES** below.

**ADDRESSES:** *Written comments* on the scope of alternatives and impacts to be studied should be sent to Mr. Jim Ritchey, General Manager, Triangle Transit Authority, PO Box 13787, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina 27709. *Scoping meetings* will be held at the following location: NC Biotechnology Center, 15 T.W. Alexander Drive, Research Triangle Park, NC 27709.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Tony Dittmeier, Federal Transit Administration, Region IV, (404) 562–3512.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

## I. Scoping

The FTA and TTA invite interested individuals, organizations, and federal, state and local agencies to participate in defining the alternatives to be evaluated and identifying any significant social, economic or environmental issue related to the alternatives. Specific suggestions related to additional alternatives to be examined and issues to be addressed are welcome and will be considered in the development of the final scope. Scoping comments may be made at the scoping meetings or in writing no later than May 15, 1998 (see **DATES** and **ADDRESSES** above). During scoping, comments should focus on identifying specific social, economic, or environmental impacts to be evaluated, and suggesting alternatives that are less costly or less environmentally damaging which achieve similar transit objectives. Comments should focus on the issues and alternatives for analysis, and not on a preference for a particular alternative.

Scoping materials will be available at the meeting or in advance of the meeting by contacting Triangle Transit Authority as indicated above. If you wish to be placed on the mailing list to receive further information as the project continues contact Mr. Jim Ritchey at the Triangle Transit Authority (see **ADDRESSES** above).

## II. Description of Study Area and Project Need

The proposed project consists of an approximately 35 mile regional rail transit system. The technology proposed is diesel multiple units (DMU's), self-propelled, diesel-powered trainsets. The regional rail alignment will be located within the existing North Carolina Railroad and CSX railroad rights-of-way. The sixteen proposed stations connect the region's major activity centers, including universities, major

employment centers, and residential areas. The system would also serve the planned Durham and Raleigh Multi-Modal Centers.

The corridor generally parallels NC 147 (Durham Freeway), Interstate 40 and NC 54, and US 1 (Capital Blvd), which are major highway facilities providing regional connections in this corridor. The region has a history of relying heavily on roadway expansion to meet the needs of the growing population. However, with the anticipated continuation of population and employment growth, congestion in the region is projected to worsen, with very limited alternatives to driving. In addition, the region continues to face other problems related to rapid growth: Suburban sprawl, deteriorating air quality, lack of community identity, loss of open space, and high highway and transit system costs.

In response to this need, TTA has completed a Major Investment Study (MIS) for this corridor. The results of the MIS resulted in a recommended design concept and scope consisting of a dedicated track with passing sidings within the existing railroad right-of-way, sixteen stations, and expanded local and feeder bus service.

## III. Alternatives

The alternatives proposed for evaluation include: (1) No-build, which involves no change to transportation service or facilities in the corridor beyond already committed projects; (2) a Transportation System Management alternative, which consists of low-to-medium cost improvements to the operations of TTA and local bus operators in addition to the currently planned transit improvements in the corridor; and (3) regional rail transit located within the North Carolina Railroad and CSX railroad rights-of-way with sixteen stations.

## IV. Probable Effects

FTA and TTA will evaluate all significant environmental, social, and economic impacts of the alternatives analyzed in the EIS. Primary issues include: the projected increase in transit ridership, the locations of the sixteen proposed stations, the support of regional land use goals and plans, secondary impacts in station areas, and capital and operating and maintenance costs. Environmental and social impacts proposed for analysis include land use and neighborhood impacts, traffic and parking impacts near stations, safety and visual impacts, impacts on cultural resources, and noise and vibration impacts. Impacts on natural areas, rare and endangered species, air and water quality, wetlands and parklands, groundwater and potentially contaminated sites will also be covered. The impacts will be evaluated both for the construction period and for the long-term period of operation. Measures to mitigate any significant adverse impacts will be developed.

Issued on: April 9, 1998.

**Susan E. Schruth,**

*Regional Administrator.*

[FR Doc. 98–9827 Filed 4–13–98; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

**[Docket No. NHTSA–98–3710]**

### Notice of Receipt of Petition for Decision That Nonconforming 1993 Jeep Cherokee Multi-Purpose Passenger Vehicles Are Eligible for Importation

**AGENCY:** National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of receipt of petition for decision that nonconforming 1993 Jeep Cherokee multi-purpose passenger vehicles (MPVs) are eligible for importation.

**SUMMARY:** This notice announces receipt by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) of a petition for a decision that a 1993 Jeep Cherokee manufactured for the Middle Eastern and other foreign markets that was not originally manufactured to comply with all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards is eligible for importation into the United States because (1) it is substantially similar to a vehicle that was originally manufactured for sale in the United States and that was certified by its manufacturer as complying with the safety standards, and (2) it is capable of being readily altered to conform to the standards.

**DATES:** The closing date for comments on the petition is May 14, 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**.

Wallace Environmental Testing Laboratories, Inc., of Houston, Texas (''Wallace'') (Registered Importer 90–005) has petitioned NHTSA to decide whether 1993 Jeep Cherokee MPVs manufactured for the Middle Eastern and other foreign markets are eligible for importation into the United States. The vehicle which Wallace believes is substantially similar is the 1993 Jeep Cherokee that was manufactured for sale in the United States and certified by its manufacturer, Chrysler Corporation, as conforming to all applicable Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

The petitioner claims that it carefully compared the non-U.S. certified 1993 Jeep Cherokee to its U.S. certified counterpart, and found the two vehicles to be substantially similar with respect to compliance with most Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

Wallace submitted information with its petition intended to demonstrate that the non-U.S. certified 1993 Jeep Cherokee, as originally manufactured, conforms to many Federal motor vehicle safety standards in the same manner as its U.S. certified counterpart, or is capable of being readily altered to conform to those standards.

Specifically, the petitioner claims that the non-U.S. certified 1993 Jeep Cherokee is identical to its U.S. certified counterpart with respect to compliance