

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Coast Guard**

[USCG-1998-4951]

Cargo Securing on Vessels Operating in U.S. Waters

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DOT.

ACTION: Notice of meeting; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Coast Guard will hold a public meeting to discuss potential cargo securing standards for vessels operating in U.S. waters carrying general cargo and hazardous materials while engaged in international and U.S. domestic coastwise trade. Potential standards would reduce the risk of serious injury or death, vessel loss, property damage, and environmental damage caused by improperly secured cargo aboard a vessel. The Coast Guard encourages interested parties to attend the meeting and submit comments for discussion during the meeting. In addition, the Coast Guard seeks written comments from any party who is unable to attend the meeting.

DATES: The Coast Guard will hold this public meeting on February 3, 1999, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. This meeting may close early if all business is finished. Written material for discussion during the meeting should reach the Docket Management Facility on or before January 29, 1999. Other written comments must reach the Docket Management Facility on or before February 28, 1999.

ADDRESSES: The Coast Guard will hold this public meeting at the U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters Transpoint Building, room 2415, 2100 Second Street SW., Washington, DC 20593-0001. The telephone number is 202-267-1181. You may mail your comments to the Docket Management Facility (USCG-1998-4951), U.S. Department of Transportation, room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001, or deliver them to room PL-401 on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building at the same address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for Federal holidays. The telephone number is 202-366-9329.

The Docket Management Facility maintains the public docket for this notice. Comments, and documents as indicated in this notice, will become part of this docket and will be available for inspection or copying at room PL-401, on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building at the same address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through

Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also access this docket on the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions on this notice, contact Mr. Bob Gauvin, Project Manager, Vessel and Facility Operating Standards Division (G-MSO-2), Coast Guard, telephone 202-267-1053. For questions on viewing, or submitting material to the docket, contact Dorothy Walker, Chief, Dockets, Department of Transportation, telephone 202-366-9329.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Requests for Comments**

The Coast Guard encourages interested persons to submit written data, views, or arguments. Persons submitting comments should include their names and addresses, identify this notice (USCG-1998-4951), and give the reason for each comment. Please submit all comments and attachments in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing to the Docket Management Facility at the address under **ADDRESSES**. Persons wanting acknowledgement of receipt of comments should enclose stamped, self-addressed postcards or envelopes.

The Coast Guard will consider all comments received during the comment period.

Information on Service for Individuals With Disabilities

For information on facilities or services for individuals with disabilities or to request special assistance at the meeting, contact Mr. Bob Gauvin at the address or phone number under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** as soon as possible.

Background Information

Several maritime incidents during the early 1990's underscored the risk of serious injury or death, vessel loss, property damage, and environmental damage caused by improperly secured cargo aboard vessels. The most well-known incident occurred off the New Jersey coast in early 1992. The incident involved the M/V SANTA CLARA I, which lost 21 containers overboard, including 4 containers of the hazardous material arsenic trioxide.

The Coast Guard convened a Board of Inquiry to investigate the M/V SANTA CLARA I incident. The Board found that the incident was caused by cargo securing failures in connection with bad weather and human error. Based on its findings, the Board recommended adopting the International Maritime Organization (IMO) voluntary

guidelines on cargo securing manuals as regulations in the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS). The Commandant approved the Board's recommendation. With the support of other IMO member governments, the U.S. led a proposal to include new requirements for cargo securing manuals in SOLAS. These requirements were adopted as part of the 1994 amendments to SOLAS. These requirements are located in SOLAS Chapters VI/5.6 and VII/6.6.

Under SOLAS, all cargo vessels engaged in international trade and equipped with a cargo securing system or an individual securing arrangement must have an approved cargo securing manual on board by December 31, 1997. The vessel's flag state administration must approve the cargo securing manual. Under SOLAS and Title 46, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 90.05-10, these requirements for a cargo securing manual apply to all U.S. flag cargo vessels of 500 gross tons or more, engaged in international trade. Vessel types affected include general cargo vessels, cellular container ships, roll-on/roll-off vessels, passenger/cargo vessels, supply vessels, bulk vessels capable of carrying non-bulk cargo, heavy lift ships, freight ships carrying packaged or break-bulk cargoes, and other similar vessels. Any vessel engaged solely in the carriage of bulk solids or liquid cargo is exempt from the requirements for a cargo securing manual.

Approved cargo securing manuals must provide up-to-date information and guidance to assist a vessel's master and crew regarding the proper use of the equipment available to adequately stow and secure the vessel's cargo.

Navigation and Vessel Inspection Circular 10-97 (NVIC 10-97), "Guidelines for Cargo Securing Manual Approval", provides interim guidance for U.S. flag vessel compliance with the SOLAS requirements for a cargo securing manual. The NVIC includes interim cargo securing manual submittal, review, approval, and appeal procedures. A copy of the NVIC is available in the public docket or in the Internet at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-m/nvic/>.

Problems with cargo securing are not limited to vessels engaged in international trade. There have been a number of cargo-related marine casualties (such as loss overboard of containerized hazardous material) involving U.S. flag vessels engaged in U.S. domestic coastwise trade. The majority of domestic marine casualties were caused by poor cargo securing methods, inadequate equipment, and poor planning and management of cargo

securing personnel. Because of this trend and the resulting risk to the public and the environment, the Coast Guard is considering the need for cargo securing requirements for U.S. vessels engaged in U.S. domestic coastwise trade.

Public Meeting

This meeting is open to the public. Please note that the meeting may close early if all business is finished. Members of the public may make oral presentations during the meeting. If you would like to make an oral presentation at the meeting, please notify the Coast Guard point of contact listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT** no later than January 29, 1999.

The Coast Guard will begin the public meeting with a brief presentation discussing the primary causes and contributing factors of cargo-related marine casualties occurring in U.S. waters during the last 5 years. The presentation will highlight the need to comply with and enforce applicable SOLAS regulations for vessels engaged in international trade, and explore potential standards for vessels engaged in U.S. domestic coastwise trade.

Dated: January 5, 1999.

Joseph J. Angelo,

Acting Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety and Environmental Protection.

[FR Doc 99-535 Filed 1-8-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-15-M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Environmental Impact Statement on the South Corridor Transitway, Charlotte, 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 City of Charlotte intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on the proposed South Corridor Transitway in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. The study corridor of approximately 13.5 miles extends from Uptown Charlotte (the center city) to the Town of Pineville.

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 local bus services

(Charlotte Transit) in addition to currently planned transit improvements in the study corridor; and multiple "Build" alternatives including light rail transit, diesel multiple units, bus rapid transit, and combined bus rapid transit and high-occupancy vehicle facilities. (See Section III. Alternatives for additional information.) 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 City of Charlotte by March 1, 1999. See **ADDRESSES** below. **Scoping Meetings:** A public scoping meeting will be held on Wednesday January 27, 1999 from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Sedgefield Middle School located at 2700 Dorchester Place, Charlotte, NC. See **ADDRESSES** below.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts to be studied should be sent to Mr. Rick Davis, City of Charlotte Corporate Communications, 600 East Fourth Street, Charlotte, NC 28202-2858. **Scoping meetings** will be held at the following location: Sedgefield Middle School, 2700 Dorchester Place, Charlotte, NC. See **DATES** above.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Myra Immings, Federal Transit Administration, Region IV, (404) 562-3508.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Scoping

The FTA and the City of Charlotte 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 issues 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 final scope. Scoping comments may be made at the scoping meetings or in writing no later than March 1, 1999. (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 the City of Charlotte as indicated above. If you wish to be placed on the mailing list to receive further information as the project continues contact Mr. Rick Davis at the City of Charlotte Corporate Communications (see **ADDRESSES** above).

II. Description of Study Area and Project Need

The proposed project consists of a major public transit investment in the South Corridor of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region. The project corridor length is approximately 13.5 miles and extends from Uptown Charlotte (the center city) to the Town of Pineville. The project study area is generally bounded by Interstate 77 (I-77) on the west, and US 521 (South Boulevard) on the west, and includes the Norfolk Southern rail line. Land uses in the study corridor are characterized by higher density office and commercial development at the northernmost portion of the corridor located in the center city; the remainder of the corridor has predominantly older, low density strip commercial, light industrial/manufacturing uses, with the southern portion having a mixed use character of residential, commercial, and some undeveloped tracts of land.

The South Corridor Transitway project is a direct outgrowth of prior transit planning activities for the region. Future growth projections for the region estimate a population increase of 57 percent and a 47 percent increase in employment by the year 2025. The 2025 Integrated Transit-Land Use Plan for Charlotte-Mecklenburg identified the South Corridor as a high-priority transit corridor based on current and future mobility needs, cost feasibility and potential ridership.

The South Boulevard corridor (US 521) and portions of I-77 within the study area experience severe congestion and delays and are considered to be one of the major transportation problems facing this rapidly growing region. The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) estimates that neither of these facilities will be widened within the next 15-20 years because of costs and other impacts. Currently, South Boulevard, a four-lane arterial, is rated as having very poor mobility and with the projected increase in future traffic volumes, travel conditions will continue to deteriorate. Past studies performed in accordance with federal guidelines indicate the need for increased public transit