

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.

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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

services in addition to roadway facilities in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region.

In response to this need, the City of Charlotte in conjunction with FTA is initiating the scoping phase of the EIS process to evaluate alternative transit options for the South Corridor.

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 the local bus service, Charlotte Transit, in addition to the currently planned transit improvements in the corridor; and multiple "build" alternatives including (3) light rail transit (LRT) located within the existing Norfolk Southern rail right of way and the South Boulevard (US 521) right of way; (4) diesel multiple units (DMU) located in the existing Norfolk Southern rail right of way; (5) bus rapid transit (BRT) using exclusive bus-only roadways in the project corridor including those constructed within the existing Norfolk Southern rail right of way and the I-77 right of way; (6) combined BRT and high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) facilities using the I-77 right of way.

IV. Probable Effects

FTA, NCDOT, and the City of Charlotte will evaluate all significant social, economic, and environmental impacts of the alternatives analyzed in the EIS. Primary environmental issues are expected to include neighborhood protection, aesthetics, environmental justice, potential contamination sites,

changes in traffic patterns, potential archaeological and historic resources, and possibly some natural areas and wetlands. Environmental and social impacts proposed for analysis include land use and neighborhood impacts, traffic and parking impacts near stations and throughout the project corridor, visual impacts, cultural and community resource impacts, public recreational facility impacts, noise and vibration impacts, and air quality impacts. In addition, adverse impacts to underprivileged social groups will be considered. Impacts to wetlands, natural areas, rare and endangered species, water quality and potential contamination sites will be evaluated. 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: December 31, 1998.
George T. Thomson,
Deputy Regional Administrator.
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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket No. NHTSA-98-3701; Notice 2]

Mitsubishi Motor Sales of America Inc.; Grant of Application for Decision of Inconsequential Noncompliance

Mitsubishi Motor Sales of America (MMSA) of Cypress, California, has determined that some of its 1994-1998 models fail to meet the requirements of paragraph S4 of Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 118,

"Power-operated window, partition, and roof panel systems," and has filed an appropriate report pursuant to 49 CFR part 573, "Defects and Noncompliance Reports." MMSA has also applied to be exempted from the notification and remedy requirements of 49 U.S.C. Chapter 301—"Motor Vehicle Safety" on the basis that the noncompliance is inconsequential to motor vehicle safety.

A notice of receipt of an application was published in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 28024) on May 21, 1998. Opportunity was afforded for comments until June 28, 1998. No comments were received.

During the periods indicated below, the applicant imported and sold or distributed approximately 57,294 vehicles equipped with power sunroofs that did not meet certain requirements mandated by FMVSS No. 118. Specifically, paragraph S4 of FMVSS No. 118 requires that power windows, partitions, and sunroofs be closed only under certain circumstances. One of those circumstances is that a power sunroof may be closed:

* * * during the interval between the time the locking device which controls the activation of the vehicle's engine is turned off and the opening of either of a two-door vehicle's doors or, in the case of a vehicle with more than two doors, the opening of either of its front doors.

In the Mitsubishi vehicles identified below, activation of the power sunroof stops immediately after the ignition is turned off and the driver's side door is open. The sunroof continues to operate, however, for thirty seconds after the ignition is turned off and the passenger front door is opened. This continued operation does not comply with the requirements of S4 of FMVSS No. 118.

Make	Line	Model year	No. of affected vehicles	Dates of manufacture
MMC	Mitsubishi 3000GT	94 to 98	5,855	5/94-4/98
MMC	Mitsubishi Mirage (Coupe and Sedan)	97 to 98	1,383	6/96-5/98
Mitsubishi Motor Manufacturing of America, Inc.	Mitsubishi Galant	94 to 98	50,056	3/93-3/98

NHTSA agrees with MMSA's arguments in support of its application for inconsequential noncompliance. That discussion was published in the **Federal Register** (63 FR 28024) on May 21, 1998. Essentially, NHTSA agrees with MMSA that FMVSS 118 sets forth requirements for power operated windows, partitions, and roof panel systems (e.g., sunroofs) to minimize the risk of injury or death from accidental operation of these systems and that FMVSS 118 S4(e) was designed to

reduce the possibility of unsupervised children operating the power windows, partitions or sunroofs in a vehicle. It is expected that after a vehicle's ignition is turned off, but prior to opening either of the vehicle's front doors, an adult will remain in the vehicle to supervise and protect children from the safety risks associated with operation of a power window, partition, or sunroof system. Hence, there should be no additional risk in allowing continued operation of the power window, partition or sunroof

after the ignition is turned off but prior to the opening of either front door because of the presence of the supervising adult. As MMSA said, "This premise is especially true for the driver side door. In most circumstances, an adult driver normally exits the vehicle from the driver side door. If the vehicle's driver side door has not been opened, the adult driver is most likely still in the vehicle." It further states that the probability of *unsupervised* children being exposed to injury from the