

The northern terminus of the project will connect to the U.S. 65 (Future I-530) Bypass near Pine Bluff, Arkansas and the southern terminus will have an interim connection to U.S. 278 in the Monticello and Warren, Arkansas vicinity. The proposed connector was identified in Section 1211(h) of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), as amended.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments have been sent to appropriate Federal, state, and local agencies and to private organizations and citizens who have previously expressed or are known to have an interest in this project. A series of public meetings will be held within the study area beginning in the fall of 1999, with on-going public involvement activities. The draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to a formal public hearing. Public notice will be given of the time and place for all meetings and hearings.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this project are addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning this proposed action and the EIS should be directed to the FHWA 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 proposed action.)

Issued on: July 20, 1999.

Elizabeth Romero,

Environmental Specialist, FHWA, Little Rock, Arkansas.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Petition for Waiver of Compliance

In accordance with part 211 of Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), notice is hereby given that the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) received a request for a waiver of compliance from certain requirements of its safety regulations. The individual petition is described below including, the party seeking relief, the regulatory provisions involved, the nature of the relief being requested, and the petitioner's arguments in favor of relief.

Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railway

[Docket Number FRA-1999-5895]

Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railway (BNSF) seeks a permanent waiver of compliance from certain provisions of the Safety Appliances Standards, 49 CFR part 231, and Power Brakes and Drawbars regulations, 49 CFR part 232, concerning RoadRailer® train operations over their railroad system. Specifically, BNSF requests relief from the requirements of: 49 CFR part 231, which specifies the number, location and dimensional specifications for handholds, ladders, sill steps, uncoupling levers, and handbrakes; and § 232.2, which regulates drawbar height.

The RoadRailer® units, by design, cannot be subjected to traditional switching or classification procedures, since they do not have the required safety appliance arrangement and their coupler assembly will only couple to another RoadRailer® unit or to a special designed adapter vehicle. In consideration of the unique way RoadRailer® units are assembled, there is no necessity for a person to ride on this equipment. Furthermore, this vehicle has a spring based parking brake (which has replaced the conventional manually operated handbrake) that operates automatically in conjunction with the train air brake system, so there is no need for an individual to mount the vehicle to apply a handbrake. The spring activates the parking brake when air pressure is reduced below a pre-determined value and remains applied until air pressure is restored. The drawbar height is not within the prescribed limits of 31½ to 34½ inches.

BNSF states that they will provide adequate training and familiarization for their operating personnel and emphasize the fact that employees must not attempt to mount or dismount RoadRailer trailers because there are no safety appliances. BNSF would also advise the FRA of any incidents or in-service problems with the RoadRailer equipment. BNSF would restrict the trains to 125 RoadRailer units, excluding the adapter unit, with a maximum of 4800 trailing tons. The adapter unit, CouplerMate, will be used between the hauling locomotive and the first RoadRailer unit in the train. BNSF would only haul hazardous materials listed in Table 2 of 49 CFR 172.504, in RoadRailer vehicles. Brake cylinder piston travel limits for the Mark V RoadRailer equipment would be 1¼ to 3½ inches at initial terminal, with 3⅝ inches being an ineffective brake.

Interested parties are invited to participate in these proceedings by submitting written views, data, or

comments. FRA does not anticipate scheduling a public hearing in connection with these proceedings since the facts do not appear to warrant a hearing. If any interested party desires an opportunity for oral comment, they should notify FRA in writing, before the end of the comment period and specify the basis for their request.

All communications concerning these proceedings should identify the appropriate docket number (e.g., Waiver Petition Docket Number FRA-1999-5895) and must be submitted in triplicate to the Docket Clerk, DOT Central Docket Management Facility, Room PL-401, Washington, DC 20590-0001. Communications received within 45 days of the date of this notice will be considered by FRA before final action is taken. Comments received after that date will be considered as far as practicable. All written communications concerning these proceedings are available for examination during regular business hours (9 a.m.-5 p.m.) at DOT Central Docket Management Facility, Room PL-401 (Plaza Level), 400 Seventh Street SW, Washington, DC. 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 July 22, 1999.

Grady C. Cothen, Jr.,

Deputy Associate Administrator for Safety Standards and Program Development.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Railroad Administration

Notice of Application for Approval of Discontinuance or Modification of a Railroad Signal System or Relief From the Requirements of Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations Part 236

Pursuant to Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) part 235 and 49 U.S.C. App. 26, the following railroads have petitioned the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) seeking approval for the discontinuance or modification of the signal system or relief from the requirements of 49 CFR part 236 as detailed below.

Docket No. FRA-1999-5517.

Applicant: Fox Valley and Western Limited, Mr. Glenn J. Kerbs, Vice President, engineering, 3000 Minnesota Avenue, Stevens Point, Wisconsin 54481.

The Fox Valley and Western Limited seeks approval of the proposed