

Background

The Order became effective on September 9, 2002. Assessments on domestic and imported fresh Hass avocados began on January 2, 2003. The funds will be used to maintain and expand markets for Hass avocados in the United States. The Hass Avocado Board (Board), which is appointed by the Secretary, will operate under the supervision of the USDA's (the Department) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

In determining who is eligible to serve as an importer member of the Board, the Act provides for a substantial activity test. In order to implement this provision, the Order needed to provide criteria to enable the Department to measure substantial activity. The Department determined that basing a person's eligibility on the person's business activity and which industry function (producing or importing) predominates was a reasonable measure that gave a clear and understandable benchmark. However, after having completed the importer member nomination process for the initial Board, we now believe that this criteria should be revised since it had such limiting effect on the number of importer nominees. The limiting effect was shown by the importers only having six nominees although the Order provided for 16 nominees.

The California Avocado Commission (CAC) has requested that the "substantial activity" definition be terminated. The CAC noted that the substantial activity language has had a limiting effect on the pool of importer candidates for possible appointment to the Board and also, that several of the largest importers are not eligible to serve on the Board because they produce or handle more Hass avocados that they import.

Regarding the subsequent step of adopting a new definition, the Department believes that it would be appropriate to wait until the Board is seated so that the Board can review the issue and make a recommendation to the Department on any new definition of substantial activity. Waiting for the Board to be seated will provide the opportunity for the Board to review and make a recommendation to the Department. Further, the Board can seek industry consensus on the new definition before submitting a recommendation to the Department.

All written comments timely received will be considered before a final determination is made on this matter.

List of Subjects in 7 CFR Part 1219

Administrative practice and procedure, Advertising, Consumer information, Hass avocados, Hass avocado promotion, Marketing agreements, Reporting and recordkeeping requirements.

For the reasons set forth in the preamble, 7 CFR part 1219 is proposed to be amended as follows:

1. The authority citation for part 1219 continues to read as follows:

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 7401-7425

§ 1219.30 [Amended]

2. The last sentence in § 1219.30 paragraph (d) is removed.

Dated: March 14, 2003.

A. J. Yates,

Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

[FR Doc. 03-6510 Filed 3-14-03; 11:50 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 121

[Docket No. FAA-2002-14081; Notice No. 03-02]

RIN 2120-AH67

Transponder Continuous Operation; Extension of Comment Period

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM); extension of comment period.

SUMMARY: This action extends the comment period for an NPRM that was published on January 14, 2003. In that document, the FAA proposed to revise the instrument and equipment requirements for airplanes operated in domestic, flag, and supplemental operations to require affected airplanes to have the capability to help assure immediate activation of the designated air traffic control (ATC) hijack alert code, and continuous transmission of that code to ATC during a hijack situation. This extension is a result of a request from the Air Transport Association to extend the comment period to the proposal.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before April 18, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Comments on this document should be mailed or delivered, in duplicate, to: U.S. Department of Transportation Dockets, Docket No. FAA-2002-14081, 400

Seventh Street, SW., Room Plaza 401, Washington, DC 20590. Comments may be filed and examined in Room Plaza 401 between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays, except Federal holidays. Comments also may be sent electronically to the Dockets Management System (DMS) at the following Internet address: <http://dms.dot.gov> at any time. Commenters who wish to file comments electronically, should follow the instructions on the DMS Web site.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Richard E. Jennings, Aircraft Certification Service, Aircraft Engineering Division, AIR-130, Federal Aviation Administration, c/o Atlanta ACO, 1895 Phoenix Boulevard, Suite 450, Atlanta, GA 30349; telephone (770) 703-6090; facsimile (770) 703-6055, e-mail Richard.Jennings@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

The FAA invites interested persons to participate in this rulemaking by submitting written comments, data, or views. We also invite comments relating to the economic, environmental, energy, or federalism impacts that might result from adopting the proposals in this document. The most helpful comments reference a specific portion of the proposal, explain the reason for any recommended change, and include supporting data. We ask that you send us two copies of written comments.

We will file in the docket all comments we receive, as well as a report summarizing each substantive public contact with FAA personnel concerning this proposed rulemaking. The docket is available for public inspection before and after the comment closing date. If you wish to review the docket in person, go to the address in the **ADDRESSES** section of this preamble between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also review the docket using the Internet at the web address in the **ADDRESSES** section.

Anyone is able to search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review DOT's complete Privacy Act statement in the **Federal Register** published on April 11, 2000 (Volume 65, Number 70; Pages 19477-78) or you may visit <http://dms.dot.gov>.

Before acting on this proposal, we will consider all comments we receive on or before the closing date for comments. We will consider comments

filed late if it is possible to do so without incurring expense or delay. We may change this proposal in light of the comments we receive.

If you want the FAA to acknowledge receipt of your comments on this proposal, include with your comments a pre-addressed, stamped postcard on which the docket number appears. We will stamp the date on the postcard and mail it to you.

Background

On January 8, 2003, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued Notice No. 03-02, Transponder Continuous Operation (68 FR 1942, January 14, 2003). Comments to that document were to be received on or before March 17, 2003.

By letter dated March 11, 2003, the Air Transport Association requested that the FAA extend the comment period for Notice No. 03-02 for 30 days. ATA stated that after publication of the NPRM, the FAA issued a Notice of Proposed Policy regarding Proposed Policy Statement No. ANM-03-111-12 (the Policy). The Policy proposed technical guidance material for compliance with the technical requirements of the NPRM. In order to ensure ATA's comments to the NPRM take into consideration the complex technical and compliance issues raised in the Policy and the NPRM, ATA requested an extension of the NPRM comment period.

Extension of Comment Period

In accordance with § 11.47(c) of Title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, the FAA has reviewed the petitions made by ATA for extension of the comment period to Notice No. 03-02. ATA has shown a substantive interest in the proposed rule and good cause for the extension. The FAA also has determined that extension of the comment period is consistent with the public interest, and that good cause exists for taking this action.

Accordingly, the comment period for Notice No. 03-02 is extended until April 18, 2003.

Issued in Washington, DC on March 13, 2003.

Ronald T. Wojnar,

Acting Director, Aircraft Certification Service.
[FR Doc. 03-6511 Filed 3-14-03; 11:44 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Office of the Secretary

14 CFR Part 255 and Part 399

[Dockets Nos. OST-97-2881, OST-97-3014, OST-98-4775, and OST-99-5888]

RIN 2105-AC65

Computer Reservations System (CRS) Regulations; Statements of General Policy

AGENCY: Office of the Secretary, Department of Transportation.

ACTION: Denial of petition for fact hearing.

SUMMARY: The Department has issued a notice of proposed rulemaking on whether it should readopt or amend its existing rules governing airline computer reservations systems (CRSs). The notice includes a detailed discussion of the tentative factual findings and analysis underlying the Department's proposals. The public will have an opportunity to submit comments and reply comments on those proposals. Sabre, a CRS, has filed a petition asking for a "fact hearing" where the commenters could cross-examine each other and members of the Department's staff. The Department is denying Sabre's petition.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Thomas Ray, Office of the General Counsel, 400 Seventh St., SW., Washington, DC 20590, (202) 366-4731.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Department is conducting a rulemaking reexamining whether its existing rules governing CRS operations are necessary and, if so, are effective. We issued a notice of proposed rulemaking that set forth our tentative proposals regarding the existing rules and our tentative belief that we should not extend the rules to cover the sale of airline tickets through the Internet. 67 FR 69366, November 15, 2002. Comments and reply comments on our notice of proposed rulemaking are now due March 16 and May 15, 2003, respectively, because we granted a request by Sabre and eighteen other persons to extend by three months the period for preparing comments and reply comments. 67 FR 72869, December 9, 2002.

On December 23, Sabre, a CRS, filed a petition asking us to hold a "fact hearing." Sabre asserts that our notice did not provide an adequate factual basis for our tentative findings and proposals. Sabre seeks a hearing at which Sabre and other interested persons could cross-examine

Department staff members on the notice's factual findings and could question persons designated by each commenter as knowledgeable about the facts in its comments. Sabre Petition at 5. We invited the public to file responses to Sabre's petition. 68 FR 1172, January 9, 2003.

Two of the other systems, Galileo and Amadeus, and the American Society of Travel Agents ("ASTA"), the largest travel agency trade association, support Sabre's petition insofar as it seeks oral testimony on the issues, although they do not urge us to give commenters the ability to cross-examine Department staff. Six airlines—American, Continental, Delta, Northwest, United, and America West—and Orbitz, an on-line travel agency owned by five of those airlines (all but America West), oppose Sabre's petition. They contend that we have no legal obligation to hold a hearing, that notice-and-comment procedures can create an adequate record, and that a hearing would only delay our final decision in the proceeding, which would be contrary to the need to update the rules as soon as possible.

In its reply Sabre alleges that it does not wish to delay the proceeding but does seek to test the data on which we relied in preparing our notice of proposed rulemaking. Sabre claims that the hearing would not require much time.

Summary of Decision

We are denying Sabre's petition for a "fact hearing" that would give each commenter the opportunity to interrogate Department staff members about the basis for the notice of proposed rulemaking's tentative findings and proposals and to cross-examine representatives from the other commenters. Such a hearing would be neither necessary nor useful. Our notice discussed in detail the basis for our proposals, and we have given the public the opportunity to file both comments and reply comments, which will enable them to present their evidence and arguments on the issues.

We agree with several of the commenters that a hearing where they can present their factual and legal arguments may be useful. We therefore plan to hold such a hearing between the end of the comment period, March 16, and the end of the reply comment period, May 15.

Discussion

The notice-and-comment procedures established by the Administrative Procedure Act, supplemented by our proposed hearing, should provide an