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Reginald C. Matthews,

Manager, Airspace and Rules Division.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

14 CFR Part 91

[Docket No. FAA-2003-15230]

Call for Information on Supersonic Aircraft Noise

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Request for information and notice of workshop.

SUMMARY: The FAA is soliciting technical information from other Federal agencies, industries, universities, and other interested parties on the mitigation of sonic boom from supersonic aircraft. The FAA is trying to determine whether there is sufficient new data supported by flight over land. This document solicits information on the latest research and development activities directed at mitigating sonic boom. The FAA may use this information of future rulemaking actions.

DATES: Send your comments on or before September 30, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Address your comments to the Docket Management System, U.S. Department of Transportation, Room Plaza 401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001. You must identify the docket number FAA-2003-15230 at the beginning of your comments, and you should submit two copies of your comments. If you wish to receive confirmation that FAA received your comments, include a self-addressed, stamped postcard.

You may also submit comments through the Internet to <http://dms.dot.gov>. You may review the public docket containing comments to this notice in person in the Docket Office between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The Dockets Office is on the plaza level of the NASSIF Building at the Department of Transportation at the above address. Also, you may review public dockets on the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Lorette Fisher, Office of Environment and Energy (AEE-100), Federal Aviation Administration, 800 Independence

Avenue, SW., Washington, DC 20591; telephone (202) 267-3561; facsimile (202) 267-5594.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Comments Invited

The FAA invites interested persons to participate in this effort by submitting written comments, data, or views. We also invite comments relating to the economic, environmental, energy, or federalism impacts that might result if this effort resulted in amending FAA sonic boom regulations.

We will file in the docket all comments we receive, and 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.

Background

The FAA uses the term sonic boom to refer to a high-pressure air disturbance directed toward the ground by an aircraft flying supersonically and creating noise unacceptable to the public. Supersonic flight over land by civil aircraft is prohibited in the United States.

Supersonic Aircraft Regulations

The current regulations applicable to supersonic aircraft are found in 14 CFR part 36, Subpart D, "Noise Limits for Supersonic Transport Category Airplanes," and 14 CFR part 91, Subpart I, "Operating Noise Limits." The noise certification levels for the Concorde airplane are in part 36. This regulation requires that the noise levels of the airplane must be reduced to the lowest levels that are economically reasonable, technologically practicable, and appropriate for a Concorde type design.

Part 91 prohibits civil aircraft operation at greater than Mach 1 over the United States. Part 91 also imposes flight limitations to ensure that civil supersonic flight entering or leaving the United States will not cause a sonic boom to reach the surface within the United States.

In 1990, the FAA proposed to amend the type certification noise standards and noise operating rules for future-generation civil supersonic airplanes. After analyzing the comments received on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), the FAA determined that further investigation and research was necessary before a final rule could be developed. Accordingly, the FAA

withdrew the proposed rule and instead issued a policy on noise issues involving the development of future generation civil supersonic transport airplanes.

With respect to future civil supersonic airplanes, specific noise standards have not yet been established. The FAA anticipates that any future proposed standards for civil supersonic airplanes would require that an airplane have no greater noise impact on a community than a civil subsonic airplane certified to Stage 3 noise levels.

U.S. Civil Programs

There have been two recent supersonic aircraft technology development programs sponsored by the U.S. government. They are the High Speed Civil Transport (HSCT) program sponsored by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the Quiet Supersonic Platform (QSP) program sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Project Agency (DARPA). These programs included both military and civil aircraft.

In the late 1980's, NASA initiated a partnership with Boeing and McDonnell Douglas to develop the technology for a commercial supersonic transport. This activity was called the High Speed Civil Transport (HSCT) program. In 1999, the HSCT program was terminated. Boeing cited the high cost of developing a supersonic airplane, along with anticipated more stringent federal regulations regarding noise and emissions as the reason for terminating the program. NASA's research and technology (R&T) effort on HSCT was also terminated. In 2000, NASA requested that the National Research Council (NRC) conduct a study to identify breakthrough technologies for overcoming key barriers to the development of an environmentally acceptable and economically viable commercial supersonic aircraft. The study, "Commercial Supersonic Technology, The Way Ahead," concluded that no insurmountable obstacles exist to viable commercial supersonic aircraft. The study further concluded that while NASA should have its eye on supersonic commercial transport, it remains appropriate to conduct research on sonic boom even when related to smaller supersonic business jets.

The DARPA's QSP program, which began in 2000, was a congressionally mandated effort to develop technologies that could mitigate the impact of sonic boom to 0.3 pounds per square feet over-pressure propagated to the ground. This is significantly less than the 2.0 pounds per square feet created by the

Concorde that is restricted from flying at supersonic speeds over land. The QSP Program initially included both military and civil aircraft. In 2003, the QSP Program is scheduled to conduct a flight demonstration to investigate sonic boom signature shaping and propagation.

In 2001, the NASA Langley Research Center was directed by Congress to expand on the civil part of DARPA's QSP Program. This program is ongoing.

In addition, at least one U.S. manufacturer has an ongoing technology effort, the goal of which is the development of supersonic civil aircraft that are deemed environmentally acceptable for supersonic operations over land.

Request for Information

The FAA is requesting information regarding current commercial supersonic aircraft development and associated sonic boom reduction technology. The FAA may use the information received to initiate rulemaking that addresses new supersonic technologies and related noise effects.

The FAA is requesting information in the following general topics of technical information. Please submit any information or comments to the Docket Management System using the docket number given in the "ADDRESSES" paragraph above.

(1) A summary of advancements made since the 1999 High Speed Civil Transport (HSCT) program;

(2) Understanding the effects of sonic boom to aid in the establishment of sonic boom impact criteria;

(3) The technical challenges in making the noise created by sonic boom acceptable;

(4) The sonic boom prediction models available to support future noise impact studies; and

(5) Whether supersonic aircraft can function within the present commercial airport infrastructure and what airport accessibility issues need to be addressed.

The FAA encourages all interested parties to participate in this opportunity to offer the latest information on supersonic aircraft noise and technologies. The FAA will evaluate the information received to aid in the consideration of future rulemaking.

In addition, the FAA is planning to conduct a technical workshop in the next six months to allow subject matter experts to discuss their research data and findings. The FAA will publish a notice in the **Federal Register** announcing the date and place of the workshop.

Information on this project will be updated and made available on an FAA Web site located at <http://www.aee.faa.gov/noise/sst.html>.

All comments submitted in response to this notice and information presented at the workshop will be filed in the docket. The docket is available for public inspection at any time. Anyone submitting information is cautioned that it will not be considered proprietary unless properly marked and separately submitted. Information presented in a workshop setting is not considered proprietary.

Issued in Washington DC on May 13, 2003.

Carl Burleson,

Director of Environment and Energy.

[FR Doc. 03-13038 Filed 5-22-03; 8:45 am]

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

47 CFR Part 15

[ET Docket No. 03-104; FCC 03-100]

Broadband Power Line Systems

AGENCY: Federal Communications Commission.

ACTION: Proposed rule; notice of inquiry.

SUMMARY: This document requests comment from the public on the current state of Broadband Power Line (BPL) technology and to determine whether changes to the Commission's rules are necessary to facilitate the deployment of this technology. The Commission believes that BPL could play an important role in providing additional competition in the offering of broadband infrastructure to the American home and consumers because power lines reach virtually every community in the country.

DATES: Written comments are due on or before August 6, 2003, and reply comments are due on or before September 5, 2003.

ADDRESSES: Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 445 12th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20554. See supplementary information for filing instructions.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Anh T. Wride, Office of Engineering and Technology, (202) 418-0577, TTY (202) 418-2989, e-mail: anh.wride@fcc.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This is a summary of the Commission's *Notice of Inquiry*, ET Docket No. 03-104, FCC 03-100, adopted April 23, 2003, and released April 28, 2003. The full text of this document is available for

inspection and copying during regular business hours in the FCC Reference Center (Room CY-A257), 445 12th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20554. The complete text of this document also may be purchased from the Commission's copy contractor, Qualex International, 445 12th Street, SW., Room, CY-B402, Washington, DC 20554. The full text may also be downloaded at: <http://www.fcc.gov>. To request materials in accessible formats for people with disabilities (Braille, large print, electronic files, audio format), send an e-mail to fcc504@fcc.gov or call the FCC Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau at (202) 418-0531 (voice), (202) 418-7365 (TTY).

This is an exempt notice and comment rule making proceeding. Ex parte presentations are permitted, except during any Sunshine Agenda period. See generally 47 CFR 1.1200(a), 1.1203, and 1.1204(b).

Comments may be filed using the Commission's Electronic Comment Filing System (ECFS) or by filing paper copies. See *Electronic Filing of Documents in Rulemaking Proceedings*, 63 FR 24,121 (1998). Comments filed through the ECFS can be sent as an electronic file via the Internet at <http://www.fcc.gov/e-file/ecfs.html>. Generally, only one copy of an electronic submission must be filed. If multiple docket or rulemaking numbers appear in the caption of this proceeding, however, commenters must transmit one electronic copy of the comments to each docket or rulemaking number referenced in the caption. In completing the transmittal screen, commenters should include their full name, Postal Service mailing address, and the applicable docket or rulemaking number. Parties may also submit an electronic comment by Internet e-mail. To get filing instructions for e-mail comments, commenters should send an e-mail to ecfs@fcc.gov, and should include the following words in the body of the message, "get form <your e-mail address>." A sample form and directions will be sent in reply.

Parties who choose to file by paper must file an original and four copies of each filing. If more than one docket or rulemaking number appears in the caption of this proceeding, commenters must submit two additional copies for each additional docket or rulemaking number. All filings must be sent to the Commission's Secretary, Marlene H. Dortch, Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, The Portals, 445 Twelfth Street, SW., Washington, DC 20554.

Parties who choose to file by paper should also submit their comments on