DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Federal Highway Administration

Notice To Rescind a Notice of Intent To Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): State Route 357 From Existing State Route 357 West of the Tri-Cities Airport to the U.S. 11E/19E U.S. 1E Intersection Near Bluff City, Sullivan County, TN

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of Intent.

SUMMARY: The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is issuing this notice to advise the public that the Notice of Intent published on December 7, 2005 to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the proposed extension of State Route 357 in Sullivan County, Tennessee, is being rescinded.


SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the Tennessee Department of Transportation, is rescinding the notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on a proposal to provide an extension to State Route 357 in Sullivan County, Tennessee. The proposed project was to involve extending State Route 357 from existing State Route 357 west of the Tri-Cities Airport to the U.S. 11E/19E-U.S. 1E intersection near Bluff City, Tennessee.

The project was proposed to provide for existing and projected traffic demand on the surrounding transportation network. After nearly two years of public involvement, it became clear that there was not an urgent need for the extension to State Route 357. An extensive Context Sensitive Solution process with a local citizen team did not identify an immediate need for the extension project. The State Route 357 Extension project is not currently included as a priority project by either the Kingsport Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) or the First Tennessee Regional Planning Organization (RPO).

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action is identified and taken into account, comments and suggestions are invited from all interested parties. Comments and questions concerning the proposed action should be directed to the FHWA contact person identified above 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 program.)

Issued on: March 26, 2007.

Karen M. Brunelle,
Planning and Program Management Team Leader, Nashville, TN.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

[DOcket No. PHMSA–2006–26275]

Receipt of Petition for Rulemaking Classification of Polyurethane Foam and Certain Finished Products Containing Polyurethane Foam as Hazardous Materials

AGENCY: Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This Notice solicits comments on the merits of a petition for rulemaking filed by the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM). The NASFM petitioned PHMSA to classify Polyurethane Foam and certain finished products containing Polyurethane Foam (PU) as hazardous materials in transportation in commerce, as a matter of safety for emergency responders and the public.

DATES: Comments must be received by June 28, 2007.

ADDRESSES: Written comments: You may submit comments on this Notice identified by the docket number (PHMSA–2006–26275) by any of the following methods:

• Federal eRulemaking Portal: http://www.regulations.gov. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.


• Fax: 1–202–493–2251.


• Hand Delivery: PL–402 on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC, 20590.

Instructions: All submissions must include the agency name and docket number for this notice. Internet users may access comments received by DOT at http://dms.dot.gov. Note that comments received may be posted without change to http://dms.dot.gov including any personal information provided. If you believe your comments contain trade secrets or confidential commercial information, those comments or relevant portions of those comments should be appropriately marked. PHMSA procedures in 49 CFR part 105 establish a mechanism by which commenters may request confidentiality.


SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

In a letter dated October 31, 2006, the National Association of State Fire Marshals (NASFM) submitted a petition for rulemaking to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) through the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) under the provisions of 49 CFR 106.31. The NASFM requested that the Hazardous Materials Regulations (HMR; 49 CFR parts 171–180) be amended to classify Polyurethane Foam (PU) and certain finished products containing PU as a hazardous material for purposes of transportation in commerce. The NASFM is made up of senior-level public safety officials from the 50 States and the District of Columbia. The NASFM petition was received and acknowledged by PHMSA and assigned petition number P–1491; Docket No. PHMSA–2006–26275.

Issuance of this Notice does not constitute a decision by PHMSA to undertake a rulemaking action on the substance of the petition. This Notice is issued solely to obtain comments on the merits of the petition to assist PHMSA in making a decision of whether to proceed with a rulemaking. Of particular interest are substantive comments that address the following items: (1) Estimated incremental costs or savings; (2) Anticipated safety benefits; (3) Estimated burden hours associated with the proposals related to information collection; (4) Impact on small businesses; and (5) Impact on the national environment.

II. Petition P–1491 Is Quoted as Follows

As a matter of safety for emergency responders and the public, the National Association of Fire Marshals petitions the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), through the Pipeline & Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), to classify polyurethane (PU) foam and certain finished products containing it as a hazardous material for purposes of transportation. NASFM consists of senior-level public safety officials from the 50 states and District of Columbia.

The petitioners regard this proposal as critical to the safety of emergency responders and the public: they are sworn to protect. The safety of emergency responders begins with information—at minimum, responders have the absolute right to know when they are dealing with hazardous materials, so they may take special precautions at incidents. The petitioners’ interest extends to ensuring that hazardous materials are used, stored and transported in safe ways. Regulations exist across agencies that regulate the use and storage of PU foam, but a gap exists in ensuring the safe transportation of this hazardous material. Because it is not officially classified as a hazardous material for purposes of transportation, the safety of emergency responders and the public is compromised.

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s system of hazardous materials transportation placarding is critical to the safety of emergency responders and the public. Placards typically are the one source of information immediately available to responders as they determine the safest and most efficient means of suppressing fires and of rescuing persons trapped in vehicles. Placards provide information essential to knowing how fast a fire might spread, how difficult it might be to suppress, and how large and dangerous it may become.

When hazardous materials are not properly placarded, the consequences to emergency responders could be increased dangers for them and the public. Obviously some shippers and transporters choose to violate the law by failing to properly placard when placarding is required. However, the DOT does not require placarding with some well-recognized hazardous materials. Such is the case with most grades of rigid and flexible PU foam and many of the finished products containing this highly flammable solid.

PU foam, whether in bulk shipments or in finished products, is explicitly listed and controlled as a hazardous material in all phases of manufacturing, construction and more recently, consumer applications. As such, records pertaining to the hazardous nature of PU foam already are kept and reports are routinely issued by the producers of these materials. Ironically, when the risks are least manageable—in transportation—PU foam is not officially considered hazardous. This petition aims to correct this inadvertent oversight.

Whether experienced in the real world or observed under scientific conditions, PU foam is a hazardous material. A significant