

more) severe hypoglycemic episodes in the last 5 years; understands diabetes management and monitoring; has stable control of his diabetes using insulin; and is able to drive a CMV safely. Mr. Williams meets the requirements of the vision standard at 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10). His optometrist examined him in 2010 and certified that he does not have diabetic retinopathy. He holds an operator's license from Indiana.

Request for Comments

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315, FMCSA requests public comment from all interested persons on the exemption petitions described in this notice. We will consider all comments received before the close of business on the closing date indicated in the date section of the notice.

FMCSA notes that section 4129 of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users requires the Secretary to revise its diabetes exemption program established on September 3, 2003 (68 FR 52441).¹ The revision must provide for individual assessment of drivers with diabetes mellitus, and be consistent with the criteria described in section 4018 of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (49 U.S.C. 31305).

Section 4129 requires: (1) Elimination of the requirement for 3 years of experience operating CMVs while being treated with insulin; and (2) establishment of a specified minimum period of insulin use to demonstrate stable control of diabetes before being allowed to operate a CMV.

In response to section 4129, FMCSA made immediate revisions to the diabetes exemption program established by the September 3, 2003 notice. FMCSA discontinued use of the 3-year driving experience and fulfilled the requirements of section 4129 while continuing to ensure that operation of CMVs by drivers with ITDM will achieve the requisite level of safety required of all exemptions granted under 49 U.S.C. 31136(e).

Section 4129(d) also directed FMCSA to ensure that drivers of CMVs with ITDM are not held to a higher standard than other drivers, with the exception of limited operating, monitoring and medical requirements that are deemed medically necessary. The FMCSA concluded that all of the operating, monitoring and medical requirements set out in the September 3, 2003 notice, except as modified, were in compliance

with section 4129(d). Therefore, all of the requirements set out in the September 3, 2003 notice, except as modified by the notice in the **Federal Register** on November 8, 2005 (70 FR 67777), remain in effect.

Issued on: December 30, 2010.

Larry W. Minor,

Associate Administrator, Office of Policy.

[FR Doc. 2011-250 Filed 1-7-11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[Docket No. FMCSA-2010-0287]

Qualification of Drivers; Exemption Applications; Vision

AGENCY: Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of Final Disposition.

SUMMARY: FMCSA announces its decision to exempt 15 individuals from the vision requirement in the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs). The exemptions will enable these individuals to operate commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) in interstate commerce without meeting the prescribed vision standard. The Agency has concluded that granting these exemptions will provide a level of safety that is equivalent to, or greater than, the level of safety maintained without the exemptions for these CMV drivers.

DATES: The exemptions are effective January 10, 2011. The exemptions expire on January 10, 2013.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Mary D. Gunnels, Director, Medical Programs, (202)366-4001, fmcamedical@dot.gov, FMCSA, Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., Room W64-224, Washington, DC 20590-0001. Office hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

You may see all the comments online through the Federal Document Management System (FDMS) at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Docket: For access to the docket to read background documents or comments, go to <http://www.regulations.gov> at any time or Room W12-140 on the ground level of the West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through

Friday, except Federal holidays. The FDMS is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. If you want acknowledgment that we received your comments, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or postcard or print the acknowledgement page that appears after submitting comments on-line.

Privacy Act: Anyone may search the electronic form of all comments received into any of our dockets by the name of the individual submitting the comment (or of the person signing the comment, if submitted on behalf of an association, business, labor union, etc.). You may review DOT's Privacy Act Statement for the FDMS published in the **Federal Register** on January 17, 2008 (73 FR 3316), or you may visit <http://edocket.access.gpo.gov/2008/pdf/E8-785.pdf>.

Background

On November 15, 2010, FMCSA published a notice of receipt of exemption applications from certain individuals, and requested comments from the public (75 FR 69737). That notice listed 15 applicants' case histories. The 15 individuals applied for exemptions from the vision requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), for drivers who operate CMVs in interstate commerce.

Under 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315, FMCSA may grant an exemption for a 2-year period if it finds "such exemption would likely achieve a level of safety that is equivalent to, or greater than, the level that would be achieved absent such exemption." The statute also allows the Agency to renew exemptions at the end of the 2-year period. Accordingly, FMCSA has evaluated the 15 applications on their merits and made a determination to grant exemptions to each of them.

Vision and Driving Experience of the Applicants

The vision requirement in the FMCSRs provides:

A person is physically qualified to drive a commercial motor vehicle if that person has distant visual acuity of at least 20/40 (Snellen) in each eye without corrective lenses or visual acuity separately corrected to 20/40 (Snellen) or better with corrective lenses, distant binocular acuity of at least 20/40 (Snellen) in both eyes with or without corrective lenses, field of vision of at least 70° in the horizontal meridian in each eye, and the ability to recognize the colors of traffic signals and devices showing standard red, green, and amber (49 CFR 391.41(b)(10)).

FMCSA recognizes that some drivers do not meet the vision standard, but

¹ Section 4129(a) refers to the 2003 notice as a "final rule." However, the 2003 notice did not issue a "final rule" but did establish the procedures and standards for issuing exemptions for drivers with ITDM.

have adapted their driving to accommodate their vision limitation and demonstrated their ability to drive safely. The 15 exemption applicants listed in this notice are in this category. They are unable to meet the vision standard in one eye for various reasons, including amblyopia, complete loss of vision, loss of an eye, corneal scarring, histoplasmosis and prosthesis. In most cases, their eye conditions were not recently developed. 14 of the applicants were either born with their vision impairments or have had them since childhood. The individual who sustained his vision condition as an adult has had it for one year.

Although each applicant has one eye which does not meet the vision standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), each has at least 20/40 corrected vision in the other eye, and in a doctor's opinion, has sufficient vision to perform all the tasks necessary to operate a CMV. Doctors' opinions are supported by the applicants' possession of valid commercial driver's licenses (CDLs) or non-CDLs to operate CMVs. Before issuing CDLs, States subject drivers to knowledge and skills tests designed to evaluate their qualifications to operate a CMV.

All of these applicants satisfied the testing standards for their State of residence. By meeting State licensing requirements, the applicants demonstrated their ability to operate a commercial vehicle, with their limited vision, to the satisfaction of the State. While possessing a valid CDL or non-CDL, these 15 drivers have been authorized to drive a CMV in intrastate commerce, even though their vision disqualified them from driving in interstate commerce. They have driven CMVs with their limited vision for careers ranging from 4 to 37 years. In the past 3 years, 3 of the drivers were involved in crashes or convicted of moving violations in a CMV.

The qualifications, experience, and medical condition of each applicant were stated and discussed in detail in the November 15, 2010 notice (75 FR 69737).

Basis for Exemption Determination

Under 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315, FMCSA may grant an exemption from the vision standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10) if the exemption is likely to achieve an equivalent or greater level of safety than would be achieved without the exemption. Without the exemption, applicants will continue to be restricted to intrastate driving. With the exemption, applicants can drive in interstate commerce. Thus, our analysis focuses on whether an equal or greater

level of safety is likely to be achieved by permitting each of these drivers to drive in interstate commerce as opposed to restricting him or her to driving in intrastate commerce.

To evaluate the effect of these exemptions on safety, FMCSA considered not only the medical reports about the applicants' vision, but also their driving records and experience with the vision deficiency.

To qualify for an exemption from the vision standard, FMCSA requires a person to present verifiable evidence that he/she has driven a commercial vehicle safely with the vision deficiency for the past 3 years. Recent driving performance is especially important in evaluating future safety, according to several research studies designed to correlate past and future driving performance. Results of these studies support the principle that the best predictor of future performance by a driver is his/her past record of crashes and traffic violations. Copies of the studies may be found at Docket Number FMCSA-1998-3637.

We believe we can properly apply the principle to monocular drivers, because data from the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) former waiver study program clearly demonstrate the driving performance of experienced monocular drivers in the program is better than that of all CMV drivers collectively (*See* 61 FR 13338, 13345, March 26, 1996). The fact that experienced monocular drivers demonstrated safe driving records in the waiver program supports a conclusion that other monocular drivers, meeting the same qualifying conditions as those required by the waiver program, are also likely to have adapted to their vision deficiency and will continue to operate safely.

The first major research correlating past and future performance was done in England by Greenwood and Yule in 1920. Subsequent studies, building on that model, concluded that crash rates for the same individual exposed to certain risks for two different time periods vary only slightly (*See* Bates and Neyman, University of California Publications in Statistics, April 1952). Other studies demonstrated theories of predicting crash proneness from crash history coupled with other factors. These factors—such as age, sex, geographic location, mileage driven and conviction history—are used every day by insurance companies and motor vehicle bureaus to predict the probability of an individual experiencing future crashes (*See* Weber, Donald C., "Accident Rate Potential: An Application of Multiple Regression

Analysis of a Poisson Process," *Journal of American Statistical Association*, June 1971). A 1964 California Driver Record Study prepared by the California Department of Motor Vehicles concluded that the best overall crash predictor for both concurrent and nonconcurrent events is the number of single convictions. This study used 3 consecutive years of data, comparing the experiences of drivers in the first 2 years with their experiences in the final year.

Applying principles from these studies to the past 3-year record of the 15 applicants, two of the applicants were convicted for a moving violation and two of the applicants was involved in a crash. All the applicants achieved a record of safety while driving with their vision impairment, demonstrating the likelihood that they have adapted their driving skills to accommodate their condition. As the applicants' ample driving histories with their vision deficiencies are good predictors of future performance, FMCSA concludes their ability to drive safely can be projected into the future.

We believe that the applicants' intrastate driving experience and history provide an adequate basis for predicting their ability to drive safely in interstate commerce. Intrastate driving, like interstate operations, involves substantial driving on highways on the interstate system and on other roads built to interstate standards. Moreover, driving in congested urban areas exposes the driver to more pedestrian and vehicular traffic than exists on interstate highways. Faster reaction to traffic and traffic signals is generally required because distances between them are more compact. These conditions tax visual capacity and driver response just as intensely as interstate driving conditions. The veteran drivers in this proceeding have operated CMVs safely under those conditions for at least 3 years, most for much longer. Their experience and driving records lead us to believe that each applicant is capable of operating in interstate commerce as safely as he/she has been performing in intrastate commerce. Consequently, FMCSA finds that exempting these applicants from the vision standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10) is likely to achieve a level of safety equal to that existing without the exemption. For this reason, the Agency is granting the exemptions for the 2-year period allowed by 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315 to the 15 applicants listed in the notice of November 15, 2010 (75 FR 69737).

We recognize that the vision of an applicant may change and affect his/her ability to operate a CMV as safely as in

the past. As a condition of the exemption, therefore, FMCSA will impose requirements on the 16 individuals consistent with the grandfathering provisions applied to drivers who participated in the Agency's vision waiver program.

Those requirements are found at 49 CFR 391.64(b) and include the following:

(1) That each individual be physically examined every year (a) by an ophthalmologist or optometrist who attests that the vision in the better eye continues to meet the standard in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), and (b) by a medical examiner who attests that the individual is otherwise physically qualified under 49 CFR 391.41; (2) that each individual provide a copy of the ophthalmologist's or optometrist's report to the medical examiner at the time of the annual medical examination; and (3) that each individual provide a copy of the annual medical certification to the employer for retention in the driver's qualification file, or keep a copy in his/her driver's qualification file if he/she is self-employed. The driver must also have a copy of the certification when driving, for presentation to a duly authorized Federal, State, or local enforcement official.

Discussion of Comments

FMCSA received no comments in this proceeding.

Conclusion

Based upon its evaluation of the 15 exemption applications, FMCSA exempts, Robert W. Blankenship, Bryan K. Deborde, Jr., Michael K. Engemann, Peter R. Gonzalez, John W. Harbaugh, Michael E. Herrera, Jr., William E. Jacobs, Perry D. Jensen, Joseph L. Jones, Gary L. Nicholas, James G. Pitchford, Virgil R. Story, John A. Thomas, Jr., Richard L. Totels, and James B. Woolwine from the vision requirement in 49 CFR 391.41(b)(10), subject to the requirements cited above (49 CFR 391.64(b)).

In accordance with 49 U.S.C. 31136(e) and 31315, each exemption will be valid for 2 years unless revoked earlier by FMCSA. The exemption will be revoked if: (1) The person fails to comply with the terms and conditions of the exemption; (2) the exemption has resulted in a lower level of safety than was maintained before it was granted; or (3) continuation of the exemption would not be consistent with the goals and objectives of 49 U.S.C. 31136 and 31315.

If the exemption is still effective at the end of the 2-year period, the person may apply to FMCSA for a renewal under procedures in effect at that time.

Issued on: December 29, 2010.

Larry W. Minor,

Associate Administrator, Office of Policy.

[FR Doc. 2011-240 Filed 1-7-11; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-EX-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Preparation of Environmental Impact Statement for Transit Improvements in the US 90A/Southwest Rail Corridor in Metropolitan Houston, TX

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), to evaluate the proposed transit improvements in the US 90A/Southwest Rail corridor in the Houston metropolitan area (Harris County). The US 90A/Southwest Rail corridor extends approximately eight miles from the vicinity of the Fannin South Station at the southern terminus of the existing METRO Rail Red Line to West Sam Houston Tollway (Beltway 8) in Missouri City, Texas. The proposed scope of the EIS, including the project's purpose and need, an initial set of alternatives proposed for evaluation, and the significant impacts to be considered, are presented below. A public scoping process seeking comment on the scope of the EIS is announced below.

DATES: Comment Due Date: Written comments on the scope of the EIS, including the project's purpose and need, and the alternatives and impacts to be considered should be sent to the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County (METRO) no later than March 11, 2011. See **ADDRESSES** below.

Scoping Meeting Dates: Public Scoping meetings for the US 90A/Southwest Rail Corridor Transit Project will be held on February 14, 2011, February 15, 2011, February 16, 2011 and February 22, 2011. See **ADDRESSES** below for meeting times and locations. Presentation of the study corridor and the proposed scope of the study will be made at the meetings, followed by an opportunity for the public to ask question or make comments on the project's purpose and need, the

alternatives to be evaluated and the impacts to be assessed. Scoping information material will be available on the project Web site at <http://www.ridemetro.org> and at the meeting and may also be obtained in advance of the meeting by contacting METRO at the address identified in **ADDRESSES** below. Any person who requires language interpretation or special communication accommodations is encouraged to contact the METRO Community Outreach Hotline at (713) 739-4018 at least 72 hours prior to the scoping meeting. The location for the meetings will be accessible to persons with disabilities.

ADDRESSES: Written comments should be sent to:

Edmund Petry, Lead Environmental Planner, METRO Infrastructure & Service Development, 1900 Main Street, Houston, Texas 77002.

You can also obtain information and contact METRO about issues for the US 90A/Southwest Rail Corridor Transit Project from the project Web site at <http://www.ridemetro.org>. Scoping meetings will be held at the following locations:

Meeting 1: February 14, 2011 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Houston-Galveston Area Council (Agency Scoping), 3777 Timmons, Conference Room A 2nd Floor, Houston, TX 77027.

Meeting 2: February 15, 2011 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Waterside Café, TMC Commons Area, 6550 Bertner STE: 1, Houston, TX 77030.

Meeting 3: February 15, 2011 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Missouri City Community Center, 1522 Texas Parkway, Missouri City, TX 77489.

Meeting 4: February 16, 2011 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

The Power Center, Southeast Ballroom, 12401 S. Post Oak Road, Houston, TX 77045.

Meeting 5: February 22, 2011 from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Westbury High School, Atrium, 11911 Chimney Rock, Houston, TX 77035.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Daisy Mather, Environmental Protection Specialist, FTA Region VI, 819 Taylor Street, Ft. Worth, Texas 76102, Telephone (817) 978-0550.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Scoping

METRO and FTA invite all interested individuals and organizations, and Federal, State, Native American Tribal, regional, and local governmental agencies to comment on the scope of the