

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Elliot Chiu in the Office of the Legal Adviser, U.S. Department of State (telephone: 202-632-6471; email: section2459@state.gov). The mailing address is U.S. Department of State, L/PD, SA-5, Suite 5H03, Washington, DC 20522-0505.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The foregoing determinations were made pursuant to the authority vested in me by the Act of October 19, 1965 (79 Stat. 985; 22 U.S.C. 2459), E.O. 12047 of March 27, 1978, the Foreign Affairs Reform and Restructuring Act of 1998 (112 Stat. 2681, *et seq.*; 22 U.S.C. 6501 note, *et seq.*), Delegation of Authority No. 234 of October 1, 1999, Delegation of Authority No. 236-3 of August 28, 2000 (and, as appropriate, Delegation of Authority No. 257-1 of December 11, 2015). I have ordered that Public Notice of these determinations be published in the **Federal Register**.

Alyson Grunder,

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Department of State.

[FR Doc. 2018-00911 Filed 1-18-18; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710-05-P

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BOARD

[Docket No. FD 36162]

Soo Line Railroad Company— Trackage Rights Exemption—BNSF Railway Company

Soo Line Railroad Company (Soo Line), a Class I rail carrier, has filed a verified notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1180.2(d)(7) to renew overhead trackage rights over approximately 137 miles of rail line owned and operated by BNSF Railway Company (BNSF) between Minneapolis, Minn., and Superior, Wis. (the Line).

Soo Line states that the purpose of the transaction is to renew the overhead trackage rights agreement governing Soo Line's continued freight service between Minneapolis, Minn., and Superior, Wis. The agreement provides trackage rights to Soo Line over two separate routes from Minneapolis that converge on BNSF's Staples Subdivision. The first route is from milepost 11.4+/- on BNSF's Staples Subdivision at or near University Avenue in Minneapolis, Minn. to the connection at milepost 21.0+/- with BNSF's Hinckley Subdivision near Coon Creek, Minn. (Hinckley Subdivision milepost 136.9 +/-). The second route is over the North Runner Lead from BNSF's Northtown Yard to Soo Line's Shoreham Yard at milepost 11.66+/- on BNSF's

St. Paul Subdivision to the connection at milepost 16.25+/- on BNSF's Staples Subdivision and thence to the connection with BNSF's Hinckley Subdivision near Coon Creek, Minn. From there, Soo Line's trackage rights continue to the connection at Hinckley Subdivision milepost 11.8+/- with BNSF's Lakes Subdivision in Boylston, Wis. (Lakes Subdivision milepost 12.6+/-), and thence to Lakes Subdivision milepost 9.4+/- at M&J Junction in Superior, Wis., including the BNSF-owned turnout at milepost 10.44+/- to the Saunders Connecting Track. Soo Line acquired the trackage rights in its 1985 acquisition of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company's assets.

According to Soo Line, the parties intend to enter into a written agreement renewing the overhead trackage rights, and a redacted copy of the draft agreement has been submitted as an exhibit with its verified notice.¹

As a condition to this exemption, any employees affected by the trackage rights will be protected by the conditions imposed in *Norfolk & Western Railway—Trackage Rights—Burlington Northern, Inc.*, 354 I.C.C. 605 (1978), as modified in *Mendocino Coast Railway—Lease & Operate—California Western Railroad*, 360 I.C.C. 653 (1980).

The transaction may be consummated on or after February 4, 2018, the effective date of the exemption (30 days after the verified notice was filed).

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void ab initio. Petitions to revoke the exemption under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) may be filed at any time. The filing of a petition to revoke will not automatically stay the effectiveness of the exemption. Petitions for stay must be filed no later than January 26, 2018 (at least seven days before the exemption before effective).

An original and 10 copies of all pleadings, referring to Docket No. 36162, must be filed with the Surface Transportation Board, 395 E Street SW, Washington, DC 20423-0001. In addition, one copy of each pleading must be served on W. Karl Hansen, Stinson Leonard Street LLP, 50 South Sixth St., Suite 2600, Minneapolis, MN 55402.

According to Soo Line, this action is categorically excluded from environmental review under 49 CFR

1105.6(c) and from historic reporting under 49 CFR 1105.8(b).

Board decisions and notices are available on our website at WWW.STB.GOV.

Decided: January 16, 2018.

By the Board, Scott M. Zimmerman, Acting Director, Office of Proceedings.

Jeffrey Herzig,

Clearance Clerk.

[FR Doc. 2018-00927 Filed 1-18-18; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

Agency Information Collection Activities: Requests for Comments; Clearance of a Renewed Approval of Information Collection: Helicopter Air Ambulance Operator Reports

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, FAA invites public comments about our intention to request the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval to renew an information collection. The **Federal Register** Notice with a 60-day comment period soliciting comments on the following collection of information was published on November 3, 2017 (82 FR 51331).

The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 mandates that all helicopter air ambulance operators must begin reporting the number of flights and hours flown, along with other specified information, during which helicopters operated by the certificate holder are providing helicopter air ambulance services. The helicopter air ambulance operational data provided to the FAA is used by the agency as background information useful in the development of risk mitigation strategies to reduce the helicopter air ambulance accident rate, and to meet the mandates set by Congress.

In response to the November 3, 2017 notice and request for comments, the FAA received two comments. One comment from an individual and one comment from the Air Medical Operators Association (AMOA). The individual commented that the hourly burden per average response estimate has increased since the last notice was published on July 29, 2014 (79 FR 44083) and asked for the reason for the change in estimated burden. In response, the FAA clarifies that none of

¹ With the verified notice, Soo Line filed a motion for a protective order to protect the confidential and commercially sensitive information contained in the agreement, which Soo Line submitted under seal. That motion will be addressed in a separate decision.

the requirements have changed, but operator data have changed. The overall number of operators has decreased. Additionally, the number of large operators (to which we attribute a higher hourly burden) has increased and the number of small operators (to which we attribute a lower hourly burden) has decreased. Therefore, in the aggregate, the average hourly burden increased from six (6) hours to eleven (11) hours per operator.

The AMOA commented that they strongly supported the intent of the data collection requirement, but also noted that the original collection requirement should have been the subject of notice and comment rulemaking. The FAA notes, as indicated in the August 12, 2013 Requests for Comments; Clearance of a New Approval of Information Collection: Helicopter Air Ambulance Operator Reports (78 FR 48925), that prior to issuance of the first information collection notice, representatives from the Flight Standards Service, Office of Accident Investigation and Prevention, and the Office of the Chief Counsel met with representatives from AMOA to discuss the FAA's approach to this data collection. Meetings were held on October 15, 2012 and May 17, 2013. On June 28, 2013 AMOA submitted a response to the FAA discussing its view of the method to collect the data being pursued by the FAA. A copy of that letter was placed in the docket (FAA-2013-0684) and was considered by the agency.

AMOA also commented that the FAA has underestimated the hourly burden for both large and small operators. Although AMOA did not provide any specific data to support its comment, in response the FAA has increased the estimates of hourly burden for both large and small operators in this notice and request for comments.

AMOA also requested information from the FAA's Office of Accident Investigation and Prevention and commented on the FAA's implementation of certain provisions of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012, which are both beyond the scope of this clearance of a renewed approval of information collection.

DATES: Written comments should be submitted by February 20, 2018.

ADDRESSES: Interested persons are invited to submit written comments on the proposed information collection to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget. Comments should be addressed to the attention of the Desk Officer, Department of Transportation/FAA, and sent via electronic mail to oir_

submission@omb.eop.gov, or faxed to (202) 395-6974, or mailed to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, Docket Library, Room 10102, 725 17th Street NW, Washington, DC 20503.

Public Comments Invited: You are asked to comment on any aspect of this information collection, including (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for FAA's performance; (b) the accuracy of the estimated burden; (c) ways for FAA to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information collection; and (d) ways that the burden could be minimized without reducing the quality of the collected information. The agency will summarize and/or include your comments in the request for OMB's clearance of this information collection.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Barbara Hall at (940) 594-5913, or by email at: Barbara.L.Hall@faa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

OMB Control Number: 2120-0761.

Title: Helicopter Air Ambulance Operator Reports.

Form Numbers: Helicopter Air Ambulance Mandatory Flight Information Report.

Type of Review: Renewal of an information collection.

Background: The **Federal Register** Notice with a 60-day comment period soliciting comments on the following collection of information was published on November 3, 2017 (82 FR 51331). The FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (The Act) mandates that all helicopter air ambulance operators must begin reporting the number of flights and hours flown, along with other specified information, during which helicopters operated by the certificate holder were providing helicopter air ambulance services. See Public Law 112-95, Sec. 306, 49 U.S.C. 44731. The FAA Administrator had 180 days to develop a methodology to collect and store those data. The Act further mandates that not later than 2 years after the date of enactment, and annually thereafter, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate, a report containing a summary of the data collected.

The helicopter air ambulance operational data provided to the FAA will be used by the agency as background information useful in the development of risk mitigation strategies to reduce the helicopter air ambulance accident rate, and to meet

the mandates set by Congress. The information requested is limited to the minimum necessary to fulfill these reporting requirements mandated by the Act and as developed by FAA. The amount of data required to be submitted is proportional to the size of the operation.

Respondents: 65 helicopter air ambulance certificate holders.

Frequency: The information is collected annually.

Estimated Average Burden per Response: 13.4 hours.

Estimated Total Annual Burden: 870 hours.

Issued in Fort Worth, TX, on January 8, 2018.

Barbara Hall,

FAA Information Collection Clearance Officer, IT Enterprises Business Services Division, ASP-110.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

Agency Information Collection Activities: Requests for Comments; Clearance of Renewed Approval of Information Collection: Renewal, Rotorcraft External Load Operator Certificate Application

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, FAA invites public comments about our intention to request the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval to renew an information collection. The collection involves the submission of application FAA Form 8710-4 for the certification process. The information to be collected will be used to and/or is necessary to evaluate the operators request to become certified as a Rotorcraft External-Load Operator.

DATES: Written comments should be submitted by March 20, 2018.

ADDRESSES: Send comments to the FAA at the following address: Barbara Hall, Federal Aviation Administration, ASP-110, 10101 Hillwood Parkway, Fort Worth, TX 76177.

Public Comments Invited: You are asked to comment on any aspect of this information collection, including (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for FAA's performance; (b) the accuracy of the estimated burden; (c) ways for FAA to