

Background and Purpose

The number of users competing for space on navigable waterways of the U.S. has increased. Commercial vessels have grown in size and number of transits; the inshore fishing fleet continues to be strong; and confidence in our economy has prompted more people to buy recreational craft. Operations of high-speed commercial vessels are also gaining in popularity nationwide. By all accounts, the market in the U.S. for fast ferries is active and growing. San Francisco Bay, Seattle, New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C., all have growing or planned operations of such ferries. The use of these ferries, especially in the nation's coastal metropolitan areas, is likely to be the next attempted solution for traffic gridlock shore-side. Further, fast cargo vessels are under construction for intra-port, coastal, and transoceanic routes.

Detailed Coast Guard policy to address issues of waterway management associated with high-speed commercial vessels is in its formative stages. The Coast Guard wants to work with our partners in industry, our advisory committees, and other stakeholders in the use of waterways to frame our policy. High-speed commercial vessels will pose great challenges, but the Coast Guard views the development and financial success of these vessels as a genuine benefit of new technology. Operation of these vessels may enhance the quality of life for the general public, as well as ensure the continued development of the nation's maritime transportation system.

Obvious issues of safety, waterway capacity, and congestion will need to be properly addressed. In addition to policy made at the national level, we expect the active participation by local Harbor Safety Committees in the achievement of appropriate management controls for risks due to operation of high-speed commercial vessels. Coast Guard field units will work closely with local industry and other waterway users to deal effectively with these vessels. In general, well-trained, -equipped and -crewed vessels, whose operators engage in a participatory partnership with the Coast Guard and other waterway users, may benefit from less governmental supervision. We envision local Harbor Safety Committees as ideal linchpins in the coordination of national and local approaches to managing risks due to operation of these vessels.

Questions

1. What are the most practical, immediate navigational and other

operational challenges faced by operators of high-speed commercial vessels? What measures (public, private, local, national) would have the most impact on meeting those challenges?

2. What are the likely impacts of wakes of high-speed commercial vessels?

3. How many high-speed commercial vessels are passenger ferries that need to operate on reliable schedules? How does reduced visibility, such as fog, affect them?

4. Taking account of your vessel's characteristics, what do you, as an operator of a high-speed commercial vessel, believe to be a safe speed relative to stopping-distance in clear or restricted visibility, or during darkness?

5. Has the operation of high-speed commercial vessels improved the competitiveness or the financial well-being of your company?

6. What is your projection for growth in the number of high-speed commercial vessels where your vessel operates?

7. While operating a conventional commercial vessel, have you experienced any navigational problems when encountering high-speed commercial vessels? What problems?

8. What are the most critical issues for recreational boating raised by high-speed commercial vessels? Have you, as a recreational boater, encountered any navigational problems when encountering such vessels?

9. Would you change any Inland Rules of the Road to account for the operation of high-speed commercial vessels? For example, would you change the Rules on steering and sailing or those on lights or shapes? Would a distinctive light or system of lights be helpful? Which of these would be best?

10. Is there a need for special policies or rules on waterway management for high-speed commercial vessels? If so, which should the policies or rules be—local, regional, or national?

11. Does the safe operation of high-speed commercial vessels call for consistency of treatment at the regional or national level? If so, which issues of waterway management in particular call for it?

12. Is there a role for local coordinating bodies (such as Harbor Safety Committees) of the marine transportation system in developing policy or in managing waterways for the operation of high-speed commercial vessels? If so, what role do you envision?

13. What operational measures would enhance the safety of high-speed commercial vessels, while facilitating their use? These measures could entail—

- a. Fewer restrictions rather than more;
- b. Voluntary or mandatory traffic lanes;
- c. Controls based on traffic load at certain periods of the day;
- d. Controls based on port-specific traffic conditions or patterns;
- e. Slow-down zones for high-speed cargo vessels entering port from sea; or
- f. Participation in Vessel Traffic Management.

Information on Services for Individuals with Disabilities

For information on facilities or services for people with disabilities, or to request special assistance at the meeting, contact Lieutenant Commander George H. Burns III, Office of Waterways Management Safety and Security (G-MWP-2), Coast Guard, telephone 202-267-0550, e-mail GBurns@comdt.uscg.mil as soon as possible.

Dated: April 7, 2000.

Joseph J. Angelo,

Director of Standard, Marine Safety and Environmental Protection.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement: Prince George's, and Charles Counties, Maryland

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared for a proposed highway project in Prince George's and Charles Counties, Maryland.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Pamela S. Stephenson, Environmental Protection, Specialist, Federal Highway Administration, The Rotunda, Suite 220, 711 West 40th Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21211, Telephone: (410) 962-4342, ext. 145.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and the US Army Corps of Engineers, will prepare a combined Tier I/Tier II Environment Impact Statement (EIS) for the US 301 Transportation Study-Southern Corridor. The study limits encompass a total of 39 miles within both the US 301 corridor, from the Governor Nice Bridge crossing of the Potomac River to the

301/MD5 interchange at T.B., and the MD 5 corridor from T.B. to the Capital Beltway (I-95/I-495). Within the Southern Corridor limits, there are four definable areas: the MD 5 corridor, LaPlata corridors, US 301 south of LaPlata to the Governor Nice Bridge and US 301 through the Waldorf area.

The EIS for this study will combine two tiered levels of documentation. Tier I documentation will be completed for the MD 5 and the LaPlata corridors, as well as for US 301 south of LaPlata to the Governor Nice Bridge. Tier II (or traditional NEPA studies) documentation will be completed for US 301 through the Waldorf area, due to the more immediate need for improvements in this area.

Existing and projected growth population and development is resulting in severe traffic congestion throughout southern Maryland, especially within Waldorf area. The roadways within and adjacent to the Waldorf area will soon reach capacity during peak travel periods and will be unable to accommodate increasing traffic volumes. This study will evaluate improvements, which will address safety problems and accommodate existing and projected travel demand. Alternatives for the Waldorf area will include the No-Build, Transportation Systems Management (TSM)/Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures, Existing road upgrades and Bypass Alternative(s) east and west of existing US 301. The goal is to receive Location Approval on one or a combination of alternative for this area.

For the remaining corridors (MD 5, LaPlata, and south of LaPlata to the Governor Nice Bridge), the current level of traffic congestion is less acute. SHA has identified these corridors, where development is likely to occur and where preservation of right-of-way (within the specific corridor) may be needed to maintain options for future transportation improvements. The goal is to receive approval on a selected corridor(s), which will permit the use of federal funds for the purpose of hardship and protective right-of-way acquisition. The goal is to receive approval on a selected corridor(s), which will permit the use of federal funds for the purpose of hardship and protective right-of-way acquisition. This would ensure that land for implementing transportation options would still be available in this corridor(s) when the anticipated need for future improvements becomes more apparent.

Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments will be sent to appropriate Federal, State, and local

agencies, and to private organizations and citizens and citizen groups who have previously expressed or are known to have an interest in this proposal. A Public Hearing is tentatively scheduled for the Fall of 2000. The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to a Public Hearing. Public notice will be given of the availability of the Draft EIS for review and of the time and place of this hearing.

Project scoping activities include formation of the US 301 Task Force, with representatives of Federal, State and Local governments, elected officials, local area civic, environmental and business leaders, and land owners. A series of Task Force environmental and business leaders, and land owners. A series of Task Force Informational Workshops and Public Hearings were held on June 17, June 19, and July 9, 1996, in Bowie, Waldorf and Upper Marlboro, respectively. The meeting reviewed the history of the US 301 Task Force and its goals and also presented its preliminary recommendations consisting of the integration of new local land use policies, transportation demand strategies and transit and highway options. Since that time, a series of Public Workshops were held on September 14, September 15, and September 23, 1999 to share with the public conceptual improvements for the Waldorf area and identify the corridors for future improvement for the LaPlata area and MD 5 corridor.

To ensure that the full range of issues related to this proposed action are addressed and all significant issues identified, comments and suggestion are invited from all interested parties. Comments or questions concerning these proposed actions and EIS should be directed to FHWA at the address provide above.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Research, Planning and Construction. The regulation implementing Executive Order 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation of Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)

Issued on: March 22, 2000.

Pamela S. Stephenson,

*Environmental Protection Specialist,
Baltimore, Maryland.*

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

[FHWA Docket No. FHWA-1999-5381]

Implementation Information for Ferry Boat Discretionary Program Funds

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice; issuance of final selection criteria for FY 2001 and beyond.

SUMMARY: This document provides implementation information on the Ferry Boat Discretionary (FBD) program for fiscal year 2001 and beyond. A memorandum with this information will be issued each year of the program to division offices soliciting candidate projects from State transportation agencies for FBD program funding.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Jack Wasley, Office of Program Administration, (202) 366-4658; or Mr. Harold Aikens, Office of the Chief Counsel, (202) 366-0764; Federal Highway Administration, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington D.C. 20590. Office hours are from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

Internet users may access all comments received by the U.S. Dockets, Room PL-401, by using the universal resource locator (URL) <http://dms.dot.gov>. It is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. Please follow the instructions online for more information and help.

An electronic copy of this document may be downloaded by using a computer, modem and suitable communications software from the Government Printing Office's Electronic Bulletin Board Service at (202) 512-1661. Internet users may reach the Office of the **Federal Register's** home page at <http://www.nara.gov/fedreg> and the Government Printing Office's database at <http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara>.

The solicitation memorandum will be available each year of the program on the FHWA web site at: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/discretionary>.

Background

On April 26, 1999, at 64 FR 20350, the FHWA solicited comments on the selection criteria to be used by the FHWA for evaluating candidate projects for the FBD program for FY 2001 and beyond. These are the same general selection criteria that the FHWA has