

Dated: September 12, 2001.

**Maureen H. Dunn,**

*General Counsel and Secretary.*

[FR Doc. 01-23319 Filed 9-14-01; 1:18 pm]

BILLING CODE 8120-08-M

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Coast Guard

[USCG 2001-10613]

#### Collection of Information Under Review by Office of Management and Budget (OMB): OMB Control Number 2115-0003

**AGENCY:** Coast Guard, DOT.

**ACTION:** Request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In compliance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Coast Guard intends to seek the approval of OMB for the renewal of one Information Collection Request (ICR). The ICR comprises Information on Marine Casualties; Testing Personnel of Commercial Vessels for Drugs and Alcohol; and Management Information Systems. Before submitting the ICR to OMB, the Coast Guard is requesting comments on it.

**DATES:** Comments must reach the Coast Guard on or before November 19, 2001.

**ADDRESSES:** You may mail comments to the Docket Management System (DMS) [USCG 2001-10613], U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT), room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington, DC 20590-0001, or deliver them to room PL-401, located on the Plaza Level of the Nassif Building at the same address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The telephone number is 202-366-9329.

The DMS maintains the public docket for this request. Comments will become part of this docket and will be available for inspection or copying in room PL-401, located on the Plaza Level of the Nassif Building at the above address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also access this docket on the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

Copies of the complete ICR are available through this docket on the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov> and also from Commandant (G-CIM-2), U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, room 6106 (Attn: Barbara Davis), 2100 Second Street SW., Washington, DC 20593-0001. The telephone number is 202-267-2326.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Barbara Davis, Office of Information Management, 202-267-2326, for

questions on this document; or Dorothy Beard, Chief, Documentary Services Division, U.S. Department of Transportation, 202-366-5149, for questions on the docket.

#### Request for Comments

The Coast Guard encourages interested persons to submit written comments. Persons submitting comments should include their names and addresses, identify this document [USCG 2001-10613], and give the reason for the comments. Please submit all comments and attachments in an unbound format no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing. Persons wanting acknowledgment of receipt of comments should enclose stamped self-addressed postcards or envelopes.

#### Information Collection Request

1. *Title:* Information on Marine Casualties; Testing Personnel of Commercial Vessels for Drugs and Alcohol; and Management Information Systems.

*OMB Control Number:* 2115-0003.

*Summary:* The Coast Guard needs information with which it can investigate mishaps to commercial vessels causing death, extensive damage, and the like, as mandated by Congress. It needs information from chemical testing so it can detect and reduce the use of drugs and alcohol by mariners, also as mandated by Congress. And it needs certain information on management so it can evaluate the effectiveness of its programs.

*Need:* 46 U.S.C. 6101 authorizes the Coast Guard to prescribe rules for reporting of marine casualties. 46 CFR parts 4 and 16 prescribe the rules governing marine casualties and chemical testing.

*Respondents:* The owner, agent, master, operator, or person-in-charge of a vessel involved in a marine casualty.

*Frequency:* On occasion.

*Burden Estimate:* The estimated burden is 19,195 hours a year.

Dated: September 12, 2001.

**V.S. Crea,**

*Director of Information and Technology.*

[FR Doc. 01-23259 Filed 9-17-01; 8:45 am]

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Aviation Administration

#### High Density Traffic Airports; Slot Allocation and Transfer Method

**AGENCY:** Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Statement of policy.

**SUMMARY:** This action extends until October 31, 2001 the temporary policy issued on November 11, 2000, regarding the minimum slot usage requirement for slots and slot exemptions at LaGuardia Airport. Additionally, the FAA advises all carriers that in view of recent events in the New York and Washington, DC areas, which resulted in the cessation of commercial air service nationwide, a separate policy providing appropriate relief from the slot usage requirement will be issued in the near future.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** September 15, 2001.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Lorelei Peter, Office of the Chief Counsel, AGC-220, Federal Aviation Administration, 800 Independence Avenues, SW., Washington, DC 20591; telephone number 202-267-3073.

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

##### Background

On November 17, 2000, the FAA published in the **Federal Register** a statement of policy regarding the slot usage requirement at LaGuardia Airport to address the high level of delay air carriers at LaGuardia experienced due to the increased number of operations under the "Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century" ("AIR-21") (65 FR 69601). As a result of AIR-21, air carriers meeting specified criteria could obtain slot exemptions for new entrant service or service to small communities at New York's LaGuardia Airport, John F. Kennedy International Airport, and Chicago's O'Hare International Airport; a separate regime for increasing service opportunities was authorized for Washington DC's Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. Subsequent to this legislation, the Department of Transportation issued eight orders establishing procedures for the processing of applications for these slot exemptions.

FAA air traffic operations data reported by OPSNET for September 2000 indicated that there were 1,163 average daily operations at LaGuardia, an increase of approximately 18 percent over the September 1999 level of 982 average daily operations. OPSNET also reported that air traffic control delays of 15 minutes or more at LaGuardia increased to 10,515 in September 2000 from 3,108 in September 1999. The percentage of flights recorded with air traffic delays increased to 30.13 percent from 10.55 percent. In comparison, the second highest level of OPSNET reported air traffic delays was at Newark International Airport, where the

percentage of flights delayed showed a small decline to 8.5 percent in September 2000 compared to 8.7 percent in September 1999.

In September 2000, the FAA Air Traffic Control System Command Center regularly implemented traffic management programs to handle the increased volume of flights at LaGuardia. Peak period demand routinely exceeded airport capacity. Delays of one hour or more were frequent, even during ideal weather conditions, and often increased to several hours when adverse aviation weather reduced system capacity. Many airlines operationally addressed the increased delays through various means including waiting for the assigned clearance time, canceling flights, reaccommodating passengers on later flights, and adding flying time to account for increased operating times. Thus, the agency found it necessary to implement a temporary usage policy to accommodate carriers in managing their operations at the airport during this time.

This policy permitted carriers to return temporarily to the FAA the slots or slot exemptions in advance due to scheduled planning or other decisions by the carriers without jeopardizing the permanent loss of the slot or slot exemption. Additionally, the policy provided that the FAA would treat a slot or slot exemption as having been used if the flight was scheduled but canceled for operational reasons and the slot/slot exemption would not otherwise have been subject to withdrawal. Consequently, the policy provided some immediate relief and/or flexibility to carriers to schedule or cancel flights due to the increased level of delay occurring daily at the airport. This policy originally was effective through the April 2001 reporting period. On February 14, 2001, the FAA extended this policy through September 14, 2001, and modified the policy to permit the return of AIR-21 slot exemptions for weekend frequencies only but retained the provision allowing the temporary return of slots (66 FR 10931; February 20, 2001).

As a result of the increased volume of operations described above, and the consequent adverse impact on operations at the airport and across the air traffic system in whole, the FAA limited the number of AIR-21 slot exemptions at LaGuardia and reallocated the slot exemptions by a lottery on December 4, 2000. Through this lottery, the FAA reallocated 159 slot exemptions among participating carriers; this allocation was originally to remain in effect until September 15,

2001, but recently was extended until October 26, 2002 (66 FR 41294; August 7, 2001).

By letter dated August 13, American Airlines, Inc., TWA Airlines LLC, and American Eagle Airlines, Inc. requested an extension of the temporary usage policy until October 26, 2002. By letter dated August 14, Continental and Continental Express requested a similar extension of the usage policy. Both requests stated that since the agency had extended the AIR-21 slot exemption allocation until October 26, 2002, an extension of the policy to coincide with that extension is consistent with FAA's stated rationale when it extended the policy in February 2001. Delta Airlines likewise submitted a request to extend the policy until October 26, 2002, based on the same justification provided by American and Continental. Delta also commented that if the agency determined to not extend the policy, that the September-October reporting period should be extended until December 31, 2001.

#### Agency Response

The limitation on the number of AIR-21 slot exemptions became effective on January 31, 2001. At the time that the agency extended the temporary usage policy in February 2001, approximately 35 allocated High Density Rule slots and a number of the 159 authorized slot exemptions were not in service due to temporary returns or delays in start-up. Also at that time, the agency did not have a basis on which to assess the operational impact of the limited reallocation and to make any conclusions as to the effect of the limitation on slot exemptions on the operating environment at LaGuardia and the national airspace system. Consequently, the FAA decided to extend the policy to coincide with the slot exemption allocation so that the agency could monitor operations at the airport, discern measurable impact, and provide carriers with sufficient time to adjust their operations given the new reallocation of slot exemptions.

Today, carriers are experiencing a significantly different operating environment at LaGuardia. The FAA has established a limit of 75 scheduled operations per hour, which reflects the airport's capacity, provides opportunity for growth above the High Density Rule limits as provided under AIR-21 provisions, and ensures that scheduled demand will not reach the levels experienced at the airport beginning in September 2000. The operational benefits are reflected in the significant delay reductions after the lottery results were implemented. For example, the

number of flights delayed by 15 minutes or more during July 2001 was 2,434, or about 7 percent of total airport operations for the month. Preliminary data for August 2001 indicates approximately 12 percent of airport operations were delayed. In each of the two months preceding the implementation of the temporary usage policy in November 2000, there were over 10,000 monthly delays, impacting up to 30 percent of total airport operations. Although a limited number of weekday slots have been returned under the temporary usage policy and most of the 21 exemptions reallocated in the August 15, 2001 lottery have not begun service, the FAA does not believe their full operation will significantly alter the current operational environment at LaGuardia. The operating environment at the airport has improved significantly from one year ago and the unpredictable delay situation prompted by continuing and significant increases in the number of exemption flights, which warranted adoption of the policy, no longer exists today. The FAA will continue to monitor operations at the airport and will revisit this issue if there is a change in the operating environment that warrants reconsideration of the usage requirement at LaGuardia.

The slot usage requirements under the regulations were last revised in 1992 and at that time, the FAA specifically addressed the fact that adoption of the 80 percent usage threshold takes into account certain factors such as weather and operational delay. The adopted 80 percent usage requirement provides an appropriate balance that ensures limited slot resources are used and allows a reasonable 20 percent level of non-operation due to operational, scheduling, or other reasons. The FAA finds that based on the above factors describing airport operations, there is no current operational reason to maintain the temporary policy until October 26, 2002. In order to accommodate schedules already planned through the remainder of the summer scheduling season, however, the FAA is extending this policy until the end of the September-October reporting period. Therefore, this policy will expire on October 31, 2001. While the agency is not adopting Delta's suggestion to extend the September/October reporting period until December 31, 2001, the FAA notes that under the minimum slot usage provisions, any slot held by a carrier at a High Density Traffic Airport is treated as used on the following days: Thanksgiving Day, the Friday following Thanksgiving Day and the period from

December 24 through the first Saturday in January (14 CFR 93.227(l)). This provision, in addition to the limited extension of the usage policy to accommodate the summer scheduling season, provides carriers with adequate time to adjust their operations if necessary. The FAA also notes that carriers, who may experience usage issues for the September/October or November/December reporting period may utilize the provisions of the buy-sell rule to make slots available to other operators through the transfer process.

In the past when circumstances dictated that relief of general applicability from the slot usage requirement was necessary, the agency has waived the slot usage requirement for all carriers at certain High Density Traffic Airports. The FAA advises that the recent events in the New York and Washington, DC areas, which resulted in the temporary cessation of all commercial air service in the United States, warrant similar consideration. Consequently, the agency currently is considering the appropriate relief and will publish such policy in the **Federal Register** in the near future.

Issued in Washington, DC on September 13, 2001.

**David G. Leitch,**  
Chief Counsel.

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## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

### Federal Transit Administration

#### **Environmental Impact Statement on the Urban Ring Project Phase II, Located in Boston, Chelsea, Everett, Somerville, Cambridge and Brookline, Massachusetts**

**AGENCY:** Federal Transit Administration (FTA), DOT.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

**SUMMARY:** The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Phase II of the Urban Ring Project located in Boston and adjacent communities. The EIS will be undertaken in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The MBTA will ensure that the EIS also satisfies the requirements of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA).

The EIS will evaluate the following alternatives: a No-Build alternative;

Transportation System Management alternative defined as low cost, operationally oriented improvements to address the transportation problems in the corridor; and a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system along existing roadway rights-of-way and other rights-of-way owned by the MBTA and local jurisdictions. Scoping will be accomplished through meetings and correspondence with interested persons, organizations, the general public, Federal, State and local agencies.

**DATES:** *Comment Due Date:* Written comments on the scope of alternatives and impacts to be considered should be sent to the MBTA by October 30, 2001. See **ADDRESSES** below. *Scoping Meeting:* A joint FTA and MBTA public scoping meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 3, 2001, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., Massachusetts Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza, Second Floor, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, Boston, MA 02116. People with special needs should contact Claire Barrett by calling (617) 492-4996 for information and arrangements. The building is accessible to people with disabilities. It is located near MBTA Bus Routes #43 and #55, the Boylston Station stop on the Green Line, and the New England Medical Center stop on the Orange Line. Copies of the Expanded Environmental Notification Form (ENF), including the Executive Summary of the Major Investment Study (MIS) will be available at the meeting. A presentation of the project will be made and comments solicited. See **ADDRESSES** below.

**ADDRESSES:** Written comments on the scope of the analysis and impacts to be considered should be sent to Mr. Peter C. Calcaterra, Project Manager, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, 10 Park Plaza, Room 5750, Boston, MA 02116. A scoping meeting will be held at the following location: Massachusetts Transportation Building, Conference Rooms 2 and 3, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, Massachusetts.

See **DATES** above.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Mr. Richard H. Doyle, Regional Administrator, Federal Transit Administration Region 1, 55 Broadway, Cambridge, MA 02142, Telephone: (617) 494-2055.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

##### **I. Scoping**

The FTA and the MBTA invite interested individuals, organizations and federal, state, and local agencies to participate in: defining the options to be evaluated in the EIS for Phase 2 of the Urban Ring Project; identifying the social, economic and environmental

impacts to be evaluated; and suggesting alternative options that are less costly or have fewer environmental impacts while achieving similar transportation objectives. An Expanded Environmental Notification Form (ENF) dated July 26, 2001 prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act 301 CMR 11.00 is being circulated to all Federal, state, and local agencies having jurisdiction in the Project. Other interested parties may request this document by contacting Fran Dowling at (978) 371-4221 or by email to fdowling@earthtech.com

#### **II. Description of the Study Area and Transportation Needs**

The Urban Ring Project is an initiative of the MBTA to improve the regional transportation system in Greater Boston. The roughly circular Urban Ring Corridor (hereafter known as the Corridor) includes portions of Chelsea, Everett, Somerville, Cambridge, Brookline and Boston. Approximately 15 miles long and one mile wide, the Corridor is growing faster than the regional average and will contain over 314,000 residents and over 360,000 jobs by the year 2025.

The Corridor has been the subject of many past transportation studies that have focused on several critical transportation needs. These studies, which span nearly 40 years, have identified solutions ranging from a highway to a new circumferential rail transit line and new bus routes augmented by low-cost traffic engineering improvements.

Every MBTA commuter rail, heavy and light rail transit line, the Silver Line (currently under construction) as well as over half of all MBTA bus routes, currently cross the Corridor, yet directness of transit travel along the Corridor today remains poor. Transit trips to and from the Corridor require twice as many transfers as the average for the metropolitan region, and transit trips travel at an average speed of less than 8 miles per hour compared to a regional average of over 15 miles per hour. This poor performance is largely due to the indirect routing that transit travelers must currently use for cross-town trips, compounded by inadequate connections with the radial transit and commuter rail system.

To date, improvements have been limited and no comprehensive program to address these mobility problems has been implemented. As summarized below, the project is planned to connect the existing radial transit lines with a multi-modal circumferential transit system to facilitate travel and help to