November 19, 1999. Statements of interest shall be no more than ten pages in length. Each statement of interest shall, at a minimum, indicate whether the applicant houses a designated high-speed corridor; identify whether the applicant proposes to host a concept demonstration, service demonstration or both; provide a detailed description of the proposed demonstration(s), including the route and schedule of any demonstrations; describe how the demonstration will develop information that supports FRA's overall program goal of facilitating the introduction of high-speed rail service in corridors outside the Northeast Corridor; provide a detailed list of any resources required and outstanding issues that must be resolved before undertaking the demonstration; provide a statement from a responsible official of the host railroad concerning the anticipated availability of the rail line proposed for the demonstration during the demonstration period outlined above; and, identify the intended source(s) and commitment status of the selected State(s)'s proposed funding.

Evaluation and Selection

In cooperation with its partners, FRA will evaluate the statements of interest using the following criteria:

1. The overall scientific and/or technical merits of the proposal.
2. The degree to which the proposed demonstration will advance the feasibility of U.S. high-speed rail operations by providing public exposure of HSR technology and operational information on the performance and public acceptance of the demonstration train.
3. The qualifications and demonstrated experience of the proposing organization to support the proposed demonstration(s).
4. The reasonableness and realism of the proposed costs.
5. The degree to which Federal funds are leveraged by private, non-Federal, and/or Federal funds available from sources other than FRA programs, including the degree to which funds are offered to offset FRA's costs of moving the locomotive between demonstration corridors.
6. The availability of funds.

It is expected that this review process will be completed within 90 days of the closing date of this announcement. At that time FRA may, at its option, request more detailed proposals from some or all of the applicants, or move forward in negotiating appropriate agreements with the selected applicants, based solely upon the statements of interest.

Dated: August 27, 1999.

Jolene M. Molitoris,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 99–23004 Filed 9–2–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–06–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Environmental Impact Statement on the Hartford to New Britain Busway Project, Hartford County, Connecticut

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration, DOT.

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

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) intend to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) on the proposed construction of a busway along an existing rail right-of-way corridor, known as the Hartford West Corridor, between Union Station in Hartford, CT and downtown New Britain, CT.

The EIS will evaluate a no-build alternative and a busway alternative, options recommended in a Major Investment Study (MIS) completed by the CTDOT and participating agencies for the Hartford West Corridor. Further scoping will be accomplished through public meetings and hearings, neighborhood meetings, cable news segments, a newsletter, 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 FTA or CTDOT by October 18, 1999.

ADDRESSES: *Written comments* on the project scope should be sent to Mr. Edgar T. Hurle, Connecticut Department of Transportation, 2800 Berlin Turnpike, P.O. Box 317546, Newington, CT, 06131–7546, Telephone (860) 594–2920 or Mr. Richard H. Doyle, Federal Transit Administration, 55 Broadway, Cambridge, MA, 02142, Telephone (617) 494–2055.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Mary Beth Mello, Deputy Regional Administrator, Federal Transit Administration Region I, (617) 494–2055.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Description of Study Area and Project Need

The proposed project corridor, known as the Hartford West corridor, extends from Union Station in Hartford, Connecticut along an existing rail-right-of-way to downtown New Britain, Connecticut. The proposed busway would extend nine miles and include twelve station locations.

The heavily urbanized Hartford West corridor is anchored by the City of Hartford and the City of New Britain. The corridor has been broadly defined to include not only I–84 but also the surrounding neighborhoods, parallel arterial roadways, and two rail lines, the Bristol-Hartford line and the New Haven-Hartford line. The corridor encompasses portions of five communities: Hartford, West Hartford, Farmington, Newington and New Britain.

To address the transportation needs in the Hartford West Corridor and evaluate the effectiveness of various transportation system improvement alternatives, the CTDOT, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG), and the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency (CCRPA) undertook a Major Investment Study (MIS) for the area. During the MIS phase, the three agencies conducted an extensive public outreach effort and evaluated a full range of alternatives including, but not limited to, transit fixed guideway (light rail, commuter rail, and busway), a high occupancy vehicle lane, expressway reconstruction and operational lanes, expressway widening, transportation system management improvements and a no-build option. Based on input from the public, state and local agencies, the CTDOT identified the goals of improved mode choice, congestion reduction, improved public health and safety, community livability and quality of life, and economic expansion to guide the MIS effort.

Early in the process, the addition of travel lanes on I–84 was dropped as an alternative due to significant local opposition and cost. The remaining build alternatives included light rail service in the I–84 median; an exclusive busway in the I–84 median; a high occupancy lane added to I–84; light-rail service on Farmington Avenue (one of the arterial highways); and either light rail service or exclusive bus service in the unused half of the Amtrak inland route main line from Union Station in Hartford to New Britain. The MIS analysis indicated that a busway in the Amtrak corridor was the optimal choice. The flexibility of the busway service is

projected to produce the highest level of ridership, increased levels of mode choice, and congestion relief on both local arterials and I–84.

II. Probable Effects

The FTA and the CTDOT will evaluate all significant environmental, social and economic impacts of the alternatives analyzed in the EIS. Primary environmental issues include: station location and community impacts, construction impacts, visual/aesthetic impacts and bicycle/pedestrian access. In addition, the EIS will evaluate issues raised through a continuation of the scoping process begun under the MIS. Measures to mitigate any significant adverse impact will be developed. Throughout the EIS phase, the CTDOT will seek public input through meetings and hearings, newsletters and cable news, to further define the issues and impacts of alternatives.

Issued on: August 31, 1999.

Richard H. Doyle,

Regional Administrator.

[FR Doc. 99–23005 Filed 9–2–99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–57–M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Petition for Exemption from the Federal Motor Vehicle Motor Theft Prevention Standard; Nissan

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Grant of petition for exemption.

SUMMARY: This notice grants in full the petition of Nissan North America, Inc. (Nissan) for an exemption of a high-theft line (whose nameplate is confidential) from the parts-marking requirements of the Federal motor vehicle theft prevention standard. This petition is granted because the agency has determined that the antitheft device to be placed on the line as standard equipment is likely to be as effective in reducing and deterring motor vehicle theft as compliance with the parts-marking requirements of the Theft Prevention Standard. Nissan requested confidential treatment for its information and attachments submitted in support of its petition. In a letter to Nissan dated August 5, 1999, the agency granted the petitioner's request for confidential treatment of most aspects of its petition.

DATES: The exemption granted by this notice is effective beginning with the (confidential) model year.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Ms. Henrietta L. Spinner, Office of Planning and Consumer Programs, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington D.C. 20590. Ms. Spinner's phone number is (202) 366–4802. Her fax number is (202) 493–2290.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: In a petition dated July 6, 1999, Nissan North America, Inc. (Nissan), requested exemption from the parts-marking requirements of the theft prevention standard for a motor vehicle line. The nameplate of the line and the model year of introduction are confidential. The petition requested an exemption from parts-marking pursuant to 49 CFR part 543, Exemption from Vehicle Theft Prevention Standard, based on the installation of an antitheft device as standard equipment for the entire vehicle line.

Nissan's submittal is considered a complete petition, as required by 49 CFR 543.7, in that it meets the general requirements contained in § 543.5 and the specific content requirements of § 543.6. Nissan requested confidential treatment for the information submitted in support of its petition. In a letter dated August 5, 1999, the agency granted the petitioner's request for confidential treatment of most aspects of its petition.

In its petition, Nissan provided a detailed description and diagram of the identity, design, and location of the components of the antitheft device for the new line. This antitheft device includes an engine-immobilizer system. The antitheft device is activated by turning the ignition switch to the ''OFF'' position using the proper ignition key.

In order to ensure the reliability and durability of the device, Nissan conducted tests based on its own specified standards. Nissan provided a detailed list of tests conducted and believes that its device is reliable and durable since the device complied with its specified requirements for each test.

Nissan compared the device proposed for its vehicle line with devices which NHTSA has determined to be as effective in reducing and deterring motor vehicle theft as would compliance with the parts-marking requirements. Nissan stated that its proposed device, as well as other comparable devices that have received full exemptions from the parts-marking requirements, lacks an audible and visible alarm. Therefore, these devices cannot perform one of the functions listed in 49 CFR 543.6(a)(3), that is, to call attention to unauthorized attempts to enter or move the vehicle. However, theft data have indicated a decline in theft rates for vehicle lines that have been equipped with antitheft devices similar to that which Nissan proposes. In these instances, the agency has concluded that the lack of a visual or audible alarm has not prevented these antitheft devices from being effective protection against theft.

On the basis of this comparison, Nissan has concluded that the antitheft device proposed for its vehicle line is no less effective than those devices in the lines for which NHTSA has already granted full exemption from the parts-marking requirements.

Based on the evidence submitted by Nissan, the agency believes that the antitheft device for the Nissan vehicle line is likely to be as effective in reducing and deterring motor vehicle theft as compliance with the parts-marking requirements of the Theft Prevention Standard (49 CFR part 541).

The agency concludes that the device will provide four of the five types of performance listed in § 543.6(a)(3): Promoting activation; preventing defeat or circumvention of the device by unauthorized persons; preventing operation of the vehicle by unauthorized entrants; and ensuring the reliability and durability of the device.

As required by 49 U.S.C. 33106 and 49 CFR Part 543.6(a)(4) and (5), the agency finds that Nissan has provided adequate reasons for its belief that the antitheft device will reduce and deter theft. This conclusion is based on the information Nissan provided about its device, much of which is confidential. This confidential information included a description of reliability and functional tests conducted by Nissan for the anti-theft device and its components.

For the foregoing reasons, the agency hereby grants in full Nissan's petition for exemption for the vehicle line from the parts-marking requirements of 49 CFR Part 541. The agency notes that 49 CFR Part 541, Appendix A–1, identifies those lines that are exempted from the Theft Prevention Standard for a given model year. Advanced listing, including the release of future product nameplates, is necessary in order to notify law enforcement agencies of new models exempted from the parts-marking requirements of the Theft Prevention Standard. Therefore, since Nissan has been granted confidential treatment for its vehicle line, the confidential status of the vehicle line will be protected until the introduction of its vehicle line into the market place. At that time, Appendix A–1 will be