- General Structures HWG Report.
- Braking Systems HWG Report.
- Airworthiness Assurance Working Group Report and Vote
- Systems Design and Analysis (25.1309) HWG Report.
- Closure

—Action Items
—Schedule for Future Meetings
—Draft Agenda for Next Meeting

The Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee will vote on the following documents during the January 1997 meeting:

- Bird Strike (Engines HWG)
- Repairs (Airworthiness Assurance Working Group)
- Revised Landing Gear Shock Absorption Test Requirements (Loads and Dynamics HWG)

Anyone interested in obtaining a copy of these documents should contact the individual listed under the heading **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.**

Attendance is open to the interested public, but will be limited to the space available. The public must make arrangements by January 15, 1997, to present oral statements at the meeting. The public may present written statements to the committee at any time by providing 25 copies to the Assistant Executive Director for Transport Airplane and Engine Issues or by bringing the copies to the meeting. In addition, sign and oral interpretation can be made available at the meeting, as well as an assistive listening device, if requested 10 calendar days before the meeting. Arrangements may be made by contacting the person listed under the heading **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT.**

Issued in Washington, DC, on December 30, 1996.

Joseph A. Hawkins,

Executive Director, Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee.

[FR Doc. 97–174 Filed 1–3–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–M

Federal Highway Administration

[FHWA Docket No. 96–49]

Achieving Interoperability With Dedicated Short Range Communication

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: With this notice the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is requesting comments on three items of concern relating to the implementation of dedicated short range communication (DSRC) systems specified in the Intelligent Transportation Systems National Architecture. These issues are as follows:

(1) Should the FHWA require that DSRC systems purchased with Federal-aid highway funds and ITS Federal funds meet draft standard specifications, such as that of the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) proposed Draft #6 standard and the Committee for European Normalisation (CEN) draft documents N473, N474, and N505 prior to their formal adoption as industry standards in an effort to reduce the proliferation of non-interoperable systems? Should the FHWA also include message set requirements, such as the Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks (CVISN) Dedicated Short Range Communications Interface Requirements of April 2, 1996 (Johns Hopkins University-Applied Physics Lab)? Should compliance with specific draft standards be required for Commercial Vehicle Operations (CVO) applications only; for both CVO and Electronic Toll and Traffic Management (ETTM) applications; or for CVO, ETTM, and additional applications?

(2) Should the FHWA require that DSRC systems purchased with Federal-aid highway funds and ITS Federal funds meet an escalating interoperability formula? An example would be that first, all CVO applications must be nationally interoperable; second, all new (after specified date) and upgrading electronic toll collection systems and other DSRC applications must be interoperable with CVO applications.

(3) Should a single standard be developed for all applications, or should separate standards be developed with an assumption that trucks and buses, and perhaps other users, would likely require separate technology to perform those functions?

DATES: The FHWA requests comments by February 1, 1997.

ADDRESSES: Submit written, signed comments to FHWA Docket No. 96–49, Room 4232, HCC–10, Office of the Chief Counsel, Federal Highway Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, D.C. 20590. All comments received will be available for examination at the above address from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. Those desiring notification of receipt of comments must include a self-addressed, stamped postcard.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Michael P. Onder, Intelligent Transportation Systems Joint Program Office, (202) 366–2639; Ms. Beverly M. Russell, Office of Chief Counsel, (202) 366–1355, Federal Highway Administration, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, D.C. 20590. Office hours are from 7:45 a.m. to 4:15, e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

In the 1980's a novel approach to facilitating transportation developed. The dedicated short range communication (DSRC) industry, as it came to be known, utilized radio frequency systems to facilitate hands-off data communication between vehicles and electronic reading devices on the roadside. This application of communications technology to transportation has enabled motorists to pay highway tolls and commercial motor vehicles to clear weigh stations and ports of entry without stopping. The main hardware components of the DSRC system consist of a transponder, or tag, mounted on a vehicle, communicating wirelessly with a roadside reading device. The transponder, or tag, stores at a minimum a unique ID number that is received by the reading device and is matched to a corresponding record on a computer system that identifies the vehicle/container/rolling stock and its associated records. The benefits derived from installation of this new technology reflect a significant return on investment; especially in the toll and fleet management business.

The Department of Transportation's Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) program was established by Congress in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) (Pub. L. 102–240, 105 Stat. 1914). In the ISTEA, Congress directed the Department to develop and implement standards and protocols to promote widespread use of ITS. *See* Pub. L. 102–240, § 6053(b), 105 Stat. at 2190 (as codified at 23 U.S.C. 307 note). A precursor to the development of standards has been the formation of a National System Architecture which provides a framework that describes how system components should work and interact. A system architecture addresses how system data flows, how various traffic and traveler information message formats are structured, how electrical interfaces are formed, and which communication system mediums are used for data transmission. The Department began an intensive ITS National Architecture Program in December 1994, and concluded with 29 user services in July, 1996. The 29 user

services have been defined to date as part of the national planning and architectural development process. A 30th user service (Highway-Rail Intersection) has recently been defined and is now being included in the national architectural process. The National Architecture envisions a transportation system in which DSRC is the favored method of wireless communication for Commercial Vehicle Operations (CVO) and for Electronic Toll and Traffic Management (ETTM) applications. The objectives of CVO services are to increase productivity of commercial vehicle regulatory agencies and commercial vehicle operators, and to enhance the safety of CVO drivers and vehicles. Examples of CVO services include automated permit and registration acquisition, vehicle performance monitoring, and hazardous materials incident response. ETTM allows drivers to pay highway tolls without stopping, and allows traffic managers to use transponders as probes in high traffic volume areas to facilitate incident detection.

Application of DSRC

The largest installed base of DSRC systems are in electronic toll collection (ETC) systems. The northeastern region of the United States, where nearly two-thirds of all tolls in the United States are collected, has electronic toll collection systems in place from Virginia to Maine. ETC systems are also in place in California, Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Kansas, Georgia, and Florida. Upcoming ETC systems are planned for widespread use in such high travel areas as the Maryland, Illinois, and Indiana tollways and the Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Florida turnpikes. None of the electronic toll facilities are interoperable with regard to reciprocity in collecting tolls. Relatively few are interoperable in terms of either utilizing the same transponder devices or having a common reading device that could read different transponders. Recent procurement requests from Maryland and Florida have addressed regional interoperability. Today there are several hundred thousand transponders in use on tollways. In the near future there are expected to be several million transponders in use. The problems caused by this lack of standards and interoperability will grow in intensity as demand and usage grow.

Commercial Vehicle Operations do not have as large an installed base of transponders as ETC. Currently there are two major areas of operations in the United States where heavy vehicles are cleared electronically as they pass weigh stations. These are the I–75 corridor in the Mid-West and the I–5, I–8, and I–10 corridors on the West Coast. The I–75 corridor, under the Advantage CVO Project, has 29 sites electronically linked from Florida through Ontario to allow for non-stop clearance of commercial vehicles as they are weighed at highway speeds. The three corridors on the West Coast comprise the HELP, Inc. Pre-Pass system which operates in a similar fashion to the Advantage CVO Project. Soon to be installed are CVO DSRC systems along the I–95 corridor from Virginia to Maine. Both Idaho and Utah also have installed electronic clearance systems, and the State of Washington is in the process of implementing such a program. In addition, DSRC systems are currently being installed in four international border crossing sites at Otay Mesa, California, Nogales, Arizona, Buffalo, New York, and Detroit, Michigan. In the planning stages for installation of DSRC equipment are the Laredo and El Paso, Texas and the Blaine, Washington border crossings, as well as sites in seven model deployment states for CVISN. Interoperability tests have been done successfully between Advantage CVO and HELP, Inc. with equipment that is compatible with the ASTM draft #6 proposed standard. Requirements for interoperability are in place; letters of agreement, have been used to ensure that only equipment that is compatible with the ASTM draft #6 proposed standard be used at the border crossing sites and in the model deployment States. However, a major growth of DSRC systems is also expected with CVO projects, and the problem of non-seamless transportation between DSRC sites will only be exacerbated without interoperability standards.

Problem

The problem is that DSRC standards governing the wireless communication between the transponder and reader, and the message sets on the transponder, do not exist. Therefore, interoperability does not exist between the equipment of different manufacturers. Interoperability, in this case, is the ability of a roadside reading or interrogation device of one manufacturer to meaningfully process the data from any given transponder mounted in a vehicle. Over the past six years, the DSRC industry has been unable to agree upon a path for standardizing DSRC at levels one and two of the International Standards Organization's Open Systems Interconnect (OSI) reference model, which deals with the air interface and the physical properties of the system. During the same time frame, the FHWA has been developing the architecture for CVO and other ITS Programs. This development has matured to the point that the FHWA is ready to initiate seven model deployments of CVISN and the Intelligent Transportation Infrastructure in four major metropolitan areas to test the system under operational conditions. In order for the fundamental concept of wireless vehicle to roadside communication to be viable for commercial fleets, it is essential that interoperability exist nationwide. Therefore, the FHWA believes it must insist that model deployments be interoperable with each other. If the industry stalemate continues, the FHWA may be forced to seek a process to stop the proliferation of non-interoperable DSRC systems. To continue to allow Federal funds to be invested in non-compatible systems will exacerbate the problem. As a result, unless the DSRC industry can identify a solution to non-interoperability immediately, the FHWA will be forced to find an interoperability solution that will not only support the near term deployment, but also the long term expanded deployments that are expected to be utilizing Federal-aid funds.

Solicitation for Public Comment

In the House report accompanying the 1996 DOT appropriations bill, the Committee on Appropriations explicitly stated that the Department should require that Federally supported ITS operations tests be consistent and compatible with the National Architecture to promote interoperability. H.R. Rep. No. 177, 104th Cong., 1st Sess. (1995). In the spirit of that requirement, this notice is being issued to solicit public comment on the following issues.

(1) Should the FHWA require that DSRC systems purchased with Federal-aid highway funds and ITS Federal funds meet draft standard specifications, such as that of the American Society for Testing Materials (ASTM) proposed Draft #6 standard and the Committee for European Normalisation (CEN) draft documents N473, N474, and N505 prior to their formal adoption as industry standards in an effort to reduce the proliferation of non-interoperable systems? Should the FHWA also include message set requirements, such as the Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks (CVISN) Dedicated Short Range Communications Interface Requirements of April 2, 1996 (Johns Hopkins University-Applied Physics Lab)? Should compliance with specific

draft standards be required for Commercial Vehicle Operations (CVO) applications only; for both CVO and Electronic Toll and Traffic Management (ETTM) applications; or for CVO, ETTM, and additional applications?

The FHWA must continue to meet schedules for deployment of ITS projects using DSRC as the communications medium. Our understanding is that at least two competing products exist that comply with the open architecture of ASTM draft #6. On the other hand, it is also our understanding that the European standard (CEN) is not used in any products available in the United States that use the 902–928 MHz spectrum. To disrupt the project schedules could have a severely detrimental effect on the ITS program. Although we desire to minimize any detrimental effect on the program, we also understand the need of the industry to set the DSRC standards. Our strongest desire is for standards to be set that will best serve the users and the industry. It is not our intention to institute a standards process that would not be agreeable to the industry and users.

(2) Should the FHWA require that DSRC systems purchased with Federal-aid highway funds and ITS Federal funds meet an escalating interoperability formula? An example would be that first, all CVO applications must be nationally interoperable; second, all new (after specified date) and upgrading ETC systems must be interoperable with CVO applications; third, all other new (after specified date) and upgrading DSRC applications must be interoperable with CVO applications?

Nationwide interoperability is critical for the efficient operation of vehicles using DSRC equipment transiting the nation, especially commercial vehicles. As such, it is imperative that CVO programs be built with a national focus. ETC programs, on the other hand, are focused on regional travel, and its customers may not be very concerned about interoperability outside the local travel area, with exception to commercial carriers. The same regional emphasis may hold true with other DSRC applications, like in-vehicle signing or transit vehicle signal priority, parking payments, and traffic network performance monitoring. It may not be practical to immediately hold all users of DSRC equipment to a single national standard. Instead, a course of action to achieve national interoperability may be to include a migration plan that requires CVO applications to adhere to a national DSRC standard, followed by DSRC applications with regional emphasis. A —best fit— date can be specified for new and upgrading regional projects to begin adherence with the national standard.

(3) Should a single standard be developed for all DSRC applications, or should separate standards be developed with an assumption that trucks and buses, and perhaps other users, would likely require separate technology to perform those functions?

The FHWA recognizes that CVO and ETTM applications, as well as other DSRC applications, have different requirements that have also shaped the design and operation of the equipment. While it may be desirable to have a single standard, it may not be practical. The FHWA is requesting comments on whether the agency should pursue the single standard approach, encourage the development of dual standards (one for the short term and one for the long term), or sponsor dual standards for the short term and pursue single standards for the next generation of DSRC?

The FHWA is looking to the industry and users to come to some agreement as to DSRC standards for both the short term (1–3 years) and the long term (4–10 years). The FHWA has demonstrated its willingness to assist in this process by funding standards development organizations for this purpose. The solution to this problem must be sought together through a team effort by all of the stakeholders. The successful implementation of the ITS model deployments is not possible without a demonstrated willingness on the part of all parties to seek a solution through the established standard setting processes. The FHWA has further demonstrated its willingness to pursue a solution by funding a contractor to meet one-on-one with purchasers and manufacturers of DSRC equipment to develop a concept of operations, a migration plan, and a draft memorandum of agreement between purchasers of DSRC equipment. The FHWA has also been participating in all discussions sponsored by ITS America that have been taking place between users and manufacturers. We are now looking for the industry to do its part. The FHWA would prefer that the industry set the necessary standards through the consensus building process that the FHWA is sponsoring. In the meantime, the FHWA is seeking comments on how it can most effectively administer the ITS programs, that rely on DSRC systems, without the necessary standards in place.

Authority: Pub. L. 102–240, § 6053(b) (as codified at 23 U.S.C. 307 note); 49 CFR 1.48.

Issued on: December 24, 1996.

Rodney E. Slater,

Federal Highway Administrator.

[FR Doc. 97–172 Filed 1–3–97; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–22–P

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB–488X]

Ludington & Northern Railway, Inc.—Abandonment Exemption—in Mason County, MI

Ludington & Northern Railway, Inc. (L&N) has filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—*Exempt Abandonments* to abandon its entire line of railroad from the south line of Michigan Highway 116 in Hamlin Township south and east through Pere Marquette Township to terminus in the city of Ludington, in Mason County, MI, a distance of 2.54 miles.

L&N has certified that: (1) no local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) there is no overhead traffic on the line; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

Where, as here, the carrier is abandoning its entire line, the Board does not normally impose labor protection under 49 U.S.C. 10505(g) unless the evidence indicates the existence of a corporate affiliate that will: (1) continue rail operations; or (2) realize significant benefits in addition to being relieved of the burden of deficit operations by its affiliated railroad. *See T and P Railway-Abandonment-in Shawnee, Jefferson and Atchison Counties, KS,* Docket No. AB–381, *et. al.* (ICC served Apr. 27, 1993). Because these conditions do not appear to exist here, employee protection conditions will not be imposed.

Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, this exemption will be effective on February 5, 1997, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do