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

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

Issued on: February 10, 1998.

C. Glenn Clinton,

Chief, District Operations—South Sacramento, California.

[FR Doc. 98–4675 Filed 2–23–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–22–M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Denial of Motor Vehicle Defect Petition

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

ACTION: Denial of petition for a defect investigation.

SUMMARY: This notice sets forth the reasons for the denial of a petition submitted to NHTSA under 49 U.S.C. 30162, requesting that the agency commence a proceeding to determine the existence of a defect related to motor vehicle safety.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. George Chiang, Office of Defects Investigation, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Telephone: (202) 366–5206.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Mr. Walter E. Bull of Prescott, Arizona, submitted a petition dated December 31, 1997, requesting that an investigation be initiated to determine whether early model Ford Explorer sport utility vehicles contain a defect related to motor vehicle safety within the meaning of 49 U.S.C. Chapter 301. The petition alleges that early model Ford Explorer sport utility vehicles develop heavy lateral vibrations at speeds above 55 mph and when encountering bumps at low speeds. The petition further alleges that these vibrations could possibly cause loss of vehicle control.

A review of agency data files, including information reported to the Auto Safety Hotline by consumers, indicates that, in addition to the petition, there were 22 complaints concerning vehicle vibration, shaking, and shimmy at certain high speeds in model year (MY) 1991–1994 Ford Explorer vehicles, allegedly caused by defective engine mounts. No loss of vehicle control, and no crashes or injuries were reported. Of the 22 complaints, five are MY1994, five are MY1993, ten are MY1992, and two are MY1991 vehicles. Ford Motor Company (Ford) has manufactured approximately 1,137,000 MY1991–1994 Explorers.

The agency interviewed four recent complainants who filed reports about the subject vehicles and confirmed that the drivers felt vibration/shake in the seat and floor at certain speeds but little or no vibration in the steering wheel. They described the severity of vibration as one which would tip over a full cup of coffee when the cup is placed on the floor. One complainant had not fixed the engine mounts as of January 14, 1998, and the other three had sold or traded their Explorers without getting the vibration problems fixed. One sold her vehicle with over 72,000 miles, one sold at about 10,000 miles, one traded at about 8,000 miles, and one still has his vehicle which has about 50,000 miles now.

Ford has issued three Technical Service Bulletins to address the vibration/shake issue on MY1991–1994 Ford Explorers. One bulletin issued on September 1, 1994, BC1431940902, informs dealers of the availability of a new engine mount with revised insulator stiffening to correct a lateral shake problem on the subject vehicles. The other two bulletins, issued on February 12, 1996, Article Nos. 96–4–15 and 96–4–17, address vibration/shake in the seat and/or floor at speeds above 50 mph and peaking near 65 mph on certain MY1991–1994 Explorer vehicles. An ''aftershake'' condition may also exist when driving over a bump at speeds less than 45 mph. To reduce or eliminate the vibration/shake problem, these latter bulletins advise dealers to install revised LH and RH engine mounts as addressed in the 1994 bulletins and also to install a rear axle-to-frame lateral shock absorber kit.

The vibration/shake in the MY1991–1994 Explorers is apparently caused by inadequately designed engine mounts which allow the engine to move laterally at certain driving speeds. The vibration/shake is primarily limited to the seat and floor. When this occurs, the driver is able to control the vehicle and to either increase or decrease the vehicle's speed to eliminate the vibration. This is evidenced by no reports of loss of vehicle control, crashes, or injuries reported to NHTSA.

For the reasons presented above, it is unlikely that NHTSA would issue an order for the notification and remedy of a safety-related defect in the subject vehicles at the conclusion of the investigation requested in the petition. Therefore, in view of the need to allocate and prioritize NHTSA's limited resources to best accomplish the agency's safety mission, the petition is denied.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30162(d); delegations of authority at CFR 1.50 and 501.8.

Issued on: February 9, 1998.

Kenneth N. Weinstein,

Associate Administrator for Safety Assurance.

[FR Doc. 98–4626 Filed 2–23–98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–59–M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Denial of Motor Vehicle Defect Petition

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

ACTION: Denial of petition for a defect investigation.

SUMMARY: This notice sets forth the reasons for the denial of a petition submitted to NHTSA under 49 U.S.C. 30162, requesting that the agency commence a proceeding to determine the existence of a defect related to motor vehicle safety.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. George Chiang, Office of Defects Investigation, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590. Telephone: (202) 366–5206.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Mr. and Mrs. Scott Montreuil of Ramsey, Minnesota, submitted a petition dated October 1, 1997, requesting that an investigation be initiated to determine whether 1993 Chrysler Jeep Grand Cherokees contain a defect related to motor vehicle safety within the meaning of 49 U.S.C. Chapter 301. The petition alleges that 1993 Chrysler Jeep Grand Cherokees have a defective viscous coupling that could cause the steering to bind and lock up, and possibly affect the vehicle's braking.

Although not all Jeep Grand Cherokees utilize a viscous coupling, some 1993 through 1995 Jeep Grand Cherokees are equipped with a Quadra-Trac transfer case. An integral part of the Quadra-Trac transfer case is its viscous coupling, a speed-sensitive device that controls torque output between the front and rear drive shafts.