determining if their vessels can pass under the bridges and thereby reduce the number of unnecessary openings at time when the draw is not required to open.

This change was requested by the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CONNDOT) to provide relief from traffic delays caused by frequent, unscheduled bridge openings.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before July 3, 1995.

ADDRESSES: Comments may be mailed to Commander (obr), First Coast Guard District, Building 135A, Governors Island, New York, 10004–5073, or may be hand-delivered to the same address between 6:30 a.m. and 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, except federal holidays. The telephone number is (212) 668–7170. The comments will become part of this docket and will be available for inspection and copying by appointment at the above address.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Gary Kassof, Bridge Administrator, First Coast Guard District, (212) 668–7069.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Request for Comments

The Coast Guard encourages interested persons to participate in this rulemaking by submitting written views, comments, data, or arguments. Persons submitting comments should include their names and addresses, identify this rulemaking (CGD01-95-009), the specific section of this proposal to which each comment applies, and give reasons for each comment. The Coast Guard requests that all comments and attachments be submitted in an unbound format no larger than 81/2" by 11", suitable for copying and electronic filing. If that is not practical, a second copy of any bound material is requested. Persons desiring acknowledgment that their comments have been received should enclose a stamped, selfaddressed post card or envelope.

The Coast Guard will consider all comments received during the comment period, and may change this proposal in light of comments received. The Coast Guard plans no public hearing. Persons may request a public hearing by writing to Commander (obr), First Coast Guard District at the address listed under ADDRESSES. The request should include reasons why a hearing would be beneficial. If the Coast Guard determines that the opportunity for oral presentations will aid this rulemaking, the Coast Guard will hold a public hearing at a time and place announced by a later notice in the Federal Register.

Drafting Information

The drafters of this notice are Mr. Waverly W. Gregory, Jr., Project Manager, Bridge Branch, and Lieutenant Commander Samuel R. Watkins, Project Counsel, District Legal Office.

Background and Purpose

The Route 82 Bridge over the Connecticut River, at mile 16.8 between East Haddam and Haddam, Connecticut, has vertical clearances of 22' above mean high water (MHW) and 25' above mean low water (MLW). The Coast Guard previously published a temporary final rule (57 FR 24191: June 2, 1992) that required the bridge to open for recreational vessels only on the hour and half-hour from 22 May through 31 October, 1992 between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays, and federal holidays. Interested persons were given until November 13, 1992 to submit comments. No comments were received; a public hearing was not requested nor was one held.

Upon the expiration of the temporary final rule in October, 1992, the bridge reverted to the general operating regulations contained in 33 CFR part 117, subpart A. These regulations required the draw to open for all vessels on signal at all times. However, in 1993 and 1994, from 15 May to 15 October, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., CONNDOT implemented hourly and half-hourly openings for recreational vessels on Saturdays, Sundays, and federal holidays without Coast Guard approval.

The Town of East Haddam and CONNDOT have since requested the Coast Guard to consider a change to the special operating regulations for the Route 82 Bridge to provide for hourly and half hourly openings from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. during the summer.

In 1993 and 1994, CONNDOT left the signs for the temporary regulations from the 1992 season in place, unofficially implementing half-hourly openings for recreational vessels from 15 May to 15 October, between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m., on weekends and federal holidays. The Coast Guard has not received any complaints or inquiries concerning this unofficial operating schedule implemented during 1993 and 1994.

The proposed regulations for the Route 82 Bridge would provide openings for recreational vessels on the hour and half hour, daily from 15 May to 31 October, between 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. Openings for commercial vessels would be provided on signal at all times.

Analysis of the bridge logs for 1990, 1991 and 1992 indicated that spring and fall transient recreational boating traffic on the weekends created the greatest potential for disruption of vehicular traffic due to back-to-back openings. Additionally, on Fridays and weekends during the summer months there were frequent, untimely openings affecting persons attending concerts and plays at the Goodspeed Opera House in East Haddam. Analysis of the 1992 and 1993 bridge logs showed that a majority of the recreational vessels requiring openings transited the bridge on the hour and half hour from Monday through Thursday as well as weekends during the summer period.

Discussion of Proposed Amendments

Under this proposal 33 CFR 117.205 would be revised to remove dedundant language and requirements that are included elsewhere in the CFR as general Part 117 operating regulations.

Paragraph (a)(1)(i) and paragraph (a)(1)(ii) from the existing regulation would be deleted as unnecessary because trains are now controlled by the block method. Under this method the track is divided into blocks or segments of a mile or more in length. When a train is in a block with a drawbridge, the draw may not open until the train has passed out of the block. This requirement is contained in 33 CFR 117.9 as a general requirement for bridges.

This proposal would also require bridge owners to install clearance gauges at the AMTRAK Old Saybrook-Old Lyme Bridge, the CONRAIL Middletown-Portland Bridge and the Route 82 Bridge as part of a new paragraph (a). This proposed requirement would assist mariners in determining if their vessels can pass under the Route 82 Bridge during periods when the draw need not be opened and would eliminate unnecessary openings at the other bridges.

Paragraph (b) in the existing regulations would be revised because the requirement to fully open is provided in 33 CFR 117.5 of the general operating regulations. The revised paragraph (b) would add the proposed regulations to formalize the current, unofficial operating regulations at the Route 82 Bridge.

Regulatory Evaluation

This proposal is not a significant regulatory action under section 3(f) of Executive Order 12866 and does not require an assessment of potential costs and benefits under section 6(a)(3) of that order. It has been exempted from review by the Office of Management and Budget under that order. It is not significant under the regulatory policies