From this review, the FAA has identified AD 80–26–05, Amendment 39–3994, as one that should be superseded with a new AD that would require a modification that would eliminate the need for short-interval and critical repetitive inspections. AD 80– 26–05 currently requires the following on Piper Models PA31, PA31–325, PA31–350, PA31P, PA31T1, and PA31T airplanes:

- —Repetitively inspecting the main landing gear (MLG) inboard door hinges and attachment angles for cracks, and replacing any cracked MLG inboard door hinge or attachment angle. Accomplishment of the inspections required by AD 80– 26–05 is in accordance with Piper Service Bulletin (SB) No. 682, dated July 24, 1980; and
- —Allowing for the provision of installing inboard door hinges and attachment angles made of steel as terminating action for the repetitive inspections.

Piper SB No. 682, dated July 24, 1980, references a new improved door hinge assembly, part number (P/N) 47529–32, which, when incorporated, provides terminating action for the repetitive inspections of the MLG inboard door hinge and attachment angles. Piper SB No. 682 contains procedures for incorporating this new improved door hinge assembly.

Based on its aging commuter-class aircraft policy and after reviewing all available information related to this subject including the referenced service information, the FAA has determined that AD action should be taken to eliminate the repetitive short- interval inspections required by AD 80–26–05, and to prevent separation of a MLG door from the airplane caused by a cracked inboard door hinge or attachment angle, which, if not detected and corrected, could result in the MLG jamming and loss of control of the airplane during landing operations.

Since an unsafe condition has been identified that is likely to exist or develop in other Piper Models PA31 PA31-325, PA31-350, PA31P, PA31T1, and PA31T airplanes of the same type design, the proposed AD would supersede AD 80-26-05 with a new AD that would (1) retain the requirement of repetitively inspecting the MLG inboard door hinges and attachment angles for cracks, and replacing any cracked MLG inboard door hinge or attachment angle; and (2) require incorporating a MLG inboard door hinge and attachment angle assembly of improved design (part number 47529-32) or FAA-approved hinges and angles made of steel as

terminating action for the repetitive inspection requirement. Accomplishment of the proposed inspections would be in accordance with Piper SB No. 682, dated July 24, 1980.

The FAA estimates that 2,448 airplanes in the U.S. registry would be affected by the proposed AD, that it would take approximately 2 workhours per airplane to accomplish the proposed replacement, and that the average labor rate is approximately \$60 an hour. Parts cost approximately \$1,664 per airplane (\$416 per assembly ×4 assemblies per airplane). Based on these figures, the total cost impact of the proposed AD on U.S. operators is estimated to be \$4,367,232 or \$1,784 per airplane. This figure is based on the assumption that no affected airplane owner/operator has accomplished the proposed replacement.

Piper has informed the FAA that hinge assemblies have been distributed to equip approximately 400 (1,600 separate assemblies) of the affected airplanes. Assuming that 400 of the affected airplanes have four of these hinge assemblies incorporated, the cost impact of the proposed AD upon U.S. owners operators of the affected airplanes would be reduced by \$713,600 from \$4,367,232 to \$3,653,632.

The intent of the FAA's aging commuter airplane program is to ensure safe operation of commuter-class airplanes that are in commercial service without adversely impacting private operators. The FAA believes that a large number of the remaining 2,048 affected airplanes (2,448 affected airplanes—400 airplanes) that would be affected by the proposed AD are operated in various types of air transportation. This includes scheduled passenger service, air cargo, and air taxi.

The proposed AD would allow 800 hours time-in-service (TIS) after the effective date of the proposed AD before mandatory accomplishment of the design modification. The average utilization of the fleet for those airplanes in air transportation is between 25 to 40 hours TIS per week. Based on these figures, operators of commuter-class airplanes involved in commercial operation would have to accomplish the proposed modification within 5 to 8 months after the proposed AD would become effective. For private owners, who typically operate between 100 to 200 hours TIS per year, this would allow 4 to 8 years before the proposed modification would be mandatory.

The FAĂ established the 800 hours TIS replacement compliance time based on its engineering evaluation of the problem. Among the issues examined in this engineering evaluation were analysis of service difficulty reports, the difficulty level of the inspection, and how critical the situation would be if cracks occurred in the subject area despite accomplishment of the repetitive inspections.

Usually, the FAA establishes the mandatory design modification compliance time on AD's affecting aging commuter-class airplanes upon the accumulation of a certain number of hours TIS on the airplane. For this action, the FAA is proposing to mandate the modification for all operators "within the next 800 hours TIS after the effective date of this AD." The total TIS levels of the airplane fleet vary from under 1.000 hours TIS to over 5.000 hours TIS, and annual accumulation rates vary from 50 hours TIS to over 1,000 hours TIS. Establishing a longterm set compliance time of hours TIS accumulated on Piper Models PA31, PA31-325, PA31-350, PA31P, PA31T1, and PA31T airplanes (such as 5,000 hours TIS) would impose an undue burden on the manufacturer of having to maintain a supply of replacement parts for the entire fleet when many airplanes in the fleet may never reach this compliance time.

Instead, the FAA believes that Piper should maintain parts for several years; in this case about 8 years to allow lowusage airplanes time to accumulate the 800 hours after the effective date of the AD. The FAA has determined that the compliance time of the proposed rule provides the level of safety required for commuter air service while still minimizing the impact on the private airplane owners of Piper Models PA31, PA31–325, PA31–350, PA31P, PA31T1, and PA31T airplanes.

The regulations proposed herein would not have substantial direct effects on the States, on the relationship between the national government and the States, or on the distribution of power and responsibilities among the various levels of government. Therefore, in accordance with Executive Order 12612, it is determined that this proposal would not have sufficient federalism implications to warrant the preparation of a Federalism Assessment.

For the reasons discussed above, I certify that this action (1) is not a "significant regulatory action" under Executive Order 12866; (2) is not a "significant rule" under DOT Regulatory Policies and Procedures (44 FR. 11034, February 26, 1979); and (3) if promulgated, will not have a significant economic impact, positive or negative, on a substantial number of small entities under the criteria of the