

DATES: *Public meeting:* The meeting will be held on February 14, 1996 at 9:00 a.m. Those wishing to make oral presentations at the meeting should contact Charles Hott, at the address or telephone number listed below, by February 2, 1996.

Written comments: Written comments may be submitted to the agency and must be received by March 15, 1996.

ADDRESSES: *Public meeting:* The public meeting will be held at the following location: Tysons West Park Hotel, 8401 West Park Drive, McLean, VA 22102, Tel: (703) 734-2800.

Written comments: All written comments (preferably 10 copies) should be mailed to the Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5109, 400 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. Please refer to the docket number when submitting written comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Charles Hott, Office of Vehicle Safety Standards, NPS-15, NHTSA, 400 7th Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590 (telephone 202-366-0247, Fax: 202-366-4329).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Regulatory Reform

Calling for a new approach to the way Government regulates the private sector, President Clinton asked Executive Branch agencies to improve the regulatory process. Specifically, the President requested that agencies: (1) Cut obsolete regulations; (2) reward agency and regulator performance by rewarding results, not red tape; (3) create grassroots partnerships by meeting with those affected by regulations and other interested parties; and (4) use consensual rulemaking, such as regulatory negotiation, more frequently.

This meeting is one of NHTSA's announced public meetings to create grassroots partnerships with regulated industries and other affected parties that do not deal with NHTSA on a routine basis. By meeting with these groups, NHTSA believes that it can build a better understanding of their needs and concerns. The agency has met with multistage vehicle manufacturers and will meet with other groups which include heavy truck manufacturers, child seat manufacturers, lamp/reflector manufacturers, and small volume manufacturers.

[Note: This list is not all-inclusive and will be expanded.]

NHTSA recognizes that manufacturers who build school buses operate under different conditions than manufacturers

of passenger cars and trucks. In addition, the agency is aware that school transportation providers and school bus manufacturers share a common interest in matters relating to pupil transportation safety. Therefore, the agency has decided to hold a public meeting to listen to the views of these groups and others in order to be better informed of their specific needs. The agency is interested in obtaining their views on how it can improve its regulations that govern the manufacture of school buses. Suggestions should be accompanied by a statement of the rationale for the suggested action and of the expected consequences of that action. Suggestions should address at least the following considerations:

- Administrative/compliance burdens
- Cost effectiveness
- Costs of the existing regulation and the proposed changes to consumers
- Costs of testing or certification to regulated parties
- Effects on safety
- Effects on small businesses
- Eforceability of the standard
- Whether the suggestion reflects a "common sense" approach to solving the problem

Statements should be as specific as possible and provide the best available supporting information. Statements also should specify whether any change recommended in the regulatory process would require a legislative change in NHTSA's authority.

Other Topics of Interest

In recent years there have been many changes to the Federal requirements for school buses. Many changes to the FMVSSs have occurred. These new requirements include stop arms for all school buses, more emergency exits for most of the larger school buses, performance requirements for wheelchair restraints in school buses, and mirror systems that are performance based instead of design based. Future requirements include head impact protection for small school buses, and may include antilock brake systems for large school buses.

Improvements have been made to the safety of the school bus loading zones. The stop arm and mirror requirements were implemented to reduce the number of loading zone injuries and fatalities. However, changes in clothing style and design have resulted in snagging and dragging injuries to bus occupants departing from the school bus. Most manufacturers have implemented recalls to modify handrail designs.

Pending administrative decision are two rulemaking actions, flammability of

school bus seating and joint strength requirements for maintenance access panels and small school buses.

The agency is interested in your views on how the above regulations and developments have affected school bus safety. Have increased costs of school buses affected the normal replacement cycle for your school buses?

There have also been many changes to the Federal requirements for school bus drivers. School bus drivers are now required to possess a commercial drivers license which requires pre-employment drug tests and random drug and alcohol tests. Staff from the Federal Highway Administration's Office of Motor Carrier Research and Standards will be available to answer questions at the meeting.

Procedural Matters

The agency intends to conduct the meeting informally so as to allow for maximum participation by all who attend. Interested persons may ask questions or provide comments during any period after a party has completed its presentation, on a time allowed basis as determined by the presiding official. If time permits, persons who have not requested time to speak, but would like to make a statement, will be afforded an opportunity to do so.

The agency is interested in obtaining the views of its customers both orally and in writing. An agenda for the meeting will be made based on the number of persons wishing to make oral presentations and will be available on the day of the meeting.

Those speaking at the public meeting should limit their presentations to 20 minutes. If the presentation will include slides, motion pictures, or other visual aids, please indicate so that the proper equipment may be made available. Presenters should bring at least one copy of their presentation to the meeting so that NHTSA can readily include the material in the public record.

A schedule of participants making oral presentations will be available at the designated meeting room. NHTSA will place a copy of any written statement in the docket for this notice. Participation in the meeting is not a prerequisite for the submission of written comments. NHTSA invites written comments from all interested parties. It is requested but not required that 10 copies be submitted.

If a commenter wishes to submit certain information under a claim of confidentiality, three copies of the complete submission, including purportedly confidential business information, should be submitted to the Chief Counsel, NHTSA, Room 5219, at