

of the room. Interested persons may seek information by writing: Mr. E.P. Pfersich, U.S. Coast Guard (G-MSO-3), 2100 Second Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20593-0001 or by calling (202) 267-1577.

Dated: January 13, 1999.

Stephen M. Miller,

Executive Secretary, Shipping Coordinating Committee.

[FR Doc. 99-1194 Filed 1-19-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4710-7-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Coast Guard

[USCG-1999-4974]

Port Access Routes Study; Strait of Juan de Fuca and Adjacent Waters

AGENCY: Coast Guard, DOT.

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Coast Guard is conducting a study of port-access routes to evaluate the continued applicability of and the need for modifications to current vessel routing measures in and around the Strait of Juan de Fuca and adjacent waters, including Admiralty Inlet, Rosario Strait, Haro Strait, Boundary Pass, and the Strait of Georgia. The goal of the study is to help reduce the risk of marine casualties and increase vessel traffic management efficiency in the study area. The recommendations of the study may lead to future rulemaking action or appropriate international agreements. The Coast Guard asks for comments on the issues raised and questions listed in this document.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before April 20, 1999.

ADDRESSES: You may mail your comments to the Docket Management Facility, (USCG-1999-4974), U.S. Department of Transportation, room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street SW., Washington DC 20590-0001, or deliver them to room PL-401 on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building at the same address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The telephone number is 202-366-9329.

The Docket Management Facility maintains the public docket. Comments, and documents as indicated in this preamble, will become part of this docket and will be available for inspection or copying at room PL-401 on the Plaza level of the Nassif Building at the same address between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. You may also access

this docket on the Internet at <http://dms.dot.gov>.

A copy of the 1995 Waterways Analysis and Management System (WAMS) report for the Strait of Juan de Fuca (1995) is available in the public docket at the above addresses. You may also obtain a copy of the WAMS report by calling Mr. John Mikesell at 206-220-7272.

A copy of the "Puget Sound Additional Hazards Study," formally titled "Scoping Risk Assessment: Protection Against Oil Spills in the Marine Waters of Northwest Washington State," is available in the public docket at the above addresses. You may also obtain a copy of the study from the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161, telephone 800-553-6847, fax 703-321-8547. Order the study as document PB97-205488 and the technical appendices to the study as document PB97-205470.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions on this notice, contact Mr. John Mikesell, Chief, Plans and Programs Section, Aids to Navigation and Waterways Management Branch, Thirteenth Coast Guard District, telephone 206-220-7272, or Ms. Barbara Marx, Office of Vessel Traffic Management, U.S. Coast Guard Headquarters, telephone 202-267-0574. For questions on viewing, or submitting material to, the docket, contact Dorothy Walker, Chief, Dockets, Department of Transportation, telephone 202-366-9329.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Request for Comments

The Coast Guard encourages interested persons to respond to this notice by submitting written data, views, or arguments. Persons submitting comments should include their names and addresses, identify this notice (USCG-1999-4974) and the specific section of this document to which each comment applies, and give the reason for each comment. Please submit all comments and attachments in an unbound format, no larger than 8½ by 11 inches, suitable for copying and electronic filing to the Docket Management Facility at the address under **ADDRESSES**. Persons wanting acknowledgment of receipt of comments should enclose stamped, self-addressed postcards or envelopes.

The Coast Guard will consider all comments received during the comment period.

The Coast Guard will hold at least one public meeting. We will announce the time, place, and agenda for the public

meeting in a later notice in the **Federal Register**.

Definition of Terms Used in this Notice

The following International Maritime Organization (IMO) definitions should help you review this notice and provide comments.

1. *Internationally recognized vessel routing system* means any system of one or more routes or routing measures aimed at reducing the risk of casualties; it includes traffic separation schemes, two-way routes, recommended tracks, areas to be avoided, inshore traffic zones, roundabouts, precautionary areas, and deep-water routes.

2. *Traffic Separation Scheme* or *TSS* means a routing measure aimed at the separation of opposing streams of traffic by appropriate means and by the establishment of traffic lanes.

3. *Two-way route* means a route within defined limits inside which two-way traffic is established, aimed at providing safe passage of ships through waters where navigation is difficult or dangerous.

4. *Recommended track* means a route which has been specially examined to ensure so far as possible that it is free of dangers and along which ships are advised to navigate.

5. *Area to be avoided* means a routing measure comprising an area within defined limits in which either navigation is particularly hazardous or it is exceptionally important to avoid casualties and which should be avoided by all ships, or certain classes of ships.

6. *Inshore traffic zone* means a routing measure comprising a designated area between the landward boundary of a traffic separation scheme and the adjacent coast, to be used in accordance with the provisions of Rule 10(d), as amended, of the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, 1972 (Collision Regulations).

7. *Roundabout* means a routing measure comprising a separation point or circular separation zone and a circular traffic lane within defined limits. Traffic within the roundabout is separated by moving in a counterclockwise direction around the separation point or zone.

8. *Precautionary area* means a routing measure comprising an area within defined limits where ships must navigate with particular caution and within which the direction of traffic flow may be recommended.

9. *Deep-water route* means a route within defined limits which has been accurately surveyed for clearance of sea bottom and submerged obstacles as indicated on the chart.

Background and Purpose

Port Access Route Study

Requirements. Under the Ports and Waterways Safety Act (PWSA) (33 U.S.C. 1223(c)), the Secretary of Transportation may designate necessary fairways and Traffic Separation Schemes (TSS's) to provide safe access routes for vessels proceeding to and from U.S. ports. The Secretary's authority to make these designations was delegated to the Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, in 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1.46. The designation of fairways and TSS's recognizes the paramount right of navigation over all other uses in the designated areas.

The PWSA requires the Coast Guard to conduct a study of port-access routes before establishing or adjusting fairways or TSS's. Through the study process, we must coordinate with Federal, State, and foreign state agencies (as appropriate) and consider the views of maritime community representatives, environmental groups, and other interested stakeholders. A primary purpose of this coordination is, to the extent practicable, to reconcile the need for safe access routes with other reasonable waterway uses.

Initial port access route study. An initial port access route study for the coasts of Oregon and Washington, including the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, was announced on April 16, 1979, in the **Federal Register** (44 FR 22543) and modified on January 31, 1980 (45 FR 7026). Results of this study were published in the **Federal Register** (46 FR 59686) on December 7, 1981. For the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, the study recommended to continue addressing port access routes under a cooperative agreement between the United States and Canada.

The United States and Canada established an "Agreement for a Cooperative Vessel Traffic Management System for the Juan de Fuca Region" in 1979. This agreement included a protocol to develop a TSS at the entrance to and within the Strait of Juan de Fuca. This TSS was adopted by the Marine Safety Committee of the International Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (now called "International Maritime Organization") and became effective on January 1, 1982. Other than minor alignment changes, no modifications have been made to the TSS in the study area since that date.

Why is a new port access route study necessary? The latest Waterways Analysis and Management System (WAMS) report for the Strait of Juan de Fuca, dated June 1995, identified

potential measures to improve navigational safety and traffic management efficiency. In 1997, the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center, on behalf of the Coast Guard, conducted a broad assessment of the probabilities and consequences of marine accidents in Puget Sound-area waters, including Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, passages around and through the San Juan Islands, and the offshore waters of the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary. This assessment, formally titled "Scoping Risk Assessment: Protection Against Oil Spills in the Marine Waters of Northwest Washington State" but commonly called the "Puget Sound Additional Hazards Study," recommends several vessel routing measures for further study, including changes to the offshore approaches to the Strait of Juan de Fuca. You will find a listing of some specific recommendations from these reports later in this document.

Timeline, area, and process of the new port access route study. Based on the recommendations of the 1995 WAMS report and the Puget Sound Additional Hazards Study, the Thirteenth Coast Guard District, in close cooperation with Canadian counterparts, will conduct a port access route study to determine the need to modify the existing vessel routing measures and the effects of potential modifications in the study area. The study will begin immediately and be completed by August 30, 1999.

The study area will encompass waters in and around the Strait of Juan de Fuca, approximately between longitudes 126°W and 122°40'W, including Admiralty Inlet, Rosario Strait, Haro Strait, Boundary Pass, and the Strait of Georgia. The study area includes both U.S. and Canadian TSS's and an area to be avoided.

As part of the study, we will consider previous studies (i.e., the 1995 WAMS report, the Puget Sound Additional Hazards Study, etc.), analyses of vessel traffic density, and agency and stakeholder experience in vessel traffic management, navigation, ship-handling, and effects of weather. We encourage you to participate in the study process by submitting comments in response to this notice and by attending public meetings.

We will publish the results of the port access route study in the **Federal Register**. It is possible that the study may validate continued applicability of existing vessel routing measures and conclude that no changes are necessary. It is also possible that the study may recommend one or more changes to

enhance navigational safety and vessel traffic management efficiency. Study recommendations may lead to future rulemaking or appropriate international agreements.

Potential study topics. Based on the recommendations of the 1995 WAMS report and the Puget Sound Additional Hazards Study, as well as related public comments, we plan to address the following potential measures in the port access route study. We welcome your feedback on these measures, as well as any additional measures you believe the study should address under the broad category of vessel routing.

- Require mandatory compliance with the International Maritime Organization (IMO)-approved area to be avoided associated with the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary.
- Establish in-shore traffic zones in the Strait of Juan de Fuca.
- Require mandatory compliance with the TSS in U.S. waters.
- Remove the dogleg in the TSS west of Port Angeles.
- Change the location of the pilot embarkation and debarkation station near Port Angeles.
- Modify the TSS convergence zone at the western entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca.
- Modify the precautionary area located west of Port Angeles.
- Straighten the TSS approach to Rosario Strait.
- Grant formal recognition to an offshore VTS zone as part of the Cooperative Vessel Traffic Management System (CVTMS).

Questions

To help us conduct the port access route study, we request comments on the following questions, although comments on other issues addressed in this document are also welcome. In responding to a question, please explain your reasons for each answer, and follow the instructions under "Request for Comments" above.

1. What navigational hazards do vessels operating in the study area face? Please describe.
2. Are there strains on the current vessel routing system (increasing traffic density, for example)? If so, please describe.
3. Are modifications to existing vessel routing measures needed to address hazards and strains and improve traffic management efficiency in the study area? Why or why not? If so, what measures should the study of port-access routes address for potential implementation?
4. What costs and benefits are associated with the potential measures

for study discussed in this document? What measures do you think are most cost-effective?

5. What impacts, both positive and negative, would changes to existing routing measures or new routing measures have on the study area?

Dated: January 13, 1999.

Joseph J. Angelo,

Acting Assistant Commandant for Marine Safety and Environmental Protection.

[FR Doc. 99-1200 Filed 1-19-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-15-U

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Environmental Impact Statement: Hinds and Rankin Counties, Mississippi

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that an environmental impact statement will be prepared for the Pearl River Bridge and Jackson International Airport Parkway/Mississippi 25 Connectors between Interstate 55, the Jackson International Airport, and Mississippi Highway 25 in the vicinity of Jackson, Flowood, and Pearl, Mississippi.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cecil Vick, Reality Officer/Environmental Coordinator, Federal Highway Administration, 666 North Street, Suite 105, Jackson MS 39202-3199, Telephone: (601) 965-4217. Contacts at the State and local level, respectively are: Mr. Billie Barton, Environmental/Location Division Engineer, Mississippi Department of Transportation, P.O. Box 1850, Jackson, MS, 39215-1850, telephone: (601) 359-7920; and Mr. William Hillman, District Engineer, Mississippi Department of Transportation, 7759 Highway 80 W., Newton MS, 39345, telephone (601) 683-3341.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the proposed Pearl River Bridge and Jackson International Airport Parkway/Mississippi 25 Connectors in Hinds and Rankin Counties, Mississippi. The proposed connectors would begin at Interstate 55 at or near High Street in Jackson, Mississippi and extend eastward across the Pearl River to connect with Mississippi Highway 475 south of the Jackson International

Airport and with Mississippi Highway 25 north of the Jackson International Airport. The proposal is for a full control of access facility, and interchanges will be studied at various locations. The estimated length of the project is 14.9 kilometers (9.3 miles).

State and Federal legislation authorized studies of the bridge and connectors and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1998, authorized partial funding for design, right of way, or construction. Alternatives under consideration include (1) taking no action and (2) build alternative.

Initial environmental studies for the proposed project began as an Environmental Assessment. As part of the Environmental Assessment Process, the FHWA and MDOT sought input through the scoping process to assist in determining and clarifying issues relative to this project. Letters describing the proposed action and soliciting comments were sent to appropriate federal, state, and local agencies, and to private organizations and citizens who had previously expressed or were known to have an interest in the proposal. A formal scoping meeting with federal, state, and local agencies, and other interested parties was held October 30, 1996. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Mississippi Department of Wildlife Fisheries and Parks became cooperating agencies. The scoping process and interagency coordination is continuing and has reached the point where the FHWA and MDOT have determined that completion of an EIS is appropriate.

Coordination will be continued with federal, state, and local agencies, and with private organizations and citizens who express or are known to have interest in this proposal. The draft EIS will be available for public and agency review and comment prior to the official public hearing.

To ensure that the full range of issues relating 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.

Lawrence J. Kastner,

Assistant Division Administrator, Jackson, Mississippi.

[FR Doc. 99-173 Filed 1-19-99; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement; Washington County, Minnesota and St. Croix County, WI

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of intent.

SUMMARY: The FHWA is issuing this notice to advise the public that a supplemental environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared for a proposed highway project in Washington County, Minnesota and St. Croix County, Wisconsin.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Cheryl Martin, Federal Highway Administration, Galtier Plaza, Box 75, 175 East Fifth Street, Suite 500, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-2901, Telephone (651) 291-6120; or Adam Josephson, Project Manager, Minnesota Department of Transportation—Metro Division, 1500 West County Road B2, Roseville, Minnesota 55113, Telephone (651) 582-1320.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FHWA, in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and Wisconsin Department of Transportation, will prepare a supplement to the EIS on a proposal for a replacement river crossing, including the reconstruction of bridge approach roadways, on Trunk Highway (TH) 36/State Trunk Highway (STH) 64 in the vicinity of Stillwater and Oak Park Heights (Washington County), Minnesota and Houlton (St. Croix County), Wisconsin. MnDOT will be the lead State agency. The original EIS for the river crossing (FHWA-MN-EIS-90-92-F) was approved on April 5, 1995 with a Record of Decision issued on July 10, 1995.

In 1996, the National Park Service (NPS) evaluated the project under Section 7(a) of the Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. The Section 7(a) Evaluation, completed in December 1996, found that the project, as proposed, would have a direct and adverse effect on the scenic and recreational values for which the Lower St. Croix River was included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. As a result, the NPS directed that Federal permits not be issued for the project and it was not allowed to proceed. In April 1998, in response to challenges to the NPS determination, a U.S. District Court Judge upheld the findings of the Section 7(a) Evaluation.

In June 1998, a facilitation process was initiated in the hope that a