DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Buy America Waiver Notification

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This notice provides information regarding FHWA’s finding that a Buy America waiver is appropriate for the obligation of Federal-aid funds for 48 State projects involving the acquisition of vehicles and equipment on the condition that they be assembled in the U.S.

DATES: The effective date of the waiver is April 6, 2016.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For questions about this notice, please contact Mr. Gerald Yakowenko, FHWA Office of Program Administration, 202–366–1562, or via email at gerald.yakowenko@dot.gov. For legal questions, please contact Mr. Jomar Maldonado, FHWA Office of the Chief Counsel, 202–366–1373, or via email at jomar.maldonado@dot.gov. Office hours for the FHWA are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access


Background

This notice provides information regarding FHWA’s finding that a Buy America waiver is appropriate for the obligation of Federal-aid funds for 48 State projects involving the acquisition of vehicles (including sedans, vans, pickups, trucks, buses, and street sweepers) and equipment (such as trail grooming equipment) on the condition that they be assembled in the U.S. The waiver would apply to approximately 393 vehicles and equipment acquisitions. The requests for the third quarter of calendar year 2015, available at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/construction/contracts/cmog160405.cfm, are incorporated by reference into this notice. These projects are being undertaken to implement air quality improvement, safety, and mobility goals under FHWA’s Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program and the Recreational Trails Program.

Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, section 635.410 requires that steel or iron materials (including protective coatings) that will be permanently incorporated in a Federal-aid project must be manufactured in the U.S. For FHWA, this means that all the processes that modified the chemical content, physical shape or size, or final finish of the material (from initial melting and mixing, continuing through the bending and coating) occurred in the U.S. The statute and regulations create a process for granting waivers from the Buy America requirements when its application would be inconsistent with the public interest or when satisfactory quality domestic steel and iron products are not sufficiently available. In 1983, FHWA determined that it was both in the public interest and consistent with the legislative intent to waive Buy America for manufactured products other than steel manufactured products. However, FHWA’s national waiver for manufactured products does not apply to the requests in this notice because they involve predominately steel and iron manufactured products. The FHWA’s Buy America requirements do not have special provisions for applying Buy America to “rolling stock” such as vehicles or vehicle components (see 49 U.S.C. 5323(j)(2)(A), 49 CFR 661.11, and 49 U.S.C. 24405(a)(2)(C) for examples of Buy America rolling stock provisions for other DOT agencies). Based on all the information available to the agency, FHWA concludes that there are no domestic manufacturers that produce the vehicles and vehicle components identified in this notice in such a way that their steel and iron elements are manufactured domestically. The FHWA’s Buy America requirements were tailored to the types of products that are typically used in highway construction, which generally meet the requirement that steel and iron materials be manufactured domestically. In today’s global industry, vehicles are assembled with iron and steel components that are manufactured all over the world. The FHWA is not aware of any domestically produced vehicle on the market that meets FHWA’s Buy America requirement to have all its iron and steel be manufactured exclusively in the U.S. For example, the Chevrolet Volt, which was identified by many commenters in a November 21, 2011, Federal Register Notice (76 FR 72027) as a car that is made in the U.S., is comprised of only 45 percent of U.S., and Canadian content according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s Part 583 American Automobile Labeling Act Report Web page (http://www.nhtsa.gov/Laws+&+Regulations/Part+583+American+Automobile+Labeling+Act+(AALA)+Reports). Moreover, there is no indication of how much of this 45 percent content is U.S.-manufactured (from initial melting and mixing) iron and steel content.

In accordance with Division K, section 122 of the “Consolidated and
Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015” (Pub. L. 113–235). FHWA published a notice of intent to issue a waiver on its Web site at http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/construction/contracts/waivers.cfm?id=117 on January 5, 2016. The FHWA received five comments in response to the publication. Four commenters suggested that preference should be given to American products in support of American workers and a waiver should only be granted if there are no domestic products available. These commenters did not provide a recommendation for domestic products that fully comply with FHWA’s Buy America requirements. The fifth commenter supports granting a waiver and agreed that domestic assembly for the vehicles seems to be the only course to follow.

Based on FHWA’s conclusion that there are no domestic manufacturers that can produce the vehicles and equipment identified in this notice in such a way that steel and iron materials are manufactured domestically, and after consideration of the comments received, FHWA finds that application of FHWA’s Buy America requirements to these products is inconsistent with the public interest (23 U.S.C. 313(b)(1) and 23 CFR 635.410(c)(2)(i)). However, FHWA believes that it is in the public interest and consistent with the Buy America requirements to impose the condition that the vehicles and the vehicle components be assembled in the U.S. Requiring final assembly to be performed in the U.S. is consistent with past guidance from FHWA Division Offices on manufactured products (see Memorandum on Buy America Policy Response, Dec. 22, 1997, http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/programadmin/contracts/122297.cfm). A waiver of the Buy America requirement without any regard to where the vehicle is assembled would diminish the purpose of the Buy America requirement. Moreover, in today’s economic environment, the Buy America requirement is especially significant in that it will ensure that Federal Highway Trust Fund dollars are used to support and create jobs in the U.S. This approach is similar to the conditional waivers previously given for various vehicle projects. Thus, so long as the final assembly of the 48 State projects occurs in the U.S., applicants to this waiver request may proceed to purchase these vehicles and equipment consistent with the Buy America requirement.

In accordance with the provisions of section 117 of the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, Technical Corrections Act of 2008” (Pub. L. 110–244), FHWA is providing this notice of its finding that a public interest waiver of Buy America requirements is appropriate on the condition that the vehicles and equipment identified in the notice be assembled in the U.S. The FHWA invites public comment on this finding for an additional 15 days following the effective date of the finding. Comments may be submitted to FHWA’s Web site via the link provided to the waiver page noted above.


Gregory G. Nadeau, Administrator, Federal Highway Administration.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration

[Docket No. FMCSA–2012–0032]

Commercial Driver’s License Standards: Application for Exemption; Daimler Trucks North America (Daimler)

AGENCY: Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of application for exemption; request for comments.

SUMMARY: FMCSA announces that Daimler Trucks North America (Daimler) has requested an exemption for one commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver from the Federal requirement to hold a U.S. commercial driver’s license (CDL). Daimler requests a five-year exemption for Ms. Melanie Baumann, executive assistant to the head of the Daimler Trucks and Bus Division. Ms. Baumann holds a valid German commercial license and wants to test drive Daimler vehicles on U.S. roads to better understand product requirements in “real world” environments, and verify results. Daimler believes the requirements for a German commercial license ensure that operation under the exemption will likely achieve a level of safety equivalent to or greater than the level that would be obtained in the absence of the exemption.

DATES: Comments must be received on or before May 5, 2016.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments bearing the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS) Docket ID FMCSA–2012–0032 using any of the following methods:

• Federal eRulemaking Portal: www.regulations.gov. Follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

• Mail: Docket Management Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., West Building, Ground Floor, Room W12–140, Washington, DC 20590–0001.

• Hand Delivery or Courier: West Building, Ground Floor, Room W12–140, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

• Fax: 1–202–493–2251.

Each submission must include the Agency name and the docket number for this notice. Note that DOT posts all comments received without change to www.regulations.gov, including any personal information included in a comment. Please see the Privacy Act heading below.

Docket: For access to the docket to read background documents or comments, go to www.regulations.gov at any time or visit Room W12–140 on the ground level of the West Building, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE., Washington, DC, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., ET, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays. The on-line FDMS is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. Privacy Act: In accordance with 5 U.S.C. 552a(c), DOT solicits comments from the public to better inform its rulemaking process. DOT posts these comments, without edit, including any personal information the commenter provides, to www.regulations.gov, as described in the system of records notice (DOT/ALL–14 FDMS), which can be reviewed at www.dot.gov/privacy.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For information concerning this notice, contact Ms. Pearlie Robinson, FMCSA Driver and Carrier Operations Division; Office of Carrier, Driver and Vehicle Safety Standards; Telephone: 202–366–4325. Email: MCPSD@dot.gov. If you have questions on viewing or submitting material to the docket, contact Docket Services, telephone (202) 366–9826.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Public Participation and Request for Comments

FMCSA encourages you to participate by submitting comments and related materials.

Submitting Comments

If you submit a comment, please include the docket number for this notice (FMCSA–2012–0032), indicate the specific section of this document to which the comment applies, and provide a reason for suggestions or recommendations. You may submit