the adapter plate installed into the airplane seat track (or other structure), have generated questions as to the proper certification procedure. In these cases, no dynamic testing incorporating the adapter plates was performed. The attached guidance addresses that issue.

''This guidance is interim, because additional data are needed to asses the interaction of seats/adapter plates/airframe. However, there are very near term projects where certification criteria are required before such data will be available. This guidance may be used until the FAA publishes a superseding document(s).

''Acceptable Interim Approach for Near Term Executive Interior Deliveries for Multiple Single Seats Mounted to an Adapter-Plate:

''Issue:

''Multiple single seats that are mounted to a single adapter-plate in the aircraft, are being tested to the 16g dynamic load conditions without the adapter-plate. The adapter-plate, which is attached to the aircraft seat tracks and, at times, to other attachment 'hard points', provides the load path to the aircraft structure. As a result of the adapter-plate not being incorporated in the test, it is unknown whether or not the seat-to-adapter-plate attachment, the adapter-plate itself, and the adapter-plate-to-aircraft-structure/seat track attachment are capable of reacting and distributing the seat loads into the aircraft structure.

''It is necessary to ensure that the seat remains attached to the aircraft floor structure under the prescribed 16g dynamic load condition. Failure in any of these load path details may result in a seat becoming detached from the aircraft floor structure. Therefore, the load path between the seat and aircraft floor structure must be shown to be capable of transferring the 16g seat dynamic loads.

''For the load path components between the seat leg attachments and the aircraft seat track or floor fittings, which were not represented/substantiated in the 16g dynamic seat test, a stress analysis of those details, using the peak loads recorded during the 16g dynamic tests, may be performed as *an acceptable interim means* of compliance to § 25.562(b) as provided below. Due to the limited amount of data available to assess the dynamic performance of this particular type of seating installation (seat/adapter-plate), this is interim action until such data are obtained to support policy addressing the subject installations. The FAA has identified that data from tests (to be performed possibly by CAMI) utilizing seats mounted on adapter-plates are needed to support long-term policy and guidance.

''Conditions necessary to use this interim approach are:

''—Each seat type (without adapter) has been dynamically tested in accordance with § 25.562, including pitch and roll.

''—The tested means of attachment is consistent with attachment of the seat to the adapter-plate.

''—Airplane floor warpage is addressed for the adapter-plate installation by providing an adequate number of distributed attachments of the adapter-plate to the airplane floor structure. The number of attachments will depend on the design of the adapter-plate and positioning of the seats on the plate. Typically the number of attachments will exceed the number of seat-to-adapter-plate attachments and shall not be less than the number of seat-to-adapter-plate attachments. The attachments of the adapter-to-aircraft structure must be structurally adequate to accommodate the dynamic loads and floor deformation.

''—Compliance with § 25.561 is achieved.

''If the actual attachment of the seat to the adapter-plate was not represented during the 16g dynamic seat test, it must be shown that the retention of the seat to the adapter-plate will not be compromised when the seat legs are subjected to the required pre-test pitch and roll conditions of § 25.562(b)(2). Testing of this condition may not be necessary if the attachment retention design and strength are shown to be capable of accommodating the dynamic loads and deformations.

''Analysis of load path components not tested:

''—*Analysis of the seat-to-adapter-plate interface.* It Must be shown that the seat/plate attachment is capable of reacting the measured peak 16g seat loads. The analysis must take into account eccentricities of load path and adapter-plate deformations that may induce prying (bending) loads at the attachment.

''—*An analysis of the adapter-plate.* It must be shown that the adapter-plate is capable of transferring the measured 16g peak loads from the seat-to-adapter-plate interface to the interface of the adapter-plate-to-aircraft floor structure (seat track lips and 'hard points').

''—*Analysis of the adapter-plate-to-floor-structure interface.* The aircraft seat track lips must be shown to be capable of reacting the measured peak 16g seat test load as distributed by the adapter-plate from the seats. The analysis must take into account eccentricities of load path and adapter-plate deformations that may induce prying (bending) loads at the attachment. In the case of hard point installations, the interface would be taken to the point at which the hard point interfaces with the aircraft floor structure (*e.g.,* floor beam).

Note: If a positive margin of safety cannot be achieved in the above analysis, either testing of the seat with the adapter-plate or redesign of the deficient interfaces will be required for compliance to § 25.562.

''If the actual seat/plate/aircraft-floor structure installation is planned to be tested, but the rigidity of the adapter-plate precludes the pre-test floor deformation condition from being performed, segments of the adapter-plate can be used for the interface between the seat and aircraft seat track section. This is in lieu of using the full plate. This will require however, that multiple attachments of the adapter-plate to the aircraft floor structure be provided. The intention of providing multiple distributed attachments is to indirectly address the potential deformation between the airplane floor structure and the plate. The number of attachments will depend on the design of the adapter-plate and positioning of the seats on the adapter-plate. The attachments of the adapter-plate-to-aircraft structure must be structurally adequate to accommodate the aircraft floor deformation.

''The FAA is also preparing a policy statement on the broader issue of compatibility of the seat installation with the airframe. This future policy statement will address this issue, and others, where they may be a question of the dynamic performance of the seat producing loads that exceed the structural capability of the airframe.''

Issued in Renton, Washington on July 14, 2000.

Donald L. Riggin,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service, ANM–100.

[FR Doc. 00–18991 Filed 7–26–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Aviation Administration

Guidance for Demonstrating Compliance With Seat Dynamic Testing for Plinths and Pallets

AGENCY: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of additional clarification on an acceptable means of compliance.

SUMMARY: This notice provides additional clarification on an acceptable means for demonstrating compliance with the airworthiness standards for seats installed on ''plinths'' and ''pallets'' of transport category airplanes. It is necessary to give the public guidance in this area and is intended to further explain the guidance contained in AC 25.562–1A and promote greater standardization and equal treatment among applicants.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Federal Aviation Administration, Attention: Jeff Gardlin, Airframe/Cabin Safety Branch, ANM–115, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service, 1601 Lind Avenue SW., Renton WA 98055–4056; telephone (425) 227–2136, facsimile (425 227–1320.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The information contained in this notice was taken directly from FAA Memorandum No. 00–115–3, dated February 22, 2000.

''The purpose of this memorandum is to provide additional clarification on acceptable means to demonstrate compliance with § 25.562, of the FAR [Federal Aviation Regulations] for seats installed on ''plinths'' and ''pallets.'' Abbreviated criteria for testing plinths and pallets are given in paragraph 10.e., of Advisory Circular (AC) 25.562–1A [Dynamic Evaluation of Seat Restraint

Systems & Occupant Protection on Transport Airplanes].

''The issue of plinths versus pallets was raised in the Aviation Rulemaking Advisory Committee seat test harmonization working group that helped develop the revised AC and was considered, at the time, to be of relatively minor importance. Thus, a simple procedure was included in lieu of a detailed discussion of the underlying rationale for the criteria in the AC. However it now appears that the frequency of plinth and pallet installations is increasing, and the simple criteria in the AC are not always sufficient to address the design variations that are being presented for certification. This memorandum is intended to provide further explanation of the guidance contained in the AC and promote greater standardization and equal treatment among applicants.

''In order to clarify the appropriate certification procedures for plinths and pallets, a brief review of the regulation is needed. Section 25.562(b)(2) requires that the seat be subjected to a prescribed 16g dynamic impulse, with the points of attachment (floor rails or fitting) misaligned with respect to each other. The misalignment is intended to address local distortion between the seat and airplane floor. A lack of tolerance to local distortion has been a primary cause of seat attachment failures, and a fundamental object of the regulation is to provide for improved retention of seats. Based on accident and research data, the interface between the seat and airplane has been identified as critical and the regulation requires that interface to be tested to the prescribed 16g dynamic impulse. The basic airplane follow structure beyond the interface (beams, intercostal etc.) is not required to be dynamically tested or demonstrated to tolerate misalignment. In the case of seats that do not attach directly to the airplane seat track (or equivalent), there is a need to establish the critical interface.

''The Advisory circular characterizes a plinth as an adapter used to attach a single seat to the floor, and gives an example of a pallet as an adapter used to attach multiple rows of seats. If the seat is essentially connected to the seat track via an adapter, the adapter is functionally part of the seat, and certification testing should take this into account. In that case, the seat and its adapter would be tested dynamically, with the misalignment required by the regulation imposed at the interface of the adapter and the floor.

''On the other hand, if seats were installed into the airplane with an adapter(s) such that the adapter(s) was effectively part of the airplane floor, then the critical interface would be between that seat and the adapter. In that case, the dynamic tests would include the seat and its attachment to the adapter, with the misalignment imposed on that interface.

“In order to give a simple characterization of the two situations, the AC refers to single seats and multiple row seats. The term 'single seat,', as used in the AC, was intended to refer to a seat assembly, which could be as large as five seat places.However, the rationale behind this characterization was that a single seat adapter would be considered a plinth, by virtue of its size and purpose, and therefore a part of the seat. Conversely, a multiple row seat installation was considered sufficiently large that the adapter would have to be a pallet, and therefore part of the floor.

''Nonetheless, using the rationale discussed above, there exists the potential for large plinths and small pallets. The issue is whether the critical interface is between the seat and the adapter, or between the adapter and the airplane. Generally speaking adapters of the size that contain a single row of seats (whether they are individual seat places or a common assembly) and mount into seat tracks, should be treated as part of the seat for purposes of certification in accordance with § 25.562. Larger, or more integrally mounted, adapters should be assessed to determine whether they should be treated as part of the floor for purposes of certification in accordance with § 25.561.''

Issued in Renton, Washington on July 14, 2000.

Donald L. Riggin,

Acting Manager, Transport Airplane Directorate, Aircraft Certification Service, ANM–100.

[FR Doc. 00–18994 Filed 7–26–00; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–13–M

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Surface Transportation Board

[STB Docket No. AB–567 and AB–568 (Sub–No. 1X)]

Rutherford Railroad Development Corporation—Abandonment Exemption—in Rutherford County, NC and Southeast Shortlines, Inc., d/b/a Thermal Belt Railway—Discontinuance of Service Exemption—in Rutherford County, NC

Rutherford Railroad Development Corporation (RRDC) and Southeast Shortlines, Inc., d/b/a Thermal Belt Railway (TBRY) have filed a notice of exemption under 49 CFR 1152 Subpart F—Exempt Abandonments and Discontinuances for RRDC to abandon and TBRY to discontinue service over a 7.87-mile line between milepost SB–180.47 in Spindale and milepost SB–188.34 near Gilkey in Rutherford County, NC.[1] The line traverses United States Postal Service Zip Codes 28160 and 28139.

RRDC and TBRY have certified that: (1) No local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; (2) any overhead traffic on the line can be rerouted over other lines; (3) no formal complaint filed by a user of rail service on the line (or by a state or local government entity acting on behalf of such user) regarding cessation of service over the line either is pending with the Surface Transportation Board (Board) or with any U.S. District Court or has been decided in favor of complainant within the 2-year period; and (4) the requirements at 49 CFR 1105.7 (environmental reports), 49 CFR 1105.8 (historic reports), 49 CFR 1105.11 (transmittal letter), 49 CFR 1105.12 (newspaper publication), and 49 CFR 1152.50(d)(1) (notice to governmental agencies) have been met.

As a condition to these exemptions, any employee adversely affected by the abandonment or discontinuance shall be protected under *Oregon Short Line R. Co.— Abandonment—Goshen,* 360 I.C.C. 91 (1979). To address whether this condition adequately protects affected employees, a petition for partial revocation under 49 U.S.C. 10502(d) must be filed. Provided no formal expression of intent to file an offer of financial assistance (OFA) has been received, the exemptions will be effective on August 26, 2000, unless stayed pending reconsideration. Petitions to stay that do not involve environmental issues,[2] formal expressions of intent to file an OFA under 49 CFR 1152.27(c)(2),[3] and trail use/rail banking requests under 49 CFR 1152.29 must be filed by August 7, 2000. Petitions to reopen or requests for public use conditions under 49 CFR 1152.28 must be filed by August 16, 2000, with: Surface Transportation Board, Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, NW., Washington, DC 20423.

A copy of any petition filed with the Board should be sent to applicant's representative: Fritz R. Kahn, P.C., 1920 N Street, NW., Washington, DC 20036–1601.

If the verified notice contains false or misleading information, the exemption is void *ab initio.*

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[1] TBRY's lease and operation of the involved line was approved in *Southeast Shortlines, Inc.,* d/b/a Thermal Belt Railway—Lease, Operation and Acquisition Exemption—*A Rail Line in Rutherford, NC,* Finance Docket No. 31484 (ICC served June 22, 1989).

The Bechtler Development Corporation (BDC) filed a request for a notice of interim trail use for the entire line pursuant to section 8(d) of the National Trails System Act, 16 U.S.C. 1247(d). The Board will address BDC's trail use request and any others that may be filed in a subsequent decision.

[2] The Board will grant a stay if an informed decision on environmental issues (whether raised by a party or by the Board's Section of Environmental Analysis in its independent investigation) cannot be made before the exemption's effective date. *See Exemption of Out-of-Service Rail Lines,* 5 I.C.C.2d 377 (1989). Any request for a stay should be filed as soon as possible so that the Board may take appropriate action before the exemption's effective date.

[3] Each offer of financial assistance must be accompanied by the filing fee, which currently is set at $1000. *See* 49 CFR 1002.2(f)(25).