

closure periods during peak traffic hours far exceeds the need to maintain the Dominion Boulevard Bridge at its present regulated schedule.

The City's request to extend the morning and evening closure periods Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays, is based on the need to reduce traffic congestion. The current schedule was updated December 26, 1995 in a Final Rule (61 FR 1714) and worked for a while, but as a result of urban development, Dominion Boulevard has become a heavily traveled thoroughfare and the current closure periods are no longer sufficient to accommodate the increase in vehicles crossing this bridge during rush hour. The City of Chesapeake studied weekday vehicular traffic counts during the morning and evening rush hours. The average vehicle traffic count during a weekday morning rush hour for this bridge is approximately 2500 and for the evening rush hour, the vehicle count is approximately 2000.

The Coast Guard studied the City of Chesapeake's drawlogs for the Dominion Boulevard Bridge for the year 2001, Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays between the hours of 6:30 a.m. to 7 a.m., 8:30 a.m. to 9 a.m., 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. to determine how often the draw opened for the passage of vessels. The logs revealed that during the requested morning and evening rush hour extensions, the draw opened a total of 252 times during the morning and 350 times during the evening. The highest number of openings occurred May through November. The highest number of recreational vessels passing through this bridge during the extended hours of closure periods requested by the City was 275 in May 2001 and 245 in October of 2001. The lowest number of openings occurred in February, March and December due to the cold weather when boating is at its lowest. Based on the number of vehicles that cross this bridge during the morning and evening rush hours and the frequency of bridge openings during the same time, the City of Chesapeake's request to extend the morning and evening rush hours appears reasonable.

Centerville Turnpike

Current regulations that govern the operation of the Centerville Turnpike Bridge across the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal, AICW mile 15.2, require the bridge to open on signal except from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. the draw need only be opened on the hour and half-hour, seven days a week year-round, for the passage of recreational vessels. Public vessels of the United

States, commercial vessels and vessels in an emergency condition which present danger to life or property shall be passed at any time.

The City of Chesapeake, through a Resolution submitted by the Chesapeake City Council, has requested changes in the regulations governing the Centerville Turnpike Bridge. Provisions would be added to close the drawspan between the hours of 6:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays, allow commercial cargo vessels, tugs, and tugs with tows access through the bridge at any time provided a 2-hour advance notification is made, and would subject certain recreational vessels and commercial vessels to the morning and evening rush hour closure periods. The City also requested that the draw open only on the hour and half hour between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. seven days a week. Since the rush hour closure periods are only for the weekday, the hour and half hour openings would apply between 8:30 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays and not seven days a week. The rest of the time the draw would open on signal. The Coast Guard is adding to the City's request that the draw shall open on signal for the passage of vessels carrying liquefied flammable gas or other hazardous materials. Coast Guard Marine Safety Office, Hampton Roads, confirmed that there is a commercial facility located past the Centerville Turnpike bridge that receives deliveries of fuel that is transported by barges.

The proposal to allow vessels carrying liquefied flammable gas or hazardous materials unimpeded access through the bridge at any time with no restrictions was made based on the hazards involved in shipping liquefied flammable gas and to maintain safety along the Albemarle and Chesapeake Canal. The Coast Guard Marine Safety Office, Hampton Roads, issues safety zones each time a liquefied flammable gas carrier is transiting the Port of Hampton Roads. Also, since tugs, and tugs with tows have no place to tie up in the vicinity of the bridge to wait for a bridge opening, it is proposed to include them in the 2-hour advance notice requirement provision, as well as commercial cargo vessels requiring high tide to transit. During the spring and fall months, the flow of recreational vessels is constant due to vessel owners referred to as "snowbirds". Owners of these recreational vessels are either transiting north to south towards a warmer climate in the fall or south to north towards a cooler climate in the spring and this can result in excessive bridge openings

during rush hour closure periods due to their numbers. The proposal to continue to restrict recreational vessels during the morning and evening rush hour is based on the need to limit the openings of the draw during these hours to aid in relieving highway congestion currently being experienced at this bridge.

The City's request to provide morning and evening closure periods for bridge openings Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays, is based on the large volume of highway traffic that occurs at this location. Centerville Turnpike is a small two-lane road that accommodates large volumes of highway traffic. The highway traffic is a result of the population growth in Chesapeake and is causing lengthy delays to motorists who use this bridge daily going to and from home to work. The current schedule was updated as a Final Rule September 30, 1991 (56 FR 49410). A Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) was published (63 FR 26792, June 2, 1998) for the Centerville Turnpike Bridge proposing a change to the current operating schedule. The request was made by the City of Chesapeake to provide rush hour closure periods in the morning and evening, Monday through Friday including Federal holidays from April 1 to November 30. The remainder of the time, the bridge would open on signal. Comments received as a result of the NPRM were from marina owners located on the AICW. They expressed concern that the closure periods would have a negative impact on their business. The City of Chesapeake was informed of these comments and decided based on their conversations with these business owners to provide a new proposal for the Centerville Turnpike Bridge. The new proposal took the place of the NPRM and provided a comprehensive sequencing of all of the AICW bridges in Chesapeake that the City felt would minimize inconvenience to the maritime industry. The Coast Guard tested the City's new proposal by transiting the AICW in a Coast Guard 41-foot Search and Rescue vessel traveling 10 knots. The Coast Guard determined the speed of travel was the average speed the majority of boaters traveled along this waterway. It was determined after the test was completed that the City's request did not meet the reasonable needs of navigation.

Data received from the City of Chesapeake revealed highway traffic counts at the Centerville Turnpike Bridge has increased from 13,700 per day to over 16,000 per day. Weekday traffic counts submitted by the City revealed over 4500 vehicles cross over the Centerville Turnpike Bridge during