

January 3, 2025

Via Electronic Submission Only

Mr. Adam Raviv
Chief Counsel
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Re: Request for Confidential Treatment:
Daimler Truck North America LLC's Response to Information Request in Preliminary Evaluation
(PE24-032)

Dear Mr. Raviv:

On behalf of Daimler Truck North America LLC ("DTNA"), we request confidential treatment for certain information in DTNA's Response to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's ("NHTSA") Office of Defect Investigation ("ODI") November 21, 2024 Information Request ("DTNA Response") in connection with the agency's Preliminary Evaluation ("PE") (PE24-032), which DTNA is submitting to NHTSA electronically and simultaneously with this request.

Specifically, DTNA seeks permanent confidential treatment for: (1) the information identified within brackets in the narrative response of DTNA; (2) the entirety of the information set forth in the Excel Spreadsheets provided in response to questions 1, 3, 5, and 7 of the IR; (3) the entirety of the information set forth in the PDF documents provided in response to question 4 (collectively "Confidential Information"). A certificate in support of this request is attached pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 512.4(b).

In accordance with the instructions set forth in the IR and 49 C.F.R. § 512.6, DTNA has identified the Confidential Information, including the information in its narrative responses and the files and materials submitted to NHTSA in response to this IR. PDF files containing copies of the documents are labeled as "ENTIRE PAGE CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION" in the top margin as appropriate. If only a portion of a page is claimed to be confidential, that portion is designated by brackets and is marked with "CONTAINS CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION" designations. To the extent DTNA was unable to add confidential marks due to the file's original format, such as Excel files, it identified confidential information using existing attributes within the file or renamed with a "ENTIRE FILE CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS INFORMATION" designation as appropriate. To the extent practicable, DTNA also marked confidential information with sequential identifiers. DTNA is also providing a separate public version of the responses as required under Part 512.

The Confidential Information qualifies for protection from public disclosure under 5 U.S.C. § 552(b)(4) ("Exemption 4"), 49 C.F.R. § 512.15 (b) and (e), the well-known standard set forth under *National Parks & Conservation Ass'n v. Morton*, 498 F.2d 765 (D.C. Cir. 1974), and its progeny, and the

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U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Food Mktg. Inst. v. Argus Leader Media*, 139 S. Ct. 2356 (2019).¹ Among other reasons, it includes confidential commercial information as described in more detail below. A certificate in support of this request is attached pursuant to 49 C.F.R. § 512.4(b).

The Confidential Information qualifies for protection from disclosure under Exemption 4 because it includes confidential commercial information. For the purposes of Exemption 4, commercial information includes information in which the submitter has a "commercial interest." *Pub. Citizen Health Research Grp. v. FDA*, 704 F.2d 1280, 1290 (D.C. Cir. 1983). Information is confidential where it is customarily and actually treated as private by its owner, regardless of whether disclosure of the information would cause substantial competitive harm. *Argus Leader Media*, 139 S. Ct. at 2366.

Setting aside whether *National Parks* and its progeny even survived the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Argus Leader*, the information here squarely qualifies for confidential treatment under either standard. The Confidential Information contains information that is both commercial and confidential. This information includes details about, *inter alia*, DTNA's (i) suppliers and customers, (ii) manufacture and design of subject vehicles and system, (iii) its internal procedures pertaining to or assessments about the alleged defect, and (iv) paid warranty claims. As the manufacturer of subject vehicles, DTNA has a commercial interest in this information. DTNA customarily treats these types of information as confidential because they could be used to develop or market competing vehicles and the release of this information can damage DTNA's goodwill. Consistent with the customary handling of the types of information composing the Confidential Information, DTNA has treated the Confidential Information as confidential and does not make them available outside the company except under assurances that they will be kept confidential.

Protecting the Confidential Information from disclosure would also be consistent with the policy behind Exemption 4. Congress enacted Exemption 4 to prevent disclosures that would "eliminate much of the time and effort that would otherwise be required to bring to market a product competitive with the [submitter's] product." *Pub. Citizen Health Research Grp. v. FDA*, 185 F.3d 898, 905 (D.C. Cir. 1999). "Because competition in business turns on the relative costs and opportunities faced by members of the same industry, there is a potential windfall for competitors to whom valuable information is released under FOIA. If those competitors are charged only minimal FOIA retrieval costs for the information, rather than the considerable costs of private reproduction, they may be getting quite a bargain. Such bargains could easily have competitive consequences not contemplated as part of FOIA's principal aim of promoting openness in government." *Worthington Compressors, Inc. v. Costle*, 662 F.2d 45, 51 (D.C. Cir. 1981). The Confidential Information squarely falls within the Exemption 4 policy interests as well.

If you receive a FOIA request for disclosure of the information for which confidential treatment is sought before you have completed your review of this request, DTNA respectfully requests notification

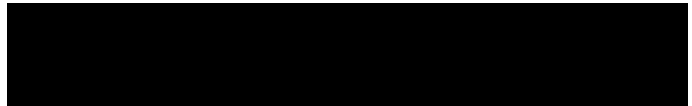
¹ Although NHTSA's confidentiality standard under 49 C.F.R. § 512.15(b) applies the "substantial competitive harm" test, NHTSA issued this standard before the Supreme Court rejected the *National Parks* "substantial competitive harm" test in *Argus Leader*. NHTSA thus should assess confidentiality consistent with *Argus Leader*.

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of the FOIA request and an opportunity to provide further justification for confidential treatment, if warranted, and to allow DTNA to conduct a deeper review of the requested information.

Please contact me if you have any questions with regards to this request for confidential treatment.

Sincerely,



Kerem Bilge
Counsel

Counsel for Daimler Truck North America LLC

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Enclosures:

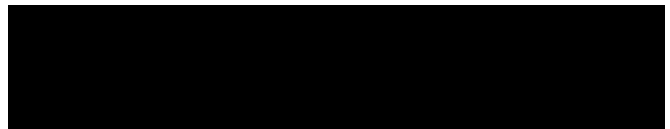
Certificate in Support of Request for Confidentiality (DTNA)
DTNA Response (Confidential version)
DTNA Response (Public version)

Certificate in Support of Request for Confidentiality

I, Sam Geser, pursuant to the provisions of 49 C.F.R. Part 512, state as follows:

1. I am the Product Defect Investigation Engineering Manager in Daimler Truck North America LLC (“DTNA”), and I am authorized by DTNA to execute this certificate on its behalf;
2. I certify that the information contained in the attached materials, and for which DTNA seeks confidential treatment, is confidential and proprietary data and is being submitted with the claim that it is entitled to confidential treatment under 5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4) (as incorporated by reference in and modified by the statute under which the information is being submitted);
3. I hereby request that the information contained in the enclosed be protected on a permanent basis;
4. This certification is based on the information provided by the responsible DTNA personnel who have authority in the normal course of business to release the information for which a claim of confidentiality has been made to ascertain whether such information has ever been released outside DTNA;
5. Based upon that information, to the best of my knowledge, information and belief, the information for which DTNA has claimed confidential treatment has never been released or become available outside DTNA.
6. I make no representations beyond those contained in this certificate and, in particular, I make no representations as to whether this information may become available outside DTNA because of unauthorized or inadvertent disclosure (except as stated in paragraph 5); and
7. I certify under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this 2nd day of January 2025.



Sam Geser
Product Defect Investigation Engineering
Manager, Compliance and Regulatory Affairs
Daimler Truck North America LLC
4747 N. Channel Ave
Portland, OR 97217