

SUPPORTING STATEMENT
Noise Barriers Inventory Request

This is to request OMB three-year approved clearance for the new information collection entitled “Noise Barriers Inventory Request”.

Part A. Justification

1. *Circumstances that make collection of information necessary:*

The Federal-aid highway program has always been based on a strong State-Federal partnership. At the core of that partnership is a philosophy of trust and flexibility, and a belief that the States are in the best position to make investment decisions that are based on the needs and priorities of their citizens. The FHWA noise regulations give each State highway agency flexibility in determining the reasonableness and feasibility of noise abatement and, thus, in balancing the benefits of noise abatement against the overall adverse social, economic, and environmental effects and costs of the noise abatement measures. The State highway agencies base their determination on the interest of the overall public good, keeping in mind all the elements of the highway program. This request for information collection is supported by the FHWA Environmental Stewardship Strategic Goal.

The flexibility in noise abatement decision-making is reflected by data indicating that not all States have built noise barriers. Through the end of 2004, 45 State Departments of Transportation (SDOT) and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico have constructed over 2,205 linear miles of barriers at a cost of over \$2.6 billion (\$3.4 billion in 2004 dollars). Five States and the District of Columbia have not constructed noise barriers. Ten State highway agencies account for approximately 64 percent of total barrier length and 72 percent of total barrier cost. The previously distributed listing can be found at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/noise/barrier/summary.htm>.

2. *How, by whom, and for what purpose is the information used:*

This listing continues to be extremely useful in the management of the highway traffic noise program, in our technical assistance efforts for State highway agencies, and in responding to inquiries from congressional sources, Federal, State, and local agencies, and the general public. An updated listing of noise barriers will be distributed nationally for use in the State highway agencies’ traffic noise program. This collection request is for all noise barriers constructed by December 31, 2007. This would include all funding sources and material types. Although the collection concentrates on the 2005, 2006, and 2007 calendar years, a State highway agency may, after review of the “Summary of Noise Barriers Constructed by December 31, 2004” document, delete, modify or add information to any calendar year.

3. *Extent of automated information collection:*

Participants will have the option of providing information by telephone, electronic mail or paper questionnaire, with approximately 95% responding via electronic mail. The decision to allow multiple options for participants was made to reduce burden for people with internet/phone access, while at the same time not excluding people without

internet/phone access.

4. Efforts to identify duplication:

There are no known efforts to collect similar information at a national level.

5. Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses:

Small businesses are not being recruited to participate in this study. No information will be collected from small businesses.

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information:

The request for collection once every 3 years is intentional for the purposes of reducing the frequency of collection. It is felt that collection less than 3 years is not necessary and that greater than 3 years reduces the relevance of the information.

7. Special circumstances:

There are no special circumstances with this request.

8. Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.8:

Federal Register Citation 60-day Notice: 72 FR 54969 Citation Date: 9/27/2007. Three comments were submitted to Docket No. FHWA-2007-29258 in response to the Federal Register Notice and Request for Comments published September 27, 2007 at page 54970. A copy of those comments is included with this submission. A summary of the comments appears below:

- All three commenter's were in support of the data collection request. Citing its usefulness in either managing the State noise barrier program or getting a look at the national noise barrier program.
- One commenter offered the data be converted into a GIS database, so to be able to manipulate and query the data. Although this would be useful, the FHWA noise program does not currently have the funds to generate such a database.
- One commenter felt that the 8-hour burden per State highway agency was appropriate, but questioned the annual burden should be around 400 hours. It was felt that that 3-year burden was slightly above 400 hours, so when divided by 3 to get the annual burden it came out to 139 hours. This commenter also felt that FHWA could enhance the quality, usefulness and clarity of the collection by reducing the non-uniformity and/or anomalies of the collected data. Although this would be possible, it would be at the expense of reduced flexibility and increased hours of burden. Finally, this commenter requested that the inventory would be updated each time a noise barrier was constructed to reduce the overall burden. Although a State highway agency can set-up an internal reporting system or agreement with their FHWA Division Office to report a noise barrier each time one is constructed, such an activity would increase, not decrease, the overall burden.
- The last commenter requested Federal-aid highway funds for the accurate data collection, inspection and maintenance of noise barriers. This comment is out of scope of this request.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents:

There are no payments or gifts to the respondents from this request of data collection.

10. Assurance of confidentiality:

The construction of noise barrier are funded with Federal-aid highway funds, and therefore are public information. When this information was collected in the past, the final reporting document was posted on the FHWA website. It is intended that the information from this request will also be posted on the FHWA website.

11. Justification for collection of sensitive information:

The information collected is not of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimate of burden hours for information requested:

It is estimated that on average it would take each respondent 8 hours to respond to this request. The actual response time will be dependent on the number of noise barriers constructed, the availability of this information, and the collection method. For the Highway agencies that did not construct noise barriers within the time period, there is no burden. It is estimated that the total burden of this request would be 416 hours.

13. Estimate of total annual costs to respondents:

There are no costs to the participants beyond the hour burden.

14. Estimate of cost to the Federal government:

There will be a GS-13, Step 1 compiling all the data received and developing a final report for posting on the FHWA website. In 2008 a GS-13, Step 1 makes \$82,961 annually (\$40.00 hourly). It is estimated that it will take 60 hours to compile the data and develop a final report for a total cost to the Federal government of \$2,400.

15. Explanation of program changes or adjustments:

This request is for information purposes only, it will not result in any changes or adjustments to the FHWA noise program.

16. Publication of results of data collection:

The results of the data collection will be posed on the FHWA website.

17. Approval for not displaying the expiration date of OMB approval:

Not applicable.

18. Exceptions to certification statement:

None.