

OMB Supporting Statement

FHWA-Environmental Streamlining: Measuring the Performance of Stakeholders in the Transportation Project Development Process

This is to request the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) renewed three-year approved clearance for the information collection entitled, "FHWA-Environmental Streamlining: Measuring the Performance of Stakeholders in the Transportation Project Development Process" (OMB Control No. 2125-0591, which is currently due to expire on June 30, 2008).

Part A: Justification

1. Circumstances that make collection of information necessary
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This survey measures relationships and cooperation among intergovernmental agencies involved in the development and processing of environmental documentation and in the approval of Federal actions pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321-4347. In order to affect this project development process resource (environmental) and transportation agencies must engage in collaborative decision making to implement NEPA and to comply with all applicable environmental requirements.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has established and utilizes comprehensive project development procedures under the NEPA for projects that require the approval of the U.S. DOT. The Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has identified the improvement of the project environmental review process under NEPA as a "critical priority" for the administration, and the FHWA has been directed to work with its Federal and State partners to implement the goal of streamlining the project review process and improving the stewardship of environmental resources.

In fact, this survey is essential to the mission of the U.S. DOT and the Federal Highway Administration in that it relates to the U.S. DOT's current Strategic Plan, which articulates the transportation priorities of the President and the Secretary of Transportation. The Strategic Plan includes the following goal:

"Improve environmental decision making processes in order to expedite surface transportation projects while, at the same time, minimize their impact on the human and natural environment."

This proposed collection supports the DOT Strategic Goal related to the Human and Natural Environment because it supports efforts to improve decision making in the environmental review and approval process.

2. How, by whom, and for what purpose is the information used?
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The proposed survey is a continuation of previous OMB-approved information collections that were undertaken in 2002 and 2006. These previous surveys have provided a baseline of data with which later responses may be assessed.

How: The information was used by FHWA in three ways. 1) Workshops across the country were convened bringing together regional transportation and resource officials to discuss results and then, brainstorm how to improve them. Action plans were set in place between agencies and agreements were discussed. 2) A national web cast was conducted by FHWA in conjunction with transportation and resource agency partners to explain the study to NEPA practitioners and discuss results. 3) Each region received four measurement scorecards on how their region was doing. These scorecards were posted on the FHWA website showing results for both managers and NEPA practitioners among resource and transportation officials.

By Whom: The information was used by FHWA staff nation-wide, and by resource agencies that participated in the survey (including US Fish and Wildlife, the Army Corps of Engineers, and the Environmental Protection Agency). In addition, State department of transportations used the results to assess their performance (including New Hampshire, Vermont, and Maine).

What purpose: The purpose of gathering the information is to assess over time the performance of NEPA practitioners in their streamlining efforts. These efforts are grounded in cooperation and relational issues measured in the survey.

With the continuation of the information collection process, results will continue to be used for comparison purposes by the same stakeholder groups listed above. Additional workshops will be scheduled and additional debriefing sessions for the regions will ensue.

3. Extent of automated information collection

Data collection will occur by phone and by web. When respondents are called, they will be given the option of going to the web and conducting the survey via web if they so choose. In the last survey, approximately 8% of respondents (both transportation and resource) conducted the survey via the web. We expect the same amount of respondents to utilize the web in this survey as well.

4. Efforts to identify duplication

There is no duplication of information in existence.

5. Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses

No small businesses are included in this survey

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information

Conducting the survey on a less-frequent basis (more than a 2-year cycle) would tend to diminish the relevancy of the information collected.

7. Special circumstances

There are no special circumstances related to this survey.

8. Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.8

Notice in the Federal Register was published on March 28, 2008, in volume #73, no.61, on pg. 16738.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents

No payments or gifts are part of this survey.

10. Assurance of confidentiality

The Gallup Organization has a policy of confidentiality for participants in the survey that is made clear to the survey's respondents in the course of the questionnaire process. No names will be entered into the data collected as part of the survey. These procedures follow the Title V- Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act. This survey follows all the rules and regulations of this act.

11. Justification for collection of sensitive information

No sensitive information is being collected in this survey

12. Estimate of burden hours for information requested

Assuming a final total of 2000 respondents (1000 participants each from the transportation and resource sectors), and assuming an average of 15 minutes per survey, the total burden hours for information requested equals 500 hours.

13. Estimate of total annual costs to respondents

No costs are associated with this task for respondents

14. Estimate of cost to the Federal government

No cost has been established for a new edition of the information collection. The cost of the contract with the Gallup Organization for the 2006 survey amounted to \$419,305.

15. Explanation of program changes or adjustments

The previous approved burden hours for the first survey were 338 based on 675 respondents for a 30-minute survey. The program change for the second (2006) survey was to increase the number of respondents to 2,000 coupled with a 15 minutes per survey, for an annual burden of 500 hours. This was an increase of 162 annual burden hours. The average time to complete a survey was assumed to be 15 minutes. (The length of time to complete the questionnaire for the first survey averaged about 13 minutes per respondent, thus the previous estimate of 30 minutes was overstated). No further changes or adjustments are anticipated to be made for a third survey.

16. Publication of results of data collection

Results will be published on the FHWA website in the form of scorecards for each of the 10 Standard Federal regions. The final report will also be published on the website.

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

The OMB approval expiration date will be given to all survey respondents.

18. Exceptions to certification statement

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.