

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

JUSTIFICATION STATEMENT

JOB ACCESS AND REVERSE COMMUTE (JARC) PROGRAM

This justification statement is associated with a request for a revision of a currently approved information collection.

A. Justification

1. CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAKE THE COLLECTION NECESSARY.

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides financial assistance to States, local governments, private nonprofit organizations and public transportation authorities through 49 U.S.C. Section 5316, the Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) Program.

The provisions of Title 49 U.S.C. Section 5316, 49 C.F.R. Part 18, the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and local governments (the Common Grant Rule), and prudent administration of federal grant funds dictate that grantor agencies review applications for federal assistance to assure eligibility and other criteria, as appropriate, and monitor approved projects to ensure timely expenditure of federal funds by grant recipients. Information collected under this program is structured to comply with federal mandates. The reporting requirements are submitted by recipients in three stages: the application stage, the project management stage and the project evaluation stage.

Application Stage

FTA must determine the applicant's eligibility to receive program funds. FTA must know: a) who the applicant is; b) for what purpose the funds are requested and c) the amount of federal funds requested or needed. Applicants must submit:

- a. Authorizing Resolution. This information is necessary to assure FTA that the individuals involved represent the organization seeking federal assistance and are empowered to enter into contracts on the organization's behalf.
- b. Opinion of Counsel. This information ensures that the applicant has the legal capacity to carry out the project and that there is no outstanding litigation that would encumber the federal government upon project approval.

In addition, each application must include:

- a. Project Budget. FTA must know how much federal financial assistance is required, the amount and sources of local funds available for this project and the specific

elements and associated costs for each.

- b. Project Description. Federal funding is limited to certain categories of transit projects. The project description enables FTA to determine whether funding of the proposed project is allowable under federal transit law and the Common Grant Rule.
- c. Project Milestone Schedule. This document consists of milestone dates for major activities and an overall project completion date. Milestone dates are provided for such events as bid advertisement, bid award, and contract completion.
- d. List of Labor Unions. This document is used by the Department of Labor in making the certification of labor protective arrangements required for JARC grants.
- e. Environmental Exhibit. This documentation includes a proposed classification of each activity line item in accordance with FHWA/FTA Environmental Impact and Related Procedures, as required by 23 C.F.R. Parts 771.115 and 771.117. Most projects meet the criteria for a categorical exclusion. For each of these projects, proposed classifications and supporting documentation must be submitted. For those projects that do not meet the criteria for a categorical exclusion, an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement may need to be submitted as required by the National Environmental Policy Act.
- f. Public Hearing Notice Transcript. When a capital project under Section 5316 will have a substantial impact on a community or on the mass transit service of the community, grant applicants must provide an opportunity for a public hearing to obtain the views of citizens on the proposed project(s). Notices of a hearing must include a brief description of the proposed project(s) and be published in a newspaper circulated in the affected area. Section 5323(b) requires that when such a hearing is held that a transcript submission provides a record of the public's concerns to verify that the comments were taken into consideration during project development.
- g. Coordination Activities. In the application stage, grantees are required to provide information describing their coordinated transportation planning process and evidence of approval by their transit operators.

Annual Certifications and Assurances. Before FTA may award a federal grant, the applicant must provide FTA with all certifications and assurances required by federal laws and regulations for the applicant or project. A grant applicant must sign the appropriate certifications and assurances each year for all anticipated grant applications during that particular fiscal year.

Project Management Stage

The reporting requirements under this stage are necessary to ensure the proper and timely expenditure of federal funds within the scope of the approved project. The requirements comply with the Common Grant Rule and are contained in FTA Circular 5010.1B, and may also be included in sections of the grant contract. These reporting requirements are:

- a. Milestone/Progress Reports (QPR). These narrative reports are required quarterly for areas over 200,000 populations and annually for areas less than 200,000. They define problems, and milestone achievements are reported to FTA. The reports greatly reduce the need for on-site visits by staff.
- b. Financial Status Reports (FSRs). These quantitative reports are required quarterly for areas over 200,000 and annually for areas under 200,000. They provide a financial picture of project activity. The reports include information regarding obligations, payments, receipts, and other pertinent financial data required to ensure proper expenditure of federal funds.
- c. Reports of Significant Events. Unforeseen events that impact the schedule, cost, capacity, usefulness or purpose of the project should be reported to FTA immediately after detection and then reflected in the next quarterly progress or annual report.
- d. Pre-award and Post-delivery Rolling Stock Audits. The audits are required to be performed by FTA grantees purchasing rolling stock. These audits are intended to ensure compliance with various requirements, such as Buy America, and to detect any vehicle defects while the vehicle is under warranty. Grantees certify compliance with the audit requirements under the implementing rule that was published in September 1991.

Project Evaluation Stage

The reporting requirement under this stage is necessary to assess program effectiveness for the federal government in both the executive and congressional branches. This electronic database report is collected annually from grantees and provides information regarding how the project is performing in achieving national program objectives. Information is provided regarding 1) the actual or estimated number of jobs that can be accessed as a result of geographic or temporal coverage of JARC projects implemented in the current reporting year and 2) the actual or estimated number of rides provided as a result of the JARC projects implemented in the current reporting year. This information permits federal executive and congressional evaluation of the program.

2. HOW, BY WHOM, AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE THE INFORMATION IS TO BE USED AND CONSEQUENCES IF THE INFORMATION IS NOT COLLECTED.

The reports are submitted annually through an electronic data collection system. The information submitted ensures FTA's compliance with applicable federal laws and the Common Grant Rule. In addition, without these reports, significant resources and manpower would be necessary to conduct on-site inspections. Finally, the evaluation report permits an assessment of program effectiveness for the federal government in both the executive and congressional branches.

This information collection also satisfies the mobility goal in the Departmental Strategic Plan.

3. CONSIDERATION OF IMPROVED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY TO REDUCE BURDEN AND ANY TECHNICAL OR LEGAL OBSTACLES TO REDUCING BURDEN.

FTA's electronic grant making and management system is a paperless, electronic grant application, review, approval, acceptance and management process. All JARC grants and periodic reports are submitted electronically. Grantees also use the electronic system for signature of annual certifications and assurances.

4. DESCRIBE EFFORTS TO IDENTIFY DUPLICATION. SHOW SPECIFICALLY WHY ANY SIMILAR INFORMATION ALREADY AVAILABLE CANNOT BE USED OR MODIFIED FOR USE FOR THE PURPOSES DESCRIBED IN ITEM 2.

The reports are project specific and the information is not available elsewhere. There is no duplication.

5. METHODS USED TO MINIMIZE BURDEN ON SMALL BUSINESSES OR OTHER SMALL ENTITIES.

The information collected does not involve small business.

6. CONSEQUENCES TO FEDERAL PROGRAMS OR POLICY ACTIVITIES IF INFORMATION WAS NOT COLLECTED OR COLLECTED LESS FREQUENTLY, AS WELL AS ANY TECHNICAL OR LEGAL OBSTACLES TO REDUCING THE BURDEN.

If these and other reports were required less frequently, additional site visits by agency staff would be required to ensure compliance with program objectives. Additionally, the agency would not be able to effectively evaluate the program in accordance with the Government and Performance and Results Act.

7. SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT REQUIRE THE COLLECTION TO BE CONDUCTED IN A MANNER INCONSISTENT WITH 5 CFR 1320.6.

The information collected is consistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.6.

8. EFFORTS TO CONSULT WITH PERSONS OUTSIDE THE AGENCY TO OBTAIN THEIR VIEWS.

A 60-day Federal Register notice was published on August 29, 2011 (page 53712) soliciting comments prior to submission to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). No comments were received. A 30-day Federal Register notice (page 71120) was published on November 16, 2011.

9. EXPLAIN ANY DECISION TO PROVIDE ANY PAYMENT OR GIFT TO RESPONDENTS, OTHER THAN REMUNERATION OF CONTRACTORS OR GRANTEES.

No payment is made to respondents.

10. DESCRIBE ANY ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY PROVIDED RESPONDENTS.

There is no assurance of confidentiality regarding these submissions.

11. ADDITIONAL JUSTIFICATION FOR QUESTIONS OF A SENSITIVE NATURE.

None of the information is of a sensitive nature. Congress through the Government Accountability Office has required an evaluation of this program every six months and a formal written report annually.

12. ESTIMATE OF THE HOUR BURDEN OF THE COLLECTION AND ANNUALIZED COST TO RESPONDENTS.

<u>Requirements</u>	<u># of Annual Submissions</u>	<u>Burden hours per Submission</u>	<u>Total Burden hours</u>
<u>Application Stage</u> <i>(includes all of the following)</i>	274	49	13,426
Authorizing/Resolution			
Opinion of Counsel			
Project Description			
Project Budget			
Project Justification			
Public Hearing Notice			
Project Milestones			
List of Labor Unions			
Environmental Exhibit			
Completion of SF Form 424	274	1	(274)
Total			13,426
<u>Project Management Stage</u> <i>(includes all of the following)</i>	822	156	128,232
Progress Report			
Financial Status Report			
Cost Allocation Plans			
Total			128,232
<u>Annual Evaluation Report</u>	274	45	12,330
Total			12,330
Grand Total			153,988

All burden hour estimates are based on a comprehensive review of all the requirements associated with the program, discussions with appropriate headquarters and regional staff and discussions and informal surveys of respondents. The total annual respondent burden includes all respondents with active grants.

The total number of burden hours associated with this submission is 153,988 (13,426 hours application stage + 128,232 hours project management stage + 12,330 hours evaluation report). An additional 274 burden hours associated with the use of the Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS's) Standard Form 424 (grants.gov application form) is shown above (1 hour x 274 applications) for completion of the SF-424 application.

Estimate of the cost to respondents:

The number and complexity of applications submitted each year vary considerably and there is a wide variance in the level of effort required. A majority of applications are, however, simple and straightforward. The figures below are representative of a straightforward application meeting all of the criteria for federal funding.

We estimate that it takes approximately 49 person-hours to develop and submit an application to FTA for review. Since FTA expects to receive approximately 274 applications per year, the total hours required are estimated to be (49 hours x 274 applications = 13,426 hours.). Although various personnel are involved in the development of an application, the average salary is estimated to be \$33 per hour. Therefore, the cost to the respondents is computed at \$443,058 (13,426 hours x \$33 = \$443,058).

Project Management Stage:

Staff time devoted to the preparation of project management reports is approximately 156 hours per report at an average salary of \$30 per hour. There are 822 reports annually. Therefore, the cost is estimated to be \$3,846,960 (156 hours x 822 reports x \$30 = \$3,846,960).

Evaluation Stage:

Staff time devoted to the preparation of evaluation reports is approximately 45 hours per report at an average salary of \$30 per hour. There are 274 reports annually. Therefore, the cost is estimated to be \$369,900 (45 hours. x 274 reports x \$30 = \$369,900).

The grand total cost to the respondents for the application, program management and evaluation stage is \$4,659,918 (\$443,058 + \$3,846,960 + \$369,900 = \$4,659,918).

13. ESTIMATE OF TOTAL ANNUAL COST BURDEN TO RESPONDENTS OR RECORDKEEPERS RESULTING FROM THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION (NOT INCLUDING THE COST OF ANY HOUR BURDEN SHOWN IN ITEMS 12 AND 14).

There is no additional cost beyond that shown in items 12 and 14.

14. ESTIMATE OF THE ANNUALIZED COST TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT.

The cost is calculated as follows:

Application Stage:

Experience indicates that it takes approximately 14 person-hours to review each application received by FTA. It should be noted that this figure assumes that the application is: 1) complete, 2) fundable and 3) non-controversial. More complex projects or programs of projects would consume additional time.

Although reviewed by several different staffers, from secretaries to the Regional Administrator, FTA estimates that the average grade level of the reviewers is GS-12, paid \$40 per hour. Since FTA expects to receive and review approximately 274 applications per year, the cost to the federal government is \$153,440 (14 hours x 274 applications = 3,836 hours x \$40 = \$153,440).

Project Management Stage:

Individuals managing projects throughout FTA vary from GS-9 to GS-14; however, in looking at the averages it can take a GS-13 (average salary, \$42 per hour) about ½ hour to review each report. There are approximately 822 projects requiring review annually. The cost to the federal government is \$17,262 (1/2 hr. x 822 submissions = 411 hours x \$42 = \$17,262).

Annual Evaluation Stage:

Grantee performance information is submitted annually (electronically). This information is summarized by FTA staff or a contractor and posted for the public. FTA estimates that one staff person at the GS-13 level (average salary, \$42 per hour) will devote approximately 481 hours to this task, totaling \$20,202 (481 hours x \$42 per hour = \$20,202).

The total cost to the federal government is \$190,904 (\$153,440 + \$17,262 + 20,202).

15. EXPLAIN REASONS FOR CHANGES IN BURDEN, INCLUDING THE NEED FOR ANY INCREASES.

The burden increased from 122,374 hours in the previous request to 153,988 hours for this request, representing an increase of 31,614 hours. The increase is due to a change in the program from a discretionary to a formula program. This programmatic change also has resulted in an increase in the number of entities that submit applications and project management reports.

16. PLANS FOR TABULATION AND PUBLICATION FOR COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION WHOSE RESULTS WILL BE PUBLISHED.

FTA plans to publish the results of the information collected for use by grantees.

17. IF SEEKING APPROVAL NOT TO DISPLAY THE EXPIRATION DATE FOR OMB APPROVAL, EXPLAIN THE REASONS.

There is no reason not to display the expiration date of OMB approval.

18. EXPLAIN ANY EXCEPTIONS TO THE CERTIFICATION STATEMENT IDENTIFIED IN ITEM 19 OF OMB FORM 83-I.

No exceptions are stated.