

The Supporting Statement

Environmental Excellence Awards

Introduction:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has established the biennial Environmental Excellence Awards to recognize partners, projects, and processes across the United States that use FHWA funding sources to go beyond environmental compliance and achieve environmental excellence. Awardees must make an outstanding contribution that goes beyond traditional transportation projects and encourages environmental stewardship and partnerships to achieve a truly multi-faceted, environmentally sensitive transportation solution.

Part A. Justification.

1. Circumstances that make collection of information necessary:

Information collection for FHWA's Environmental Excellence Awards supports the agency's mission to "improve mobility on our Nation's highways through national leadership, innovation, and program delivery."¹ The Environmental Excellence Awards Program recognizes outstanding initiatives and partnerships across the United States that incorporate environmental stewardship into the planning and project development processes using FHWA funding sources. The Program encourages the sharing of these innovative practices to achieve FHWA's mission, to increase awareness of these successes, and to share best practices.

The Environmental Excellence Awards Program categorizes award recipients and nominations under the following topic areas: Air Quality Improvement and Global Climate Change; America's Byways®; Context Sensitive Solutions; Cultural and Historical Resources; Ecosystems, Habitat, and Wildlife; Environmental Leadership; Environmental Research; Environmental Streamlining; Nonmotorized Transportation; Recycling and Reuse; Roadside Resource Management and Maintenance; and Wetlands, Watersheds, and Water Quality. These categories help transportation stakeholders obtain information about the selected projects so that they can learn more about the projects and potentially bring these examples or similar efforts into their own agency practices.

Information collection for FHWA's Environmental Excellence Awards also supports the U.S. Department of Transportation's Environmental Sustainability Strategic Goal. This goal promotes policies that protect and enhance natural resources and promote environmentally-friendly methods to support more energy-efficient transportation systems. The Environmental Excellence Awards Program highlights projects that reflect this goal in their processes and results.

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

The Environmental Excellence Awards Program is a biennial awards program sponsored by FHWA that recognizes partners, projects, and processes across the United States that use FHWA funding to support initiatives that go beyond traditional environmental compliance requirements and encourage a more comprehensive approach to environmental considerations. FHWA accepts nominations for any project, process, group, or individuals involved in a project or process that has used FHWA funding sources to make an outstanding contribution to transportation and the environment. Anyone may submit a nomination. An independent panel of judges with various backgrounds, disciplines, and expertise review the applications and select the winning entries. Award recipients are recognized at a ceremony organized by FHWA. Information

¹ FHWA Mission: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/about/vmcv.cfm>

about the awards recipients will be available on FHWA's Environmental Excellence Awards website.

The purpose of the Environmental Excellence Awards Program is to honor projects that encourage environmental stewardship and partnerships to achieve comprehensive, environmentally-sensitive solutions to transportation issues. These innovative projects include those that support the use of renewable energy sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, preserve historical and cultural sites while improving transportation infrastructure across the country, and involve partners to consider ecological issues early in the transportation planning process and thereby streamline the environmental review process. The Program is open to nominations by any individual or agency in recognition that innovative work that supports environmental stewardship and streamlining occurs across all levels of staffing and agencies.

The recipients of the Environmental Excellence Awards demonstrate strong commitments to environmentally-sensitive solutions and to integrating environmental considerations into transportation and infrastructure projects. These recipients serve as effective examples for other agencies or individuals looking to promote environmental excellence in their work. The Environmental Excellence Awards Program exemplifies FHWA's mission to support innovation and program delivery. The Program brings together a collection of current efforts across the country that demonstrates a commitment to the environment and shares these efforts with the public and with other agencies and stakeholders to encourage future innovative methods. The data gathered and information collected as part of the Environmental Excellence Awards Program identifies outstanding efforts occurring nationwide that go beyond traditional transportation practices and demonstrate environmental excellence to showcase these examples as best practices and products for other practitioners and interested parties.

3. Extent of automated information collection:

The Environmental Excellence Awards Program supports the use of an on-line submission form that will be available via the FHWA Environmental Review website. This submission form will allow prospective applicants to nominate individuals, projects, or processes. FHWA expects the estimated completion of each application by respondents to be approximately eight hours. All information is to be submitted electronically. Supporting documentation is optional. If, for any reason, the electronic submittal of entries is not possible, faxed and mailed copies are acceptable.

4. Efforts to identify duplication:

The biennial Environmental Excellence Awards Program facilitates the submittal of current practices that go beyond traditional transportation projects and encourage environmental stewardship and partnerships. The Environmental Excellence Awards is unique among Federal awards programs, as it places a significant emphasis on the environment and on the ways that initiatives protect and enhance the environment while, at the same time, build partnerships, address environmental challenges through innovative solutions, and encourage interagency coordination.

5. Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses:

There will be no burden on small business. FHWA intends for an electronic application and submission process. No special equipment is required to apply. The completion and submission of applications for the Environmental Excellence Awards will take place on-line via an FHWA secure website (currently under development).

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information:

The biennial Environmental Excellence Awards Program facilitates the submittal of current, innovative practices. If the program were less frequent, FHWA may miss opportunities to highlight significant partners, projects, or processes that use FHWA funding sources to achieve environmental excellence.

7. Special circumstances:

There are no special circumstances associated with this information collection.

8. Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.8:

The proposed information collection 60-day notices is published in the Federal Register as follows: Federal Register / Vol. 77, No. 21, June 22, 2012. No comments were received during the 60-day period.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents:

There are no payments of gifts being offered to respondents as part of this information collection effort.

10. Assurance of confidentiality:

We do not assure any confidentiality of responses to this information collection effort.

11. Justification for collection of sensitive information:

We are not collecting any sensitive information as part of this information collection effort.

12. Estimate of burden hours for information requested:

FHWA anticipates that it will take 8 hours per respondent per application to complete each of the 150 Environmental Excellence Award nomination applications that will be submitted biennially. Total biennial hours = 1,200 hours.

The first collection is planned for the winter of 2012, with another collection during the winter of 2014.

13. Estimate of total annual costs to respondents:

There are no capital/start-up or operation/maintenance costs associated with this effort.

14. Estimate of cost to the Federal government:

FHWA does not anticipate any additional costs outside of federal employee salaries. The projected cost estimate for the Federal government salaries are \$14,926.08. This cost estimate assumes a GS-12 hourly staff salary of \$35.88 and 416 hours (2,080 * 20% Staff Time) every other year dedicated to reviewing, processing, and managing the Environmental Excellence Awards Program.

15. Explanation of program changes or adjustments:

This is a new information collection effort.

16. Publication of results of data collection:

FHWA will publish the results of the Environmental Excellence Awards on its Environmental Excellence Awards website. FHWA will also produce a document that recognizes the recipients and describes the partners, projects, and processes that were selected as winners. Winners will also be announced and recognized at an awards ceremony.

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

Approval for not displaying the expiration date is not being requested.

18. Exceptions to certification statement:

No exceptions to the certification statement are being requested.