



ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICAN RAILROADS

Sarah G. Yurasko
Assistant General Counsel

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Via email to: oira_submissions@omb.eop.gov

Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20503
Attention: FRA Desk Officer

Re: FRA Work Force Development Survey; OMB Control Number 2130-NEW

Dear FRA Desk Officer:

The Association of American Railroads (“AAR”), on behalf of itself and its member railroads, submits the following comments in response to the Federal Railroad Administration’s (“FRA”) Information Collection Request (“ICR”) to collect information on the current workforce in the form of a Workforce Development (“WFD”) Survey.¹ AAR is a trade association whose membership includes freight railroads who employ 95 percent of the workers of all railroads in the United States, who will therefore be impacted by this ICR.

In 2011, the Federal Railroad Administration (“FRA”) Office of Research, Development, and Technology (“RD&T”) published the first edition of the “Railroad Industry Modal Profile: An Outline of the Railroad Industry Workforce Trends, Challenges, and Opportunities” (“Modal Profile”) in response to the DOT National Transportation Workforce Initiative. The profile provided an assessment of the railroad workforce and identified workforce challenges facing the industry at that time, including a focus on the risk in maintaining a viable workforce considering the anticipated rates of attrition in the rail industry. FRA claims that to validate and further develop the understanding of the risks identified in 2011, this WFD survey is being proposed.

In the survey’s overview, FRA claims that “it is critical that systems and processes to recruit, train and retain a railroad industry workforce are developed, shared and implemented to support the ever-changing needs of the industry.” Although AAR and its member railroads are dedicated to recruiting, training, and retaining a highly-skilled workforce, we disagree with the timing of this proposed survey.

¹ See 82 Fed. Reg. 34,569 (July 25, 2017).

Since the publication of the Modal Profile, FRA published a final rule on November 7, 2014, establishing 49 CFR Part 243, Training, Qualifications, and Oversight for Safety-Related Railroad Employees.² This Part requires each railroad or contractor that employs one or more safety-related railroad employees to develop and submit a training program to FRA for approval and to designate the minimum training qualifications for each occupational category of employee. The rule also requires most employers to conduct periodic oversight of their employees and develop annual written reviews of their training programs to close performance gaps. Under Part 243, railroads are not required to submit their training plans to FRA until January 1, 2019, at the earliest.³

Given the number of questions in the proposed survey that address the training needs of railroad employees, FRA should wait until after the railroads have submitted their training programs pursuant to Part 243. Indeed, many railroads are currently in the midst of developing their training programs pursuant to the regulatory requirements. To accurately gage whether the industry adequately provides for the training of its employees, this survey should not be conducted until after FRA has had a chance to review the railroads' Part 243 training programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this ICR.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Yurasko". The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

Sarah Yurasko

² See 79 Fed. Reg. 66,459 (Nov. 7, 2014).

³ See 82 Fed. Reg. 20,549 (May 3, 2017).