

The Supporting Statement

Introduction:

Local Public Agencies Training and Technical Assistance Needs Assessment

Part A. Justification.

1. Circumstances that make collection of information necessary:

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is charged with implementing a local technical assistance program under 23 U.S.C. § 504 (b). Congress recognized that training and technical assistance for local public agencies (LPA) managing transportation assets was necessary and created the Rural Technical Assistance Program (RTAP) in 1982. In 1991, through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) legislation, this program became the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP). The program began as a 10 Center pilot and is currently a program of 51 LTAP Centers across the US – one in every State and one in PR / USVI.

The program supports the US DOT strategic priority areas by providing technical assistance, resources, guidelines and training to local public agencies seeking to develop or expand highway expertise in the design and implementation of roadway infrastructure improvements. The program also promotes the latest innovative tools, technologies and countermeasures as part of the Every Day Counts (EDC) initiative.

In 2016, FHWA began reassessing the current program to better meet the needs of the local public agencies, ensure the LTAP structure, operations and services align with emerging agency priorities and expand the local agency customer base. This process has identified the lack of consistent, verifiable and valid program data that directly links the training provided to program delivery improvements and the adoption of innovation. To meet these challenges, the Agency requires both raw data and direct feedback on current and anticipated service needs from the local public agencies that access LTAP services. FHWA in turn will use this information to identify program services and implement program changes that are focused, aligned and accountable to LTAP customers.

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

This information will be used by FHWA to better assess the training and technical assistance needs of local transportation agencies. Information will be collected by FHWA from broad population of local public agency workforce. These practitioners, such as directors of public works, road superintendents, engineers and road maintenance workers will represent the mission-critical knowledge, skills and experience of the 39,000 local governments that own and operate about 85 percent, or roughly 3.5 million miles, of our Nation's highway network. The survey will pose pertinent questions to this cohort to determine technical assistance and training needs of their agencies and how well the current LTAP operating structure fulfills those needs. The results gleaned from the data collected will directly inform FHWA on needed programmatic, strategic and operational decisions. FHWA will perform an in-depth analysis of the information collected, compare to current program performance data to gauge the effectiveness of the program and identify gaps in program capabilities. Additionally, this data will allow FHWA to prioritize the implementation of these efforts by identifying areas of high customer demand.

3. Extent of automated information collection:

FHWA will use its existing web-based SurveyMonkey tool to collect the data and expects all responses (100%) to be submitted through the Survey Monkey interface. The survey will be conducted once over a 30-day period.

The Survey Monkey tool collects, processes and stores the information collected on behalf of FHWA. The service also provides back-end analytical tools that allow FHWA to generate user-defined reports, charts and graphs. These capabilities significantly reduce the logistical, management and analytical burdens on FHWA staff.

Based on typical survey response rates, it is estimated that there will be approximately 7,800 respondents (20%) who will each require an average of 30 minutes to respond. The total annual public burden hours for this information collection is estimated to be 3900 hours.

4. Efforts to identify duplication:

The data set described in this proposal does not exist. FHWA has not undertaken a comprehensive, structured survey of local agencies and their needs in the LTAP service space.

5. Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses:

This information collection targets local government agencies. While it is possible that some small businesses are on the mailing list of potential respondents, it would be due to their role as service providers on behalf of state, local and rural governments.

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information:

This important information-gathering is a first step that lays the foundation for the entire process to strategically align the needs of the local public agencies to transportation priorities. This information collection effort has never been undertaken. Future surveys maybe needed in 4-5 years to refresh the strategic plan, but not requested at this time.

7. Special circumstances:

No special circumstances apply to this proposal.

8. Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.8:

Both 60 and 30 day notices were published on May 30, 2017 (82/102) and August 28, 2017 (82/165 respectively to solicit public comment on FHWA's intent to collect this information. No public comments were received.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents:

No payments or gifts to respondents will be offered to respondents to participate in this proposed survey.

10. Assurance of confidentiality:

As these surveys are designed solely to collect program-related information, no sensitive, personal questions will be posed, nor will PII be collected from respondents. Accordingly, an assurance of confidentiality is not necessary.

11. Justification for collection of sensitive information:

No sensitive information will be collected.

12. Estimate of burden hours for information requested:

There are more than 39,000 local public agencies that manage highway infrastructure. Based on industry norms, we do not anticipate a response rate greater than industry averages of approximately 20%. This average would result in a response rate of approximately 7800. It is estimated that the survey will take the average respondent approximately 30 minutes to complete for an estimated 3900 burden hours.

The median earnings for a Public Works Director comes to \$76,000 per year or \$37.50 per hour. The total burdened cost for the information collection is estimated at \$146,250.

This information is from Payscale.com

Figures cited in their summary are based on replies to PayScale's salary questionnaire.

https://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Public_Works_Director/Salary

13. Estimate of total annual costs to respondents:

There is no annual cost to the respondents for the proposed activity.

14. Estimate of cost to the Federal government:

The total salary costs to prepare the on-line collection and analysis is estimated at approximately \$10,000.

15. Explanation of program changes or adjustments:

This is a new information collection.

16. Publication of results of data collection:

An executive summary of the information collection will be published as supporting information in the program's strategic plan. It is estimated that the strategic plan will be published in the Spring of 2018.

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

FHWA is not requesting approval to not display the expiration date.

18. Exceptions to certification statement:

FHWA is not asking for an exception to the certification statement.