

BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION STATISTICS  
OMB CLEARANCE PACKAGE

For  
CLEARANCE TO UPDATE THE NATIONAL FERRY  
CENSUS QUESTIONNAIRE

National Census of Ferry Operators  
(OMB Control Number - 2139-0009)

Prepared by  
Office of Data Development and Standards  
Bureau of Transportation Statistics  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology

May 23, 2019

## **Table of Contents**

### **A. JUSTIFICATION**

1. Need for the Information Collection
2. Use of Information
3. Use of Improved Information Technology
4. Efforts to Avoid Duplication
5. Methods Used to Minimize Burden on Small Entities
6. Consequences of Not Collecting the Information
7. Special Circumstances
8. Agency 60-Day Federal Register Notice and Consultations Outside the Agency
9. Payment to Respondents
10. Assurance of Confidentiality
11. Sensitive Questions
12. Estimates of Response Burden and Annual Cost to Respondents
13. Estimates of Cost Burden for Collection of Information.
14. Estimates of Annual Cost to the Federal Government.
15. Changes in Burden
16. Publication Plans/Time Schedule
17. Approval Not to Display Expiration Date
18. Exceptions to the Certification Statement

### **B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS**

1. Description of Activity
2. Procedures for the Collection of Information
3. Non-response, Maximization of Response Rates, Accuracy and Reliability
4. Test of Procedures
5. Personnel/Organizations Responsible for Design, Collection, or Analysis of the Information

Attachment I: The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) (P.L. 105-178), section 1207(c)

Attachment II: The Safe, Accountable, Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) Public Law 109-59, Section 1801(e)

Attachment III: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (P.L. 112-141)

Attachment IV: Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) Public Law 114-94, Section 1112

Attachment V: TITLE 5 United States Code 552(b)(4)

Attachment VI: TITLE 18 United States Code 1905

Attachment VII: 60- Day Ferry Federal Register Notice

Attachment VIII: 30- Day Ferry Federal Register Notice

Attachment IX: Title 49 C.F.R. 7.17

Attachment X: 2020 NCFO Cover Letter

Attachment XI: 2020 NCFO Questionnaire (draft) including the ICR statement

## B. COLLECTION OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

**1. Describe (including a numerical estimate) the potential respondent universe and any sampling or other respondent selection methods to be used. Indicate expected response rates for the collection as a whole. If the collection had been conducted previously, include the actual response rate achieved during the last collection.**

This survey will be a census of all known ferry boat operators within the United States. Current enumerations have provided an estimate of 250 operators. All known ferry operators will be encouraged to participate. Since this is a census of establishments, each ferry operator will be asked to select the person or persons who are most knowledgeable about the operation to complete the questionnaire.

The following table represents response rates for the National Census of Ferry Operators (NCFO) data collection.

Table 1: NCFO Response Rates

SURVEY YEAR	RESPONSE RATE
2006	89%
2008	88%
2010	84%
2014	60%
2016	71%
2018	81%

Respondents to the survey who are eligible for funding are more likely to complete the survey as shown in Table 2. Ninety-five percent of those eligible for funding respond to the survey, compared to 19% who are not eligible for funding and did respond.

Table 2: NCFO 2018 Operators by Public Funding Eligibility

	Eligible	Not Eligible	Total
Response	184 (95%)	9 (19%)	193 (81%)
Non-response	5 (5%)	39 (81%)	44 (19%)
Total	189 (100%)	48 (100%)	237 (100%)

**2. Describe the procedures for the collection of information including: statistical methodology for stratification and sample selection, estimation procedure, degree of accuracy needed for the purpose described in the justification, unusual problems requiring**

**specialized sampling procedures, and any use of periodic (less frequent than annual) data collection cycles to reduce burden.**

As the NCFO is a census of all known ferry operations in the United States, no sampling or stratification procedures will be employed. All operations will be asked to participate. Given the difference in operating cycles among operations (some only operate seasonally), it is estimated that the data collection period for this survey will last up to 6 months. This will allow responses to be received from ferry companies that do not operate year round. As previously noted, statute requires that the census data be updated every two years.

**3. Describe methods to maximize response rates and to deal with issues of non-response. The accuracy and reliability of information collected must be shown to be adequate for intended uses. For collections based on sampling, a special justification must be provided for any collection that will not yield "reliable" data that can be generalized to the universe studied.**

Techniques used to maximize response rates will include the use of an advance letter to inform operators about the census as well as articles in industry related publications, announcements at conferences, a notification banner on the NCFO website, a toll-free number for respondents to call if they have questions about the survey, as well as an email address. Telephone follow-up will also be used as needed to increase response rate.

In 2010, the questionnaire was also made available online to decrease respondent burden and simplify the data collection process. This resulted in a cooperation rate of about 84%. A web based questionnaire was also used in 2018, in addition to a paper questionnaire option. This resulted in a response rate of 81%. These census years achieved amongst the highest response rates in the history of the census. In 2020, a web based 2018 questionnaire will be used with some additional improvements to decrease burden and maximize response.

**4. Describe any tests of procedures or methods to be undertaken. Testing is encouraged as an effective means of refining collections of information to minimize burden and improve utility.**

The content of the survey was established by the legislation requiring the data collection. The survey was modified and reviewed by the Office of Data Development and Standards using feedback from a number of United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) staff affiliated with the 2010, 2014, 2016, and 2018 studies. The national ferry database questionnaire was reviewed by staff within the Maritime Administration (MARAD), FHWA, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Ferry Committee, and the Passenger Vessel Association (PVA). There are no experimental conditions built into the NCFO data collection itself. To ensure that the NCFO is consistent with the National Transit Database (NTD), a review of NTD and the forms used to collect the data were reviewed. Where appropriate, items were revised within the NCFO questionnaire to maximize content validity and constructability.

**5. Provide the name and telephone number of individuals consulted on statistical aspects of the design and the name of the agency unit, contractor(s), grantee(s), or other person(s) who will actually collect and/or analyze the information for the agency.**

The data entry and follow up phoning will be conducted by BTS. The questionnaire design specifications, specifications for data collection, questionnaire content, and data production are under the supervision of BTS. BTS is solely responsible for the review of the final survey questionnaire, data, and technical documentation. The points-of-contact at BTS are:

Janine McFadden  
[janine.mcfadden@dot.gov](mailto:janine.mcfadden@dot.gov)  
202-366-2468

Mike Sprung  
[michael.sprung@dot.gov](mailto:michael.sprung@dot.gov)  
202-366-9047

Both are located at:  
Department of Transportation  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology  
Bureau of Transportation Statistics  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590