

**Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration**

**Supporting Statement A for
Paperwork Reduction Act Generic Information Collection Submissions for “Generic
Clearance for the Collection of Qualitative Feedback on Agency Service Delivery”**

Introduction: FHWA seeks the Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) approval to reinstate a previously approved information collection (OMB Control Number: 2125-0628) for generic clearance for qualitative feedback on agency service delivery. This collection of information is necessary to enable the Agency to garner customer and stakeholder feedback in an efficient, timely manner, in accordance with our commitment to improving service delivery. The information collected from our customers and stakeholders is achieved through voluntary surveys and will help ensure that users have an effective, efficient, and satisfying experience with the Agency’s programs. Our customers and stakeholders range from individuals and households, businesses, organizations, and State and local governments. This information collection request is for a reinstatement and increased the burden hours to 3,750 and the cost to \$338,530.

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

Executive Order 12862 directs Federal agencies to provide service to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector. In order to work continuously to ensure that our programs are effective and meet our customers’ needs, The Federal Highway Administration (hereafter “the Agency”) seeks to obtain OMB approval of a generic clearance to collect qualitative feedback on our service delivery. By qualitative feedback we mean information that provides useful insights on perceptions and opinions but are not statistical surveys that yield quantitative results that can be generalized to the population of study.

This collection of information is necessary to enable the Agency to garner customer and stakeholder feedback in an efficient, timely manner, in accordance with our commitment to improving service delivery. The information collected from our customers and stakeholders will help ensure that users have an effective, efficient, and satisfying experience with the Agency’s programs. This feedback will provide insights into customer or stakeholder perceptions, experiences, and expectations, provide an early warning of issues with service, or focus attention on areas where communication, training or changes in operations might improve delivery of products or services. These collections will allow for ongoing, collaborative, and actionable communications between the Agency and its customers and stakeholders. It will also allow feedback to contribute directly to the improvement of program management.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

Improving agency programs requires ongoing assessment of service delivery -- systematic review of the operation of a program compared to a set of explicit or implicit standards -- as a means of

contributing to the continuous improvement of those programs. The Agency will collect, analyze, and interpret information gathered through this generic clearance to identify strengths and weaknesses of current services and make improvements in service delivery based on that feedback. The solicitation of feedback will target areas such as: timeliness, appropriateness, accuracy of information, courtesy, efficiency of service delivery, and resolution of issues with service delivery. Responses will be assessed to plan and inform efforts to improve or maintain the quality of service offered to the public. If this information were not collected, vital feedback from customers and stakeholders on the Agency's services would be unavailable and the Agency would not know if adjustments would be warranted.

The Agency will only submit a collection for approval under this generic clearance if it meets the following conditions:

- Information gathered will be used only internally for general service improvement and program management purposes and is not intended for release outside of the agency (if released, procedures outlined in Question 16 will be followed);
- Information gathered will not be used for the purpose of substantially informing influential policy decisions ¹;
- Information gathered will yield qualitative information; the collections will not be designed or expected to yield statistically reliable results or used as though the results are generalizable to the population of a study;
- The collection is voluntary;
- The collection is low-burden for respondents (based on considerations of total burden hours, total number of respondents, or burden-hours per respondent) and is low-cost for both the respondents and the Federal Government;
- The collection is non-controversial and does not raise issues of concern to other Federal agencies;
- The collection is targeted to the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the near future; and
- With the exception of information needed to provide remuneration for participants of focus groups and cognitive laboratory studies, personally identifiable information (PII) is collected only to the extent necessary and is not retained.

If these conditions are not met, the Agency will submit an information collection request to OMB for approval through the normal PRA process.

To obtain approval for a collection that meets the conditions of this generic clearance, a standardized form will be submitted to OMB along with supporting documentation (e.g., a copy of the comment card). The submission will have automatic approval unless OMB identifies issues within 5 business days.

The types of collections that this generic clearance covers include, but are not limited to:

- Customer comment cards/complaint forms

¹ As defined in OMB and agency Information Quality Guidelines, "influential" means that "an agency can reasonably determine that dissemination of the information will have or does have a clear and substantial impact on important public policies or important private sector decisions."

- Small discussion groups
- Focus Groups of customers, potential customers, delivery partners, or other stakeholders
- Cognitive laboratory studies, such as those used to refine questions or assess usability of a website;
- Qualitative customer satisfaction surveys (e.g., post-transaction surveys; opt-out web surveys)
- In-person observation testing (e.g., website or software usability tests)

The Agency has established a manager/managing entity to serve for this generic clearance and will conduct an independent review of each information collection to ensure compliance with the terms of this clearance prior to submitting each collection to OMB.

3. Consideration Given to Information Technology

If appropriate, agencies will collect information electronically and/or use online collaboration tools to reduce burden.

4. Duplication of Information

No similar data are gathered or maintained by the Agency or are available from other sources known to the Agency.

5. Reducing the Burden on Small Entities

Small business or other small entities may be involved in these efforts, but the Agency will minimize the burden on them of information collections approved under this clearance by sampling, asking for readily available information, and using short, easy-to-complete information collection instruments.

6. Consequences of Not Conducting Collection

Without these types of feedback, the Agency will not have timely information to adjust its services to meet customer needs.

7. Special Circumstances

There are no special circumstances. The information collected will be voluntary and will not be used for statistical purposes.

8. Consultations with Persons Outside the Agency

The 60-day notice for public comment was published on March 27, 2024 [89 FR 21405]. There were no comments received.

The FHWA published a 30-day notice in the Federal Register on June 3, 2024 [89 FR 47682] to announce that this ICR would be submitted to OMB for approval and request comments from the public for 30-days.

9. Payment or Gift

The Agency will not provide payment or other forms of remuneration to respondents of its various forms of collecting feedback. Focus groups and cognitive laboratory studies are the exceptions.

In the case of in-person cognitive laboratory and usability studies, the Agency may provide stipends of up to \$50. In the case of in-person focus groups, the Agency may provide stipends of up to \$100. If respondents participate in these kinds of studies remotely, via phone, or Internet, any proposed stipend needs to be justified to OMB and must be considerably less than that provided to respondents in in-person studies, who have to travel to the agency or other facility to participate. If such information collections include hard-to-reach groups and the agency plans to offer non-standard stipends, the Agency will provide OMB with additional justifications in the request for clearance of these specific activities.

10. Confidentiality

If a confidentiality pledge is deemed useful and feasible, the Agency will only include a pledge of confidentiality that is supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, and that does not unnecessarily impede sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use. If the agency includes a pledge of confidentiality, it will include a citation for the statute or regulation supporting the pledge.

11. Sensitive Nature

No questions will be asked that are of a personal or sensitive nature.

12. Burden of Information Collection

A variety of instruments and platforms will be used to collect information from respondents. The annual burden hours requested (3750 hours) are based on the number of collections we expect to conduct over the requested period for this clearance. It is anticipated that each Program Office within FHWA will conduct at least one collection of qualitative feedback on FHWA service delivery each year, estimated to take no more than 15 minutes per respondent. Therefore, based on the estimated number of respondents (1000 each), the total hours equate to 250 hours per occurrence (1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 250 hours).

It is recognized that a Program Office within FHWA may choose to conduct more than one collection of qualitative feedback on FHWA service delivery. In that instance, it is expected that particular collection would require less burden hours to complete (see example below).

Program Office collection example:

Collection #1 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #2 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #3 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #4 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #5 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #6 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #7 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #8 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #9 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #10 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #11 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #12 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #13 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #14 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #15 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Collection #16 1000 respondents x 15 minutes per response = 15000 minutes (250 hours)
Total Program Office collection would equate to 15000 respondents x 15 minutes = 225,000 minutes = 3750 hours total.

Estimated Annual Reporting Burden				
Type of Collection	No. of Respondents	Annual Frequency per Response	Hours per Response	Total Hours
1. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of the Administrator	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
2. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Administration	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
3. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Chief Counsel	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
4. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Chief Financial Officer	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
5. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Civil Rights	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours

Estimated Annual Reporting Burden				
6. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Federal Lands Highway	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
7. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Policy and Governmental Affairs	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
8. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Public Affairs	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
9. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Research, Development, and Technology	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
10. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Safety	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
11. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Innovation & Workforce Solutions	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
12. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Intelligent Transportation Systems	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
13. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Infrastructure	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
14. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Operations	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
15. Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery for the Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty	1000	Annual, periodically	15 minutes	250 hours
ANNUAL TOTAL (estimated)	15000		15 minutes	3750 hours

13. Costs to Respondents

Participation in this collection is voluntary, and there are no costs to respondents beyond the time spent participating in the surveys.

14. Costs to Federal Government

The anticipated cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$338,530.00 annually. It is estimated that two employees and one contract support will spend a total of 2,300 hours annually recording, assimilating, analyzing, and reporting information submitted with each survey. Therefore, given the estimated hourly salary and benefit costs for each employee, the cost to the Government is estimated as follows:

Estimated Federal Government and Contractors Labor Costs

Staff	Wage + Overhead	Time (h)	Total Cost
GS-14 (Step 10)	\$82.10 ²	250	\$20,525.00
GS-13 (Step 10)	\$72.02 ³	250	\$18,005.00
Contract Support	\$200.00	1500	\$300,000.00
Total	--	2000	\$338,530.00

15. Reason for Change

This information collection request is for a reinstatement and increases the total burden to 3,750 hours and decreases the cost to \$338,530. The burden hours and costs changed from the last request due to the one-time collections no longer needed and added new collections.

16. Tabulation of Results, Schedule, Analysis Plans

Feedback collected under this generic clearance provides useful information, but it does not yield data that can be generalized to the overall population. Findings will be used for general service improvement but are not for publication or other public release.

Although the Agency does not intend to publish its findings, the Agency may receive requests to release the information (e.g., congressional inquiry, Freedom of Information Act requests). The Agency will disseminate the findings when appropriate, strictly following the Agency's "Guidelines for Ensuring the Quality of Information Disseminated to the Public." and will include specific discussion of the limitation of the qualitative results discussed above.

17. Display of OMB Approval Date

We are requesting no exemption.

18. Exceptions to Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions

These activities comply with the requirements in 5 CFR 1320.9.

² [Employer Costs for Employee Compensation – December 2023 \(bls.gov\)](https://www.bls.gov/charts/employee-costs/december-2023/)

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