

**Supporting Statement for Form SSA-671  
Railroad Employment Questionnaire  
20 CFR 404.1401, 404.1406-404.1408  
OMB No. 0960-0078**

**A. Justification**

**1. Introduction/Authoring Laws and Regulations**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) needs specific information to coordinate benefit distribution with the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). Section 205(o) of the *Social Security Act (Act)* provides the criteria for use of railroad compensation to determine Social Security benefit entitlement. Section 20 CFR 404.1401 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* describes the relationship between the *Act* and the *Railroad Retirement Act*, and the coordination of benefits provided to railroad workers, their dependents, and survivors. Section 20 CFR 404.1406-404.1408 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* describes the circumstances under which SSA may pay Social Security benefits to a railroad employee, and when SSA can consider railroad industry wages for our own purposes.

**2. Description of Collection**

Railroad workers, their dependents, or survivors can concurrently apply for railroad retirement and Social Security benefits at SSA if the number holder, or claimant on the number holder's Social Security number, worked in the railroad industry. SSA uses Form SSA-671 to coordinate Social Security claims processing with the RRB, and to determine benefit entitlement and amount. A railroad worker, dependent, or survivor may want to file concurrently if they have insured status under both the Act and the Rail Road (RR) Act. The Act and the RR Act provide the RR annuity is offset by entitlement to SSA benefits and in certain situations SSA payments be certified to Treasury by the RRB rather than SSA. By not certifying the SSA payment to Treasury, SSA precludes duplication of payment by both agencies and decreases the risk of overpayment. SSA subsequently reimburses RRB for the SSA amounts that RRB certified to Treasury. If RRB has certification responsibility, SSA will adjudicate the claim but will certify the payment to RRB instead of to Treasury. Section A is completed when the RR worker is deceased and the spouse is filing. Section B is completed when the RR worker is still living and they or their spouse are filing. The questions in sections A and B are nearly identical because SSA needs to know the same information about the RR worker in either situation. SSA asks the specific questions on the questionnaire, such as how many months, to help us determine if the RR worker has worked enough months in RR employment to obtain insured status for RR benefits under the Railroad Retirement Act. SSA does not always already have the answers to all these questions, and we do share information and utilize various information agreements with RRB, but there are still times when that information is missing or lacking. The best source to obtain this information then is from the individual filing for benefits.

The respondents are Social Security benefit applicants previously employed by a railroad or dependents of railroad workers.

**3. Use of Information Technology to Collect the Information**

This information collection does not allow for electronic submission as described in GPEA. SSA hosts a PDF fillable and printable version on its website, which respondents can complete and mail back to their local field office. SSA maintains an Intranet version of the SSA-671 via the Modernized Claims System (MCS) and SSI Claims System, and SSA can record responses during an in-person interview at a field office. SSA estimates 98% of responses are recorded through one of these two systems.

**4. Why We Cannot Use Duplicate Information**

The nature of the information we collect and the manner in which we collect it preclude duplication. SSA does not use another collection instrument to obtain similar data.

**5. Minimizing Burden on Small Respondents**

This collection does not affect small businesses or other small entities.

**6. Consequence of Not Collecting Information or Collecting it Less Frequently**

If we did not use Form SSA-671, we would have no means of coordinating benefits for railroad workers and their dependents. Failure to coordinate SSA and RRB benefits could result in duplicate or incorrect annuity payments, and violate relevant laws and regulations. Because we collect this information on an as needed basis, we cannot collect it less frequently. There are no technical or legal obstacles to burden reduction.

**7. Special Circumstances**

There are no special circumstances that would cause SSA to conduct this information collection in a manner inconsistent with 5 *CFR* 1320.5.

**8. Solicitation of Public Comment and Other Consultations with the Public**

The 60-day advance Federal Register Notice published on May 5, 2020, at 85 FR 26776, and we received no public comments. The 30-day FRN published on July 29, 2020. If we receive any comments in response to this Notice, we will forward them to OMB. We did not consult with the public in the revision of this form.

**9. Payment or Gifts to Respondents**

SSA does not provide payments or gifts to the respondents.

**10. Assurances of Confidentiality**

SSA protects and holds confidential the information it collects in accordance with 42 *U.S.C.* 1306, 20 *CFR* 401 and 402, 5 *U.S.C.* 552 (Freedom of Information Act), 5 *U.S.C.* 552a (Privacy Act of 1974), and OMB Circular No. A-130.

11. **Justification for Sensitive Questions**

The information collection does not contain any questions of a sensitive nature.

12. **Estimates of Public Reporting Burden**

Modality of Completion	Number of Respondents	Frequency of Response	Average Burden per Response (minutes)	Estimated Total Annual Burden (hours)	Average Theoretical Hourly Cost Amount (dollars)*	Average Wait Time in Field Office (minutes)**	Total Annual Opportunity Cost (dollars)***
SSA-671 (Internet)	112,500	1	5	9,375	\$29.76	0	\$279,000**
SSA-671 (Modernized Claims System (MCS) or SSI Claims System)	12,500	1	5	1,042	\$29.76	24**	\$179,810**
<b>Totals</b>	<b>125,000</b>			<b>10,417</b>			<b>\$458,810</b>

\* We based this figures on average U.S. citizen’s hourly salary, as reported by Bureau of Labor Statistics data ([https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes\\_stru.htm](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_stru.htm)).

\*\* We based this figure on the average FY 2020 wait times for field offices, based on SSA’s current management information data.

\*\*\* This figure does not represent actual costs that SSA is imposing on recipients of Social Security payments to complete this application; rather, these are theoretical opportunity costs for the additional time respondents will spend to complete the application. **There is no actual charge to respondents to complete the application.**

In addition, OMB’s Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs is requiring SSA to use a rough estimate of a 30-minute, one-way, drive time in our calculations of the time burden for this collection. OIRA based their estimation on a spatial analysis of SSA’s current field office locations and the location of the average population centers based on census tract information, which likely represents a 13.97-mile driving distance for one-way travel. We depict this on the chart below:

Total Number of Respondents Who Visit a Field Office	Frequency of Response	Average One-Way Travel Time to a Field Office (minutes)	Estimated Total Travel Time to a Field Office (hours)	Total Annual Opportunity Cost for Travel Time (dollars)****
12,500	1	30	6,250	\$155,400

\*\*\*\*We based this dollar amount on the Average Theoretical Hourly Cost

Amount in dollars shown on the burden chart above.

Per OIRA, we include this travel time burden estimate under the 5 CFR 1320.8(a) (4), which requires us to provide “time, effort, or financial resources expended by persons [for]...transmitting, or otherwise disclosing the information,” as well as 5 CFR 1320.8(b)(3)(iii) which requires us to estimate “the average burden collection...to the extent practicable.” SSA notes that we do not obtain or maintain any data on travel times to a field office, nor do we have any data, which shows that the average respondent drives to a field office, rather than using any other mode of transport. SSA also acknowledges that respondents’ mode of travel and, therefore, travel times vary widely dependent on region, mode of travel, and actual proximity to a field office.

NOTE: We included the total opportunity cost estimate from this chart in our calculations when showing the total opportunity cost estimates in the paragraph below.

We base our burden estimates on current management information data, which includes data from actual interviews, as well as from years of conducting this information collection. Per our management information data, we believe that 5 minutes accurately shows the average burden per response for reading the instructions, gathering the facts, and answering the questions. Based on our current management information data, the current burden information we provided is accurate. The total burden for this collection instrument is **10,417** burden hours (reflecting SSA management information data), which results in an associated theoretical (not actual) opportunity cost financial burden of **\$551,925**. SSA does not charge respondents to complete our applications

**13. Annual Cost to the Respondents (Other)**

This collection does not impose a known cost burden on the respondents.

**14. Annual Cost To Federal Government**

The annual cost to the Federal Government is approximately **\$1,554,598**. This estimate accounts for costs from the following areas:

<b>Description of Cost Factor</b>	<b>Methodology for Estimating Cost</b>	<b>Cost in Dollars*</b>
Designing, Printing, and Distributing the Form	Design Cost + Printing Cost + Distribution Cost	\$452
SSA Employee (e.g., field office, 800 number, DDS staff) Information Collection and Processing Time	GS-9 employee x # of responses x processing time	\$186,146
Systems Development, Updating, and Maintenance	GS-9 employee x man hours for development, updating, maintenance	\$1,368,000

<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,554,598</b>
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SSA is unable to break down the costs to the Federal government further than we already have. First, since we work with almost every US citizen, we often do bulk mailings, and cannot track the cost for a single mailing. We do not track design costs or upkeep costs (as these are based on employee time and may vary from collection to collection). In addition, it is difficult for us to break down the cost for processing a single form, as field office and State Disability Determination Services staff often help respondents fill out several forms at once, and the time it takes to do so can vary greatly per respondent. As well, because so many employees have a hand in each aspect of our forms, we use an estimated average hourly wage, based on the wage of our average field office employee (GS-9) for these calculations. Finally, SSA prefers not to provide breakdowns of estimated payment to employees who process these items for a variety of reasons (only one of which is that it is not possible to do this entirely accurately).

**15. Program Changes or Adjustments to the Information Collection Request**

There are no changes to the public reporting burden.

**16. Plans for Publication Information Collection Results**

SSA will not publish the results of the information collection.

**17. Displaying the OMB Approval Expiration Date**

OMB granted SSA an exemption from the requirement to print the OMB expiration date on its program forms. SSA produces millions of public-use forms with life cycles exceeding those of an OMB approval. Since SSA does not periodically revise and reprint its public-use forms (e.g., on an annual basis), OMB granted this exemption so SSA would not have to destroy stocks of otherwise useable forms with expired OMB approval dates, avoiding Government waste.

**18. Exceptions to Certification Statement**

SSA is not requesting an exception to the certification requirements at 5 *CFR* 1320.9 and related provisions at 5 *CFR* 1320.8(b)(3).

**B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods**

SSA does not use statistical methods for this information collection.