Department of Transportation
Maritime Administration
Information Collection Request (ICR)
2133-0541
United States Marine Highway Program

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This submission is to request a three-year approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for the information collection entitled OMB 2133-0541 (United States Marine Highway Program (USMHP)) (also known as America's Marine Highway Program), which was initially discontinued on August 28, 2023, due to the elimination of the project designation application for this program from the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (Pub. L. 117-263, December 23, 2022). However, in order to facilitate the operation of the United States Marine Highway Program Grant Program (the Program), which provides funding to develop, expand, or promote marine highway transportation or shipper use of marine highway transportation on waterways designated as Marine Highway Route, and is codified at 46 United States Code (U.S.C.) 55601, this collection is being submitted as a *reinstatement without change of a previously approved collection*.

The Department of Transportation (the Department) may provide financial assistance, including grants, to states, political subdivisions of a State or a local government, metropolitan planning organizations, port authorities, or Tribal governments. Assistance may also be provided to private sector operators of marine highway services or private sector owners of facilities, including an Alaska Native Corporation, with an endorsement letter from the current Marine Highway Route Sponsor. The Program's statute requires the Secretary to publish a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) not more than 60 days after the enactment of the appropriations act. The information to be collected for the NOFO are applications for grants to be used for Projects or components of Projects that: 1) provide a coordinated and capable alternative to landside transportation; mitigate or relieve landside congestion; promote marine highway transportation; or use vessels documented under 46 U.S.C. Chapter 121; and 2) develop, expand, or promote Marine Highway Transportation or shipper use of Marine Highway Transportation.

Each applicant is required to provide a Standard Form (SF) 424 form along with a project narrative to address the program requirements and assist in evaluating relevant information. The project narrative should include the information necessary for the Department to determine if it satisfies program requirements and to assess the selection criteria. To the extent practicable, applicants should provide supporting data and documentation. Responding to the proposed new collection is required to obtain and/or retain benefits.

If an applicant is selected for a grant award, the applicant will be required to complete a grant agreement with the Maritime Administration (MARAD) and provide quarterly reports on the progress of the grant until the project is completed. The grant recipient will then be required to report on specific performance measures after the project is substantially complete for a period of three years. These reports are required to be submitted to the Program Office electronically at the end of each quarterly period.

A. JUSTIFICATION

1. Circumstances Making the Collection of Information Necessary

When funding is appropriated for the Program, the Department will make discretionary grants to develop, expand, or promote marine highway transportation or shipper use of marine highway transportation on waterways designated as Marine Highway Routes. The Program will accept applications to make grants and will review the applications to determine if they meet the criteria for selection as grant recipients.

The United States Marine Highway Program is codified at 46 U.S.C. 55601. The statute authorizes the Department of Transportation ("Department" or "DOT") to establish a United States Marine Highway Program (the Program) to designate Marine Highway Routes and to fund services serving those Routes.

Through the Program, the Department seeks to make grants to eligible entities to implement a marine highway transportation project or a component of such a project that develops, expands, or promotes marine highway transportation and shipper use of marine highway transportation. The Department also seeks to fund Projects that advance the Departmental priorities of safety, equity, climate and sustainability, and workforce development, job quality and wealth creation.

This Program supports the Department of Transportation (DOT) strategic goal of "Economic Strength and Global Competitiveness" to grow an inclusive and sustainable economy, invest in our transportation system to provide American workers and businesses reliable and efficient access to resources, markets, and good-paying jobs. The Program also aligns with MARAD's goal to improve and expand waterborne transportation and to reduce landside congestion and increase mobility throughout the domestic transportation system.

2. Purpose and Use of the Information Collection

The Program was established to provide grants for the development of domestic maritime services. To carry out a project under this program, the Department may provide financial assistance, including grants to states, political subdivisions of a State or a local government, metropolitan planning organizations, port authorities, Tribal governments, or private sector operators of marine highway services or private sector owners of facilities, including an Alaska Native Corporation, with an endorsement letter from the current Marine Highway Route Sponsor.

The Department requests applications that seek funds to expand or create marine highway services on domestic waterways designated by the Secretary as Marine Highway Routes. The Department reviews applications to determine if they meet criteria for potential grant awards for projects that advance outcomes that support stated goals.

The Program seeks applications to provide financial assistance, including grants to states, political subdivisions of a State or a local government, metropolitan planning organizations, port authorities, Tribal governments, or private sector operators of marine highway services or private sector owners of facilities, including an Alaska Native Corporation for Projects or

components of Projects that 1) provide a coordinated and capable alternative to landside transportation; mitigate or relieve landside congestion; promote Marine Highway Transportation; or use vessels documented under 46 U.S.C. chapter 121; and 2) develop, expand, or promote Marine Highway Transportation or shipper use of Marine Highway Transportation. Accordingly, the Department expects to award at least one project that advances each of the aforementioned project outcomes, but a project does not need to address one or more of these outcomes to be awarded.

The Program will require progress reports from applicants that have an executed grant agreement until the project is complete. The progress reports will inform the Program on the status of the steps required to complete the project. Once a project is complete, the grantee will report on performance measures showing the public benefits accrued from these grant awards.

3. Automation or Use of Information Technology

The Program's Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) calls for applications to be submitted through Grants.gov. All submissions will be done electronically. The Department will host webinars and provide technical assistance to applicants prior to the application deadline in order to address questions about the Program. Successful applicants who have signed grant agreements must report quarterly on project progress and on the metrics required by the Program Office.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

There is no duplication of effort required by potential applicants.

5. Impact on Small Businesses or Other Small Entities

The Program seeks the minimum needed information from an applicant to meet statutory and policy requirements for determination of grant eligibility and funding. This collection has minimal impact on small business and other small entities.

6. Impact of Not Conducting or Less Frequent Collection of Information.

Through the Program, the Department seeks information on projects that will: 1) provide a coordinated and capable alternative to landside transportation; mitigate or relieve landside congestion; promote Marine Highway Transportation; or use vessels documented under 46 U.S.C. chapter 121; and 2) develop, expand, or promote Marine Highway Transportation or shipper use of Marine Highway Transportation.

If this collection is not allowed, existing and potential maritime services on the nation's waterways will not grow or develop. The Program provides public benefits by removing trucks from the nation's roadways, resulting in road damage mitigation, reduced emissions, and reduced congestion. If not allowed, road congestions and emissions will both increase as there will not be a viable maritime option to move freight domestically. If not allowed, applications cannot be submitted for possible funding under this Program. Grant recipients would also be unable to provide grant progress reports or quarterly grant performance measures.

7. Special Circumstances Relating to the Guidelines 5 CFR 1320.5

Under this collection, an applicant will be required to submit a grant application electronically. If the applicant is awarded a grant, MARAD will negotiate a grant agreement with the recipient. When a grant agreement is executed, the recipient is required to provide quarterly progress reports until the project is complete. When a project is complete, the recipient will report on quarterly performance measures showing the public benefits accrued from these grant awards.

All information submitted as part of or in support of any application shall use publicly available data or data that can be made public and methodologies that are accepted by industry practice and standards, to the extent possible. If the applicant submits information that the applicant considers to be a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information, the applicant must provide that information in a separate document, which the applicant may cross-reference from the application narrative or other portions of the application. For the separate document containing confidential information, the applicant must do the following: (1) state on the cover of that document that it "Contains Confidential Business Information (CBI)"; (2) mark each page that contains confidential information with "CBI"; (3) highlight or otherwise denote the confidential content on each page; and (4) at the end of the document, explain why the information you are submitting is CBI. DOT will protect confidential information complying with these requirements to the extent required under applicable law. If DOT receives a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the information that the applicant has marked in accordance with this section, DOT will follow the procedures described in its FOIA regulations at 49 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Section (§) 7.29. Only information that is in the separate document, marked in accordance with this section, and ultimately determined to be confidential under § 7.29 will be exempt from disclosure under FOIA.

There are no special circumstances that would cause this collection to be conducted in a different manner including but not limited to those listed below:

- Requiring respondents to report information to MARAD more often than quarterly;
- Requiring respondents to prepare a written response in fewer than 30 days after receipt of a collection instrument;
- Requiring respondents to submit more than one original copy of any document;
- Requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, medical, government contract, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than three years;
- Requiring the use of any statistical data that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;
- Requiring the use of a statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- Requiring any pledge of confidentiality; or
- Requiring respondents to submit any proprietary or trade secrets.

8. Public Comments in Response to the Federal Register Notice and Outside Consultation

MARAD published a 60-day notice and request for comments on this information collection in the Federal Register (FR 97167, Vol. 89, No. 235) on Friday, December 6, 2024, indicating comments should be submitted on or before February 4, 2025. No comments were received. A 30-day notice will now be published in the Federal Register to solicit public comments.

MARAD Consulted with approximately two hundred fifty current or potential stakeholders through webinars, in person meetings and via MARAD Gateway Directors. The objective of this engagement is to reduce the burden of applying for US Marine Highway Program grant funding both in terms of time expended and possible costs if outside expertise is engaged. A sample of webinar material can be found at: 2024 U.S Marine Highway Program Grant Program Webinars | MARAD.

9. Explanation of Any Payments or Gifts to Respondents

There are no payments or gifts provided to respondents.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality and Protection of Privacy

DOT will protect confidential information and comply with privacy requirements to the extent required under applicable law. If DOT receives a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the information that the applicant has marked in accordance with this section, DOT will follow the procedures described in its FOIA regulations at 49 C.F.R. § 7.29. Only information that is in the separate document, marked in accordance with this section, and ultimately determined to be confidential under § 7.29 will be exempt from disclosure under FOIA.

11. Justification for Sensitive Questions

There are no questions of a sensitive nature.

12. Estimate of Annualized Burden Hours and Cost

a. Estimated Annualized Burden Hours

It is estimated that MARAD will receive 25 applications annually for the United States Marine Highway Grant Program. This estimate is based on existing grant program records. Each applicant will take a combined 60 hours to complete all task related to this application process (i.e., project review (10 hours), proposal writing (40 hours), proposal editing (8 hours), and an online application submission via grants.gov, which includes the completion of form SF 424 (1 hour) and the completion of the narrative and cover page (1 hours). Additionally, each grantee will take two hours to prepare and submit quarterly reporting of grant progress and performance measures (2 hours). Therefore the total combined annualized burden hours for this collection are 1,700, which can be calculated as shown in the table below:

Form Name/ Type of Action	Total Respondents		Total Responses per Respondent		Total Responses		Time Taken to Respond (Hours)		Total Annualized Burden Hours
Project Review	25	*	1	*	25	*	10	=	250
Proposal Writing			1		25		40		1,000
Proposal Editing			1		25		8		200
ONLINE APPLICATION									
Form SF 424			1		25		1		25
Narrative & Cover Page			1		25		1		25
PERFORMANCE REPORTS									
Quarterly Reports			4		100		2		200
TOTAL	**25**		**9**		**225**		**62**		**1,700**

b. Estimated Annualized Burden Costs

The Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS)[1] estimates that the average hourly wage rates for the following professionals who perform a variety of tasks (i.e. prepare the grant application, the grant agreement, progress reporting, and performance reporting) are as follows: General and Operation Manager (11-1021) is $62.18, Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants (43-6011) is $ 35.42, and Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (43-6014) is $ 21.87.

When combined the total compensation rate of 29%[2], the annualized hourly rate for each professional is as follows: General and Operation Manager (11-1021) is $ 80.21, Executive Secretaries and Executive Administrative Assistants (43-6011) is $46.98 and Secretaries and Administrative Assistants (43-6014) is $ 28.21. Therefore, the total annualized cost burden for all professionals associated with preparing and submitting data for this collection is $ 87,329.51, which can be calculated as shown in the table below:

Title and Code of Respondents	Hourly Wage	Compensation Rate of 29%	Number of Employees	Total Compensation Rate for Each Respondent	Total Annualized Burden Hours	Total Annualized Cost Burden
General and Operations Manager (11-1021)	$ 62.18	$ 80.21	1	$ 80.21	566.67	$ 45,452.60
Executive Administrative Assistant (43-6011)	$ 35.42	$ 46.98	1	$ 46.98	566.67	$ 25,291.15
Administrative Assistant (43-6014)	$ 21.87	$ 28.21	1	$ 28.21	566.67	$ 15,985.76
TOTAL					1,700.01	$ 87,329.51

13. Estimate of Total Annual Cost Burden to Respondents and/or Record Keeper

[1] The hourly wage estimate is taken from current BLS tables: https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_nat.htm and https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes436014.htm

[2] Per BLS Employee Compensation Memo, the total compensation rate for the private sector is 29%, :https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecec.pdf

There are no capital, start-up, operation, or maintenance cost associated with this collection.

14. Estimate of Federal Government Costs

According to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)[3] the hourly wages for the following Federal Employees to complete program related tasks for USMPH Grant Program are as follows: GS 14 (Step 5):Develop, review and post notice of funding opportunity is $ 75.70, GS 13 (Step 5): Receive/Sort/Review applications is $ 64.06 , GS 15 (Step 5): Prepare, review, post list of awards is $ 89.04, GS 13 (Step 5): Negotiate scope, schedule, and budget for all agreements is $ 64.06, GS 13 (Step 5): Receive, sort, and review progress and performance reports is $ 64.06. When combined with the Federal Employee Compensation rate of 31%[4], the total hourly wage rates are as follows: GS 14 (Step 5) is $ 99.17, GS 13 (Step 5) is $ 83.92, and GS 15 (Step 5) is $116.64. Therefore, the total combined Federal Government wages for all tasks associated with this grant program is $ 2,616,790.16.

FTE Grade and Step & CRF Program Related Task	Hourly Wage	Average Hourly Wage Rate with 31% Compensation	Total Employees	Total Time for Per application (Hours)	Total Applications/ Agreements/ Reports	Total Federal Government Wages
GS 14 (Step 5):Develop, review and post notice of funding opportunity	$ 75.70	$ 99.17	1	200	25	$ 495,850.00
GS 13 (Step 5): Receive/Sort/Review applications	$ 64.06	$ 83.92	5	200	25	$ 2,098,000.00
GS 15 (Step 5): Prepare, review, post list of awards	$ 89.04	$ 116.64	1	24	1	$ 2,799.36
GS 13 (Step 5): Negotiate scope, schedule, and budget for all grant agreements	$ 64.06	$ 83.92	1	40	5	$ 16,784.00
GS 13 (Step 5): Receive, sort, and review progress and performance reports	$ 64.06	$ 83.92	1	2	20	$ 3,356.80
TOTAL COMBINED FEDERAL WAGES						**$ 2,616,790.16**

15. Explanation of Program Changes or Adjustments

After the Project Designation application phase for the United States Marine Highway grants were removed from James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023 (Pub. L. 117-263, December 23, 2022) this collection was discontinued, and the public burden was eliminated. However, since this collection is also associated with the USMHP Grant Program, both the collection and the associated public burden are being reinstated to facilitate program operation.

[3] OPM 2024 wage tables for Washington-Baltimore-Arlington, DC-MD-VA-WV-PA is as follows: https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/salary-tables/pdf/2024/DCB_h.pdf

[4] Per BLS Employee Compensation Memo, the total compensation rate for the Federal Government is 31%, :https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/ecec.pdf

16. Publication of Data Collection

No data from this collection will be published.

17. Display of the OMB Expiration Date

MARAD is not seeking approval to avoid displaying the OMB expiration date.

18. Exceptions to the Certification Statement

There are no exceptions to the certification statement.