

11FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION
Generic Clearance for the Collection of Qualitative
Feedback on Agency Service Delivery
SUPPORTING JUSTIFICATION—Part A
OMB Control No. 2130-0593

Summary of Submission

- This submission is a request for an extension without change of the last three-year approval granted by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) on July 3, 2023, with an expiration date of July 31, 2026.
- The Federal Railroad Administration (hereafter “FRA” or “the Agency”) published the required 60-day Notice in the Federal Register on April 23, 2026. *See* 91 FR 21861. FRA received zero comments in response to this Notice.
- The total number of burden hours requested for this information collection request (ICR) submission is 475 hours annually (1,425 hours for three years), which is unchanged from the previous submission.
- The total number of responses for this ICR submission is 5,750 responses annually, (17,250 responses for three years) which is unchanged from the previous submission.

1. Circumstances that make collection of the information necessary.

Executive Order 12862 directed Federal agencies to provide service to the public that matches or exceeds the best service available in the private sector. In order to ensure that its programs are effective and meet customers’ needs, FRA seeks to obtain from OMB an extension of a generic clearance to collect qualitative feedback on FRA’s service delivery, as defined as 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 its commitment to improving service delivery. The information collected from 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 also allows feedback to contribute directly to the improvement of program management.

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

Improving agency programs requires ongoing assessment of service delivery, by which we mean 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 the program. 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 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 is not collected, vital feedback from customers and stakeholders on the Agency's services will be unavailable.

FRA will only submit a collection for approval under this generic clearance under the following conditions:

- The information gathered is only used internally for general service improvement and program management purposes and is not intended for release outside of the agency.
- The information gathered is not used for the purpose of substantially informing influential policy decisions.¹
- The information gathered will yield qualitative information; FRA will not design the collection or expect it to yield statistically reliable results or use it as though the results are generalized to the study population.
- Participation in the collection is voluntary.
- The collections are low burden for respondents (based on considerations of total burden hours, total number of respondents, or burden hours per respondent) and are low-cost for both the respondents and the Federal Government.
- The collections are non-controversial and do not raise issues of concern to other Federal agencies.
- The collection is targeted at the solicitation of opinions from respondents who have experience with the program or may have experience with the program in the near future.
- 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 ICR to OMB for approval through the normal Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (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.,

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."

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, but are not limited to:

- Customer comment cards/complaint forms
- 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)

3. Extent of automated information collection.

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

4. Efforts to identify duplication.

The information collection requirements are not duplicated anywhere else. Similar data is not available from any other source.

5. Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses.

The participation of small businesses or other small entities may be requested, but FRA will minimize their burden by sampling, asking for readily available information, or/and using short, easy-to-complete information collection instruments, whenever possible.

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information.

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

7. Special circumstances.

There are no special circumstances. All requirements of this information collection comply with 5 CFR 1320.5(d)(2).

8. Compliance with 5 CFR § 1320.8.

As required by the PRA and its implementing regulations in 5 CFR part 1320, FRA published a notice in the *Federal Register* on April 23, 2026,² soliciting comment from the public, railroads, and other interested parties on these information collection requirements. FRA received no comments from the public.

Consultations with representatives of the affected population:

As a part of FRA's oversight and enforcement, individuals from the railroad industry are generally in direct contact with FRA's inspectors at the time of site inspections and can provide any comments or concerns to them.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents.

There are no monetary payments provided, or gifts made to respondents in connection with this information collection. 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 \$40. In the case of in-person focus groups, the Agency may provide stipends of up to \$75. 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 must 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. Assurance of confidentiality.

The information collected is not of a confidential nature, and FRA pledges no confidentiality.

11. Justification for any questions of a sensitive nature.

The information collection does not contain any data of a personal or sensitive nature.

12. Estimate of burden hours for information collected.

A variety of instruments and platforms will be used to collect information from respondents. The annual burden requested (475 hours and 5,750 responses) is based on the number of collections we expect to conduct over the requested period for this clearance. Table 1 provides the breakout for the three categories of information collections and the estimated burden hours for one year. On a three-year basis this amounts to 1,425 hours and 17,250 responses.

² 91 FR 21861.

The respondent universe (used for prior year surveys submitted under this ICR) is “railroad industry” and “general public”. Based on this, for this submission the wage rate used for “Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery” is the average hourly wage for civilian workers³ reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). For surveys related to stakeholder engagement and stakeholder capacity building and training resources, an industry specific hourly wage rate for the rail transportation industry⁴ (All Occupations) has been used.

Table 1. Annual Respondent Total Burden Hour Estimate for One Year

Information Collection Description	Office	Annual Responses (A)	Frequency	Average Time per Response	Total Annual Burden Hours (C=A*B)	Wage Rate	Total Cost
Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery.	Administrator	350	Annual, Periodically	10 minutes	59 hours	\$48.78	\$2,878.02
	Railroad Safety	350	Annual, Periodically	10 minutes	59 hours	\$48.78	\$2,878.02
	Research, Data, and Innovation	350	Annual, Periodically	10 minutes	59 hours	\$48.78	\$2,878.02
	Railroad Development	350	Annual, Periodically	10 minutes	59 hours	\$48.78	\$2,878.02
	Chief Financial Officer	350	Annual, Periodically	10 minutes	59 hours	\$48.78	\$2,878.02
Web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery related to the improvement of webinar-based stakeholder engagement.	Railroad Development	3,500	Annual, Periodically	1 minute	58 hours	\$68.81	\$3,990.89
Surveys, comment cards, interviews, focus groups, and web-based technologies for Customer Service Satisfaction and Delivery related to the improvement of stakeholder capacity building and training resources.	Railroad Development	500	Annual, Periodically	15 minutes	125 hours	\$68.81	\$8,601.25
Totals		5,750 responses			475 hours		\$26,982.24

³ The wage rate for respondents was calculated using BLS “Employer Costs For Employee Compensation December 2025” hourly wage rate. Civilian workers averaged \$48.78 per hour, with wages and salaries of \$33.45 and benefit costs of \$15.33 (approximately 31.4 percent). See <https://www.bls.gov/bls/news-release/ecec.htm#current>.

⁴ The wage rate for respondents was calculated using BLS “Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics” for rail transportation, May 2024. For “All Occupations (00-0000) the mean hourly wage is \$68.81 (Hourly wage \$39.32 x 1.75 overhead). See <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/industry/482000>.

13. Estimate of total annual costs respondents.

No costs are anticipated.

14. Estimate of cost to Federal Government.

Costs are dependent upon the type of collection administered, the size of the sample, the number of questions asked, the type and complexity of the questions asked, and the frequency of the collection. The cost for a private firm to conduct a survey is between \$50,000 and \$75,000; however, in most cases FRA will conduct the surveys. FRA estimates staff members will spend a total of 300 hours annually developing, recording, assimilating, analyzing, and reporting information submitted with each survey.

FRA anticipates the processing of this information collection to be conducted by a General Schedule (GS) 12, step 5 (step 5 has been used as a midway point) and GS-14, step 5 at FRA's Washington D.C. headquarters. The anticipated cost to the Federal Government is approximately \$31,173 as shown in the table below.

Staff	Wage ⁵ x 1.75 Overhead	Time (h)	Total Cost
GS-12 (Step 5)	\$97.34	125	\$12,167.50
GS-13 (Step 5)	\$115.73	125	\$14,466.25
GS-14 (Step 5)	\$136.76	50	\$6,838.00
Total	--	300	\$33,471.75

Note: Total cost to the public previously reported under this section is now being reflected in the burden table for question 12.

15. Explanation of program changes and adjustments.

This is an extension without change to a current ICR. FRA made no adjustments to the previously approved burden hours. The requested estimated burden hours remain at 1,475 hours and 17,250 responses for a three-year period.

16. Publication of results of data collection.

Findings will be used for general service improvement but are not for publication or other public release.

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

FRA is not seeking approval to not display the expiration date.

18. Exceptions to certification for PRA submissions.

No exceptions are taken at this time.

⁵ The hourly wage rate was calculated using the 2026 GS locality pay table for Washington-Baltimore-Arlington, DC-MD-VA-WV-PA see <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/salaries-wages/2026/general-schedule/>.