DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

OMB CONTROL No. 2138-0049

Freight Logistics Optimization Works (FLOW) Project

Part A. Justification.

1. Circumstances that make collection of information necessary:

Following COVID-19, the U.S. supply chain struggled with unprecedented congestion and surges of containerized cargo through our ports and intermodal networks. The Freight Logistics Optimization Works (FLOW) program was established as a government-industry information sharing initiative aimed at improving key freight information exchange between parts of the goods movement supply chain, equipping companies involved in freight with the evidence needed to avoid significant congestion events and support a more resilient freight network.

FLOW is a joint endeavor between the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) and the freight industry. Data collected and exchanged supports industry decision making associated with the daily management of cargo and assets. Industry partners involved with FLOW, referred to as FLOW participants, include beneficial cargo owners, intermodal equipment providers, the logistics real estate sector, ports and marine terminal operators, motor carriers, ocean carriers, non-vessel operating common carriers, rail carriers, and third-party logistics providers. The practice of sharing operational information between FLOW participants benefits the operational resilience and efficiency of the national logistics system, i.e., the complex collection of personnel, transportation assets, vessels, trucks, railcars, equipment, and any and all other freight components that comprise the United States' supply chain system.

Participants contribute data on import and export containers and the availability of space and assets to move the containers, including purchase orders, cargo bookings, marine terminal space availability and gate transactions, truck dispatch capacity, chassis availability, and warehouse capacity. By providing a means to share this data securely, the FLOW program aims to enable a data driven approach to balance U.S. cargo traffic demand with system capacity.

The USDOT Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) serves as the independent steward of the data collection. BTS is authorized by Title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 63 to collect, compile, analyze, and publish a comprehensive set of transportation statistics on the performance and impacts of the national transportation system, of which freight

transportation is a key component. The FLOW program is sponsored by the USDOT Office of Multimodal Freight Infrastructure and Policy (OST-F), and FLOW contributes to a primary role of the office: “to promote and facilitate the sharing of information between the private and public sectors with respect to freight issues” (49 U.S.C. 118(c)(4)).

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

Data collected is used to calculate demand and capacity metrics that act as leading indicators of freight congestion and supply chain performance. These metrics help to communicate the degree of oversupply or undersupply of logistics assets at U.S. ports and along intermodal logistics networks.

BTS maintains an analytical database using the reported data and other pertinent information, conducts statistical analyses, calculates metrics, and develops visualization and analytical tools to facilitate the sharing of results with FLOW participants. BTS shares aggregated, deidentified data with FLOW participants to provide information that will help participants to assess supply chain risk and allocate resources to address those risks. FLOW participants will use the information to support decision making associated with the daily management of cargo and assets.

Access to the secure web portal is limited to FLOW participants and not shared publicly, although participants may provide specific authorization to publish FLOW data products through a review process. Current in-progress efforts to apply and include FLOW data in public data products include BTS port performance freight statistics and freight scenario analysis research.

3. Describe whether, and to what extent, the collection of information involves the use of automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses, and the basis for the decision for adopting this means of collection. Also describe any consideration of using information technology to reduce burden.

Data are collected on a voluntary basis through a secure web portal and SFTP (secure file transfer protocol) server administered by BTS. Participants may choose to upload data via the secure web portal or set up an SFTP connection to automate the data transfer. All data collection is electronic. The SFTP server reduces burden by allowing for recurring, automatic data transfer.

4. Efforts to identify duplication:

These data were not collected by the USDOT prior to the start of the FLOW pilot effort in 2022. Need for these data were identified by the federal government and industry partners while unprecedented congestion challenged the supply chain prior to the pilot

effort. Although other freight data are collected, no data source can answer the frequent demand and capacity data needs identified.

5. Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses:

This data collection program is expected to have a minimal impact on small businesses because FLOW receives data primarily from companies that exceed the thresholds defined by Small Business Administration.

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information:

If the data were collected less frequently, the information would not be as timely and effective as leading indicators of potential congestion risk. Because of the automation, less frequent data collection does not reduce burden and would not benefit the program or participants. Reduced frequency will reduce the USDOT's ability to forecast congestion in the supply chain and the efficacy and value of the program.

7. Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner:

- requiring respondents to report information to the agency more often than quarterly;
- requiring respondents to prepare a written response to a collection of information in fewer than 30 days after receipt of it;
- requiring respondents to submit more than an original and two copies of any document;
- requiring respondents to retain records, other than health, government contracts, grant-in-aid, or tax records for more than 3 years;
- in connection with a statistical survey, that is not designed to produce valid and reliable results that can be generalized to the universe of study;
- requiring the use of statistical data classification that has not been reviewed and approved by OMB;
- that includes a pledge of confidentiality that is not supported by authority established in statute or regulation, that is not supported by disclosure and data security policies that are consistent with the pledge, or which unnecessarily impedes sharing of data with other agencies for compatible confidential use; or
- requiring respondents to submit proprietary trade secrets, or other confidential information unless the agency can demonstrate that it has instituted procedures to protect the information's confidentiality to the extent permitted by law.

There are no special circumstances that pertain to this information collection.

8. If applicable, provide a copy and identify the date and page number of publication in the Federal Register of the agency's notice, required by 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting

comments on the information collection prior to submission to OMB. Summarize public comments received in response to that notice and describe actions taken by the agency in response to these comments. Specifically address comments received on cost and hour burden.

Describe efforts to consult with persons outside the agency to obtain their views on the availability of data, frequency of collection, the clarity of instructions and recordkeeping, disclosure, or reporting format (if any), and on the data elements to be recorded, disclosed, or reported.

Consultation with representatives of those from whom information is to be obtained or those who must compile records should occur at least once every 3 years - even if the collection of information activity is the same as in prior periods. There may be circumstances that may preclude consultation in a specific situation. These circumstances should be explained.

A Federal Register notice relevant to this collection was published March 2, 2026 (91 FR 10198). Two comments were received. BTS received a comment from a transportation logistics company which was deemed nonrelevant, as the comment did not include any input on the FLOW collection. The second comment expressed support for the collection and did not address cost and hour burden. The comment proposed additional metrics and signals that could be developed from the FLOW data to provide value to program participants. BTS appreciates these suggestions and will consider them in the development of additional analytics and models using the FLOW data.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents:

No payments or gifts to respondents.

10. Assurance of confidentiality:

BTS will collect, store, process, and analyze the data while assuring data confidentiality. The information provided will be used for statistical purposes only, in accordance with the BTS confidentiality statute (49 U.S.C. § 6307) and the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (CIPSEA) of 2018 (Title III of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018, Pub. L. 115-435, codified at 44 U.S.C. 3561–3583). In accordance with CIPSEA, information voluntarily submitted by industry partners will be used exclusively for statistical purposes and will not be disclosed in identifiable form except with the informed consent of the respondent. As applicable, BTS will apply appropriate disclosure avoidance methods associated with any publications or data releases.

11. Justification for collection of sensitive information:

The information we are collecting will be aggregated and de-identified, meaning the data will not be associated with a specific entity or business. The information provided is protected by CIPSEA, which establishes uniform confidentiality protections for information collected for statistical purposes by recognized statistical agencies and units.

12. Estimate of burden hours for information requested:

Approximately 90 companies have joined the FLOW program to date, and up to an additional 50 companies may join the program over the next three years. It is estimated that a FLOW participant will spend a maximum of six hours establishing the initial system connection and developing and testing the data file. Once established, participants may spend up to two hours annually on routine maintenance activities, including system connection maintenance or any necessary amendments to data files. Most participants transmit files on a scheduled, automated basis through secure file transfer protocol; no additional burden is estimated for these scheduled jobs. Participants may also submit files via upload to secure web portal on a weekly basis; up to 15 minutes per week or approximately 13 hours annually are estimated for these uploads. This additional manual burden is included in the total estimate, for a total annual burden estimate of 21 hours per participant or 2,940 hours total for up to 140 FLOW participants.

The total burden hours are not expected to meaningfully vary between company types.

We expect this work will be carried out primarily by transportation, storage, and distribution managers. Wage information for this occupation type for each industry sector participating in the pilot phase is shown in the table below. Based on the mean wage of transportation, storage, and distribution managers in each sector and the number of participating companies in each sector, the total cost for the burden hours for this collection is estimated as $172,618.

Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2023
Occupation: Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers (SOC Code 11-3071)

Occupation	Employment[1]	Employment percent relative standard error[3]	Hourly mean wage	Annual mean wage[2]	Wage percent relative standard error[3]	Hourly median wage	Annual median wage[2]	Expected Number of Respondents	Expected Burden Hours per Response	Total Burden Hours	Total Effort Cost
Food and Beverage Stores (4451 and 4452 only) (4450A1)	460	26.8	$46.49	$96,700	7.0	$47.44	$98,670	30	21	630	$29,289
General Merchandise Retailers(455000)	2,370	31.0	$58.48	$121,630	17.0	$65.27	$135,770	30	21	630	$36,842
Deep Sea, Coastal, and Great Lakes Water Transportation(483100)	630	21.5	$72.62	$151,050	3.8	$68.29	$142,030	12	21	252	$18,300
Truck Transportation(484000)	17,860	7.5	$51.52	$107,160	4.4	$47.50	$98,800	20	21	420	$21,638
Support Activities for Water Transportation(488300)	3,490	16.9	$76.06	$158,210	3.1	$74.28	$154,510	24	21	504	$38,334
Freight Transportation Arrangement(488500)	6,440	6.8	$55.98	$116,430	2.0	$49.19	$102,310	24	21	504	$28,214
Total Burden								140			$172,618

Cells in gray extracted from BLS Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics, May 2023
(1) Estimates for detailed occupations do not sum to the totals because the totals include occupations not shown separately. Estimates do not include self-employed workers.
(2) Annual wages have been calculated by multiplying the corresponding hourly wage by 2,080 hours.
(3) The relative standard error (RSE) is a measure of the reliability of a survey statistic. The smaller the relative standard error, the more precise the estimate.

SOC code: Standard Occupational Classification code -- see http://www.bls.gov/soc/home.htm

13. Provide an estimate of cost to the respondents. Do not include the cost of any hour burden shown in items 12 and 14. General estimates should not include purchase of equipment or services or portions thereof made prior to October, 1995.

There is no additional cost to the respondents.

14. Estimate of cost to the Federal government:

Two full-time GS-12 employees, one GS-13 employee, and two GS-14 employees are needed to support the program. The annual salaries per employee estimated at the step 7 level and the total fully burdened cost (estimated as 1.4 times the respective salaries) for employees within the Washington, DC area is shown in the table below. The total annual cost estimate for these employees is $1,032,277.40.

	Annual Salary	Fully Burdened Annual Salary Estimate	Number of FTEs	Total Cost Estimate
GS-12	$122,899	$172,058.60	2	$344,117.20

GS-13	$146,143	$204,600.20	1	$204,600.20
GS-14	$172,700	$241,780.00	2	$483,560.00
Total				$1,032,277.40

In addition, an annual cost of approximately $1.5 million is estimated for interagency agreements and contract support in the following task areas:

- Stakeholder engagement: FLOW success is grounded in the principles of a voluntary and secure national platform for information sharing that is sustained by commercial and operational benefit. FLOW, is a consensus driven approach, requiring continued stakeholder engagement. Currently, USDOT convenes, multiple meetings weekly with the FLOW team to facilitate consensus and advance the effort. Events, including in-person event for training and recruitment to the effort, are needed.
- Technical design and development: The FLOW initiative requires maintaining the consensus-based message constructs and exchange protocols. FLOW program management focuses on ensuring the expertise that understands the business of supply chain data exchange in the transportation and logistics industry is acquired and maintained for the lifecycle of this project.
- Data management and protection: The FLOW initiative requires the continuing development and maintenance of tools and processes for the management of data and protection of confidentiality.
- Project management: Project management resources are targeted to ensure data quality, IT oversight, and timely delivery of results.

The following provides a breakdown of estimated costs for the above support services:

	Annual Estimated Cost
Direct Labor	$1,200,000
Travel	$50,000
IT Software, Hardware	$250,000
Total	**$1,500,000**

15. Explanation of program changes or adjustments:

This is a continuation of an existing data collection. The program will build on efforts to date by broadening participants and continuing to develop tools for the exchange, analysis, and use of FLOW data to monitor trends, risks, and geographic hot spots for key freight corridors. FLOW is also working to apply and include FLOW data in public data products such as BTS port performance freight statistics and freight scenario analysis research, as well as incorporate additional data sources to complement FLOW data and add analytical capability, such as vessel location data and trade data.

16. Publication of results of data collection:

The FLOW program provides aggregate statistics and visualizations to the participating companies on a dashboard through a secure online portal. A public-facing website is in place to share information about the FLOW initiative with all stakeholders including members of the public.

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

Not applicable. BTS is not seeking approval to not display the expiration date.

18. Exceptions to certification statement:

Not applicable. BTS does not have any exceptions to the certification statement.