

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Procedures and Evidence Rules for Air Carrier Authority Applications

OMB Control Number: 2106-0023

Justification:

- 1. Explain the circumstances that make the collection of information necessary. Include identification of any legal or administrative requirements that necessitate the collection.***

The Department of Transportation (DOT) is responsible for ensuring that air carriers requesting economic authority are fit, willing, and able to provide air transportation as a U.S. air carrier. Collection of this data provides DOT with a sufficient basis upon which to determine whether an applicant or operating U.S. air carrier is a U.S. citizen and has or continues to have the managerial competence necessary, the financial wherewithal, and the compliance disposition to conduct its proposed, current, or expanded operations.

Statutory requirements for this information collection are identified in 49 U.S.C. sections 41102, 41103, and 41738. The relevant sections of 49 U.S.C. require DOT to determine the initial fitness of all applicants for authority to provide certificated passenger and cargo air service, and commuter air service. 49 U.S.C. 41110(e) states that the fitness requirement for these air carriers is a continuous one and provides the DOT with the ability to modify, suspend, or revoke an air carrier's authority if it is no longer fit to operate, or if it fails to file the reports needed to monitor its continuing fitness.

14 CFR Parts 201, 204, and 291 contain evidentiary rules that set forth specific information that needs to be filed in fitness cases. Specifically, 14 CFR sections 201.1, 204.3, 204.4, 204.5, 204.6, and 291.10 set forth the application procedures and specific information filing requirements for air carriers seeking certificate or commuter authority or the information required to be filed by existing airlines demonstrating their continuing fitness. In addition, section 204.7 provides for revocation/termination of certificate or commuter authority if an air carrier does not operate for one year under any authority for which it was found fit. Furthermore, if an air carrier ceases operations, it must re-establish its fitness to operate before resuming operations.

- 2. Indicate how, by whom, and for what purposes the information is to be used.***

Sections 201.1, 201.4, 291.10 contain the formal procedures to be followed by applicants in filing applications for certificate or commuter authority. Sections 204.3, 204.4, 204.5, and 204.6 identify the information that is required to be submitted by applicants in support of their fitness to hold Department authority to provide air

transportation services to the public. Fitness information includes data on the company's owners, officers, management, and other key personnel, including their citizenship, background and qualifications for their positions; the applicant's operating plan and source of funds to provide its proposed services; and the applicant's safety and compliance history.

The Department uses the information collected to perform a unique and important function in its review of the fitness of air carriers. The existence of minimum standards for fitness is a primary deterrent for unsophisticated and potentially unfit companies that might otherwise commence operations to the detriment of the traveling public. As a result of the Department's efforts in establishing and monitoring the fitness of air carriers, a number of applicants for initial certificate or commuter authority have been found unfit and have withdrawn their applications in anticipation of an unfavorable finding, and previously certificated air carriers have made changes designed to strengthen their ability to provide air carrier services without posing an undue risk to the traveling and shipping public. If the collection of information was proscribed, it could create serious consumer problems by, for instance, permitting financially marginal air carriers or those with questionable compliance attitudes or inadequate managerial capabilities to institute and/or continue airline services.

In addition, section 204.7 requires air carriers that cease operations often do so because of extreme financial difficulties or safety problems establish that they are fit before recommencing operations. The requirements of section 204.7 that such air carriers establish that they continue to be fit before recommencing operations enables the Department to ensure that such air carriers will not provide unwarranted risk to the public.

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.*

14 CFR Part 302, which became effective on October 1, 1997, authorizes the filing of documents by electronic means. Applicants submit applications for new economic authority electronically through <http://www.regulations.gov>, or the information required to be filed by existing airlines demonstrating their continuing fitness through email directly to our office. Approximately 98 percent of the responses are sent electronically. For the remaining 2 percent that submit paper responses, those are scanned and submitted electronically to the Federal government-wide docket management system at <http://www.regulations.gov>. Electronic submission helps reduce the costs associated with printing and mailing the information through the postal service. Fitness information for new or amended economic authority may be accessed by the public at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

4. *Describe efforts to identify duplication.*

On occasion, an air carrier holding authority may have filed fitness-related information with the Department in the recent past or in connection with another proceeding. The Office of the Secretary, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the National Transportation Safety Board maintain databases containing information on the type and status of an air carrier's authority, aircraft operated, consumer complaints, enforcement history, and accident and incident reports. By making use of these information sources, we are able to reduce the information required to be supplied by applicants.

When such information still accurately reflects its fitness, it may cite the date and place of such filings and thus avoid having to file duplicate information. If material previously filed by an air carrier is no longer accurate because, for example, its financial, managerial, ownership, or compliance situation has changed, we must require the air carrier to file updated information.

In most cases, however, applicants for new authority have not previously filed information similar to that required in Part 204 with the Department of any other agency.

5. If the collection of information involves small business or other small entities, describe the methods used to minimize burden.

We have tried to simplify and assist small companies in the preparation of fitness applications through the development and distribution of explanatory booklets which contain copies of the applicable regulations, sample application forms, and a narrative discussion of the type of information we look for in making fitness determinations and the form in which such information may be submitted. These booklets can save air carriers many hours in preparing applications and are available online at <http://www.transportation.gov/policy/aviation-policy/licensing/US-carriers>.

6. Describe the consequence to federal program or policy activities if the collection is not conducted or is conducted less frequently, as well as any technical or legal obstacles to reducing burden.

The Department is required by statute to determine the fitness of anyone seeking to hold a license to provide air transportation. The collection of evidence of air carrier fitness is done on an occasional basis, in connection with applications from companies seeking new air carrier authority or supporting their continuing fitness to hold such authority. 14 CFR Parts 201, 204, and 291 contain evidentiary rules that set forth specific information that needs to be filed in fitness cases. Without these rules, the burden of submitting an application would be substantially greater to the federal government and to the respondents since there would be no uniform rule detailing the information requirements. New applicants unfamiliar with past fitness cases would be at a loss to determine what to file and would likely file too little material, necessitating requests for further information from the Department's staff, resulting in delays in processing the application. In order to avoid these problems, potential applicants would seek personal

assistance from Department staff on how to set up an application. This would be a tremendous drain on staff time, increasing the government's burden substantially.

7. *Explain any special circumstances that would cause an information collection to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with guidelines.*

These collections are consistent with 5 CFR 1320.6.

8. *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.*

A notice, pursuant to 5 CFR 1320.8(d), soliciting comments on the proposed renewal of the information collections was published in the Federal Register on May 21, 2026, Vol. 91, No. 98 (Page 30025). No comments were received.

9. *Describe any decision to provide any payment or gift to respondents, other than remuneration of contractors or grantees.*

No payments or gifts are provided to respondents.

10. *Describe any assurance of confidentiality provided to respondents and the basis for assurance in statute, regulation, or agency policy.*

A motion requesting confidential treatment may be filed by respondents to these collections under section 302.12 of the Department's Procedural Regulations (14 CFR 302.12). Such motions are handled in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and the Department's past practices.

11. *Provide additional justification for any questions of a sensitive nature, such as sexual behavior and attitude, religious beliefs, and other matters that are commonly considered private.*

There are no sensitive questions.

12. *Provide estimates of the hour burden of the collection of information. The statements should: indicate the number of respondents, frequency of response, annual hour burden and an explanation of how the burden was established.*

Number of respondents: 38

Number of responses: 114

Frequency of response: on occasion

Annual hour burden: 7,635

Annualized cost to respondents: \$13,413

Explanation of how the burden was estimated.

We have estimated the number of annual respondents and responses based on the average of the level of activity experienced during the two-year period from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2025. Applicants file the required information only when applying for new air carrier authority or supporting their continuing fitness to hold such authority.

To calculate the total number of annual respondents, we summed the number of respondents for (1) initial/additional certificate or commuter authority which includes fitness evidence; and (2) review of continuing fitness in which evidence requirements vary.

The annual burden on the applicant estimate is based on our acquired knowledge of the industry's experience in preparing the various types of applications under 14 CFR Parts 201, 204, and 291. Assumptions made in arriving at these estimates include the following: (1) Not all applications require the filing of comparable amounts of, or even any, fitness data; and (2) the burden on the applicants is the minimum that a reasonable person would expect to supply only the information required; that is, optional expenses an applicant might incur for outside consultants or attorneys to assist in preparing an application are not considered.

The estimated total annual burden on 38 applicants of preparing and submitting filings for initial certificate and commuter authority, additional certificate authority and continuing fitness reviews is 7,635 hours. To calculate the amount of hours, we multiplied the total number of filings per category by the number of hours it takes an applicant to prepare a filing. We then summed the totals for each category. These burden estimates are based on an average burden ranging between 80 person-hours and \$14,800 for an initial/additional certificate or commuter authority application or 65 person-hours and \$12,025 for an application for review of continuing fitness at an average cost per hour of \$185, which includes the cost of analytical, legal, and clerical participation in the preparation of these applications (see attached chart for a breakdown of burden estimate).

13. Provide an estimate of the total annual cost burden to respondents or recordkeepers resulting from the collection.

- a. Total capital and start-up cost component – none
- b. Total operation and maintenance and purchase of services component – none

The fitness information to be provided by respondents, if not already available in the company's own records, would need to be developed anyway as tools for monitoring its operations or for the requirements of suppliers, lessors, and lenders. Therefore, the burden should extend no further than collecting already existing material and putting in a form appropriate for filing with the Department.

14. Provide estimates of annualized cost to the Federal Government. Also, provide a description of the method used to estimate cost, which should include qualification of hours, operational expense, and any other expense that would not have been incurred without this collection of information.

The total annual estimated cost to the federal government for processing the estimated 114 responses, requiring an average of 108 hours to process, is \$1,231,200. The average cost per hour for processing an application is \$100, regardless of the type of application filed. However, the average cost per filing ranges from \$10,000 to \$11,500 based on the average number of hours it takes to process the type of filing (see attached chart for a breakdown of burden estimate).

15. Explain reasons for any program changes or adjustments.

There are adjustment changes due to the decrease in the average number of applications/filings submitted during the two-year period from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2025, plus the increase in costs associated with the analytical, legal, and clerical participation in the preparation of these applications.

16. For collection of information whose results will be published, outline plans for tabulation and publication.

Not applicable.

17. If seeking approval to not display the expiration date for OMB approval of the information collection, explain the reasons that display would be inappropriate.

Not applicable.

18. Explain each exception to the certification statement identified in "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions," of OMB Form 83-I.

Not applicable.

Estimated Annual Burden on Applicants and Government of Collections of Information

	Initial/additional cert. or commuter authority	Review of continuing fitness	Totals
Applicants	5	33	38
Filings each	3	3	6
Total filings	15	99	114
Burden on Respondents			
Avg. number of hours to prepare filing	80	65	73
Avg. cost per hour	\$185	\$185	\$185
Avg. cost per filing	\$14,800	\$12,025	\$13,413
Total hours	1200	6435	7,635
Total cost to Applicants	\$225,000	\$1,190,475	\$1,412,475
Burden on Government			
Avg. number of hours to process filing	115	100	108
Average cost per hour	\$100	\$100	\$100
Average cost per filing	\$11,500	\$10,000	\$10,750
Total hours	1,725	9,900	11,625
Total cost to Government	\$172,500	\$990,000	\$1,162,500