

detailed in this request, that FTA should consider in supporting the assessment and mitigation of identified transit safety risks?

(5) Should data sources outside of those maintained by transit agencies and FTA, such as geographic or demographic data, be considered to support the identification of safety concerns and assessment and mitigation of safety risk? If so, which data sources, and why?

Examples

(6) What are examples of safety concerns evaluated by a transit agency that can be shared with FTA?

(7) What are examples of high-impact data that support the identification of safety concerns and hazards and the corresponding safety risk assessment and mitigation that can be shared with FTA?

(8) Is there anything else FTA should know regarding the identification of safety concerns for the SRM process?

Please clearly indicate which question(s) you address in your response and any evidence to support assertions, where practicable.

Public Participation

How do I prepare and submit comments?

To ensure that your comments are filed correctly, please include the docket number provided [FTA–2021–0011] in your comments.

Please submit one copy of your comments, including any attachments, to the docket following the instructions given above under **ADDRESSES**. Please note, if you are submitting comments electronically as a PDF (Adobe) file, these documents must be scanned using an Optical Character Recognition process, thus allowing the Agency to search and copy certain portions of submissions.

Will FTA consider late comments?

FTA will consider all comments received before the close of business on the comment closing date indicated above under **DATES**. To the extent practicable, the Agency will also consider comments received after that date.

How can comments submitted by other people be read?

Comments received may be read at the Docket Management Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12–140, Washington, DC 20590–0001. The hours of the docket are indicated above in the same location. Comments may also be

located on the internet, identified by the docket number at the heading of this notice, at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Please note, this RFI will serve as a planning document. The RFI should not be construed as policy, a solicitation for applications, or an obligation on the part of the Government.

Nuria I. Fernandez,

Administrator.

[FR Doc. 2021–15078 Filed 7–14–21; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–57–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration

Request for Information Concerning the Capital Investment Grants Program

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Request for Information.

SUMMARY: The Federal Transit Administration is seeking suggestions from all transit stakeholders (transit authorities, planning officials, States, cities, the private sector, and the public) on improvements that could be made to the evaluation process for projects seeking funding from the Capital Investment Grants (CIG) Program. Specifically, FTA seeks input on evaluation measures and data sources that can better capture the benefits and costs of transit and how the CIG program can facilitate outcomes that maximize those benefits.

DATES: Comments should be submitted on or before October 13, 2021. FTA will consider comments filed after this date to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES: All responses MUST be submitted electronically to Docket No. FTA–2021–0010 at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Elizabeth Day, Director, Office of Capital Project Development, (202) 366–5159, or Elizabeth.Day@dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background: To receive discretionary Capital Investment Grants (CIG) program funding from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), an applicant must complete the multi-year, multi-step process outlined in law at 49 U.S.C. 5309 for the proposed transit capital project. The law specifies evaluation criteria covering project justification and local financial commitment that FTA must use to develop a project rating on a five-point scale from low to high. It also specifies that a project must receive a Medium or

better overall rating to advance through the process and receive CIG program funding. The law establishes three categories of projects eligible under the CIG program, which are known as New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity Improvement projects. Each project type has a unique set of requirements and evaluation criteria in law, although many similarities exist among them.

For New Starts and Core Capacity Improvement projects, the steps in the CIG process include project development, engineering, and construction. The CIG process for Small Starts projects includes only project development and construction. New Starts and Core Capacity Improvement projects receive construction funds from the CIG program through a full funding grant agreement (FFGA) that defines the scope of the project and specifies the total multi-year Federal commitment to the project. Small Starts projects receive construction funds through a single-year grant or a Small Starts grant agreement (SSGA) that defines the scope of the project and specifies the Federal commitment to the project.

There are six statutory project justification criteria that FTA must evaluate and rate individually for projects pursuing CIG funding that differ slightly between the three categories of projects. The law requires each project justification criterion to be given a “comparable, but not necessarily equal, numerical weight” when FTA develops a summary project justification rating. The law also requires FTA to evaluate local financial commitment. For New Starts and Core Capacity, the law requires FTA to determine whether: (A) The proposed financial plan provides for the availability of reasonable contingency to cover unanticipated cost increases or funding shortfalls; (B) each proposed local source of capital and operating financing is stable, reliable, and available within the proposed project timetable; and (C) local resources are available to recapitalize, maintain, and operate the overall existing and proposed public transportation system, including essential feeder bus and other services necessary to achieve the projected ridership levels, without requiring a reduction in existing public transportation services or level of service to operate the proposed project. For Small Starts projects the law requires FTA to determine that, “each proposed local source of capital and operating financing is stable, reliable, and available within the proposed project timetable.”

Lastly, the law requires FTA to issue policy guidance on the CIG review and

evaluation process each time FTA makes significant changes to the process or criteria, but not less frequently than once every two years. When there are significant guidance changes proposed, the document is subject to notice and comment procedures.

For more information on the existing CIG process and evaluation criteria, please see the CIG Policy Guidance found at <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grant-programs/capital-investments/final-capital-investment-grant-program-interim-policy>.

Through this request for information (RFI), FTA seeks input on the CIG process and evaluation criteria to inform the development of proposed changes to the existing CIG policy guidance that would undergo formal notice and comment in the future. The timing for publication of proposed CIG policy guidance is not certain and could be impacted by enactment of reauthorization legislation. FTA looks forward to feedback from all interested parties.

CIG Process (New Starts, Small Starts and Core Capacity Improvements)

1. The law currently specifies that the Project Development phase for New Starts and Core Capacity Improvement projects must be completed within two years, signifying Congress' intent that projects move through the CIG process expeditiously. However, the law allows project sponsors to seek, and FTA to approve, an extension of the two-year timeframe. Is there a maximum amount of time beyond two years that FTA should allow a project sponsor to extend Project Development to remain consistent with the statutory intent?

2. In addition to the requirements specified in law that must be completed to advance from one phase of the CIG process to the next, FTA has also issued CIG policy guidance. For example, FTA specifies in the guidance that a minimum of 30 percent design be completed and a minimum of 30 percent of the non-CIG funding be committed or budgeted before a New Start or Core Capacity Improvement project may advance from the Project Development phase to the Engineering phase. FTA also specifies in the guidance that all types of CIG projects (New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity) have all of the non-CIG funding committed or budgeted, all critical third-party agreements completed, and a firm and reliable cost, scope, and schedule developed before a construction grant is awarded. Should FTA alter any provisions of its CIG guidance? Please be specific as to the

reason for the response and any proposed alterations.

Economic Development Criterion (New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity Improvements)

FTA currently evaluates the Economic Development criterion for New Starts and Small Starts projects based on the extent to which a proposed project is likely to induce additional, transit-supportive development in the future. The evaluation is based on: (1) The transit-supportive plans and policies in place (e.g., growth management plans, transit-supportive corridor policies; supportive zoning regulations near transit stations; and tools to implement land use policies); (2) the performance and impacts of those policies; and (3) the tools in place to maintain or increase the share of affordable housing in the project corridor (e.g., evaluation of project corridor-specific affordable housing needs and supply, or plans or policies to preserve and increase affordable housing).

3. Should FTA consider under the Economic Development criterion whether a proposed CIG project is located in a federally designated community development zone (e.g., designated opportunity zones, promise zones, empowerment zones, or choice neighborhoods)? Please provide reasons for answering yes or no. [See <https://www.irs.gov/credits-deductions/opportunity-zones-frequently-asked-questions#designated>; https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/field_policy_mgt/fieldpolicygmtpz; https://www.hud.gov/hudprograms/empowerment_zones, and https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/ph/cn]

4. Should FTA consider other ways of assessing whether local plans and policies are transit supportive and encourage affordable housing under the Economic Development criterion? Please be specific as to what different or additional metrics could be used, and what thresholds for these metrics could be deemed as transit-supportive.

Land Use Criterion (New Starts and Small Starts)

The Land Use criterion examines what exists in the project corridor today. FTA currently evaluates Land Use for New Starts and Small Starts projects based primarily on existing station area population densities, total existing employment served by the project, and the percentage of existing "legally binding affordability restricted" housing within a ½ mile of station areas as compared to the counties in which the corridor is located.

5. For equity considerations, should FTA evaluate measures under the Land Use criterion that are easy to calculate using census data, such as the minority population or the number of households in poverty along the alignment?

6. Should FTA consider "access to opportunity" under the Land Use criterion? If so, how specifically could FTA measure it? For example, should access provided by the project to education facilities, health care facilities, or food stores be considered? Please identify measures/data sources that would be readily available nationwide without requiring an undue burden on project sponsors to gather and FTA to verify the information.

7. In a *Memorandum on Redressing Our Nation's and the Federal Government's History of Discriminatory Housing Practices and Policies* (January 26, 2021), President Biden highlighted the Federal government's history of disconnecting neighborhoods from access to high-quality housing, jobs, public transit, and other resources. Should FTA consider under the Land Use criterion whether the project corridor has been affected by major transportation projects in the past that destroyed, divided, or isolated neighborhoods? If so, how should FTA analyze and evaluate those impacts and consider them in the Land Use criterion?

8. The more measures used to develop a criterion rating, the less influence each measure has on the outcome. How many measures are appropriate to include in total under the Land Use criterion given the questions above? Should the use of multiple, strongly correlated measures be avoided?

Environmental Benefits Criterion (New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity Improvements)

FTA currently evaluates Environmental Benefits for New Starts projects based on the dollar value of the anticipated direct and indirect benefits of the project resulting from the change in air quality criteria pollutants, change in energy use, change in greenhouse gas emissions, and change in safety divided by the annualized capital and operating cost of the proposed project. These benefits are computed based on the change in vehicle miles traveled resulting from implementation of the proposed project. The Environmental Benefits measure for Small Starts projects is currently the dollar value of the anticipated direct and indirect benefits to safety, energy, and air quality calculated in the same way as for New Starts projects but divided by the annualized Federal share of the project.

Core Capacity Improvement projects receive an automatic Medium rating on the Environmental Benefits criterion unless the sponsor requests to be evaluated using the New Starts measures.

9. As mentioned in the existing CIG policy guidance, FTA intended to include the direct and indirect benefits to human health resulting from implementation of a proposed project in the Environmental Benefits measures, but has had difficulty in determining how to do so. How should FTA calculate the health benefits of transit projects? Please provide specific proposed measures and data sources that would be readily available across the nation without requiring an undue burden on project sponsors to gather the information or on FTA to verify the information.

10. Should FTA also consider impacts to water quality under the Environmental Benefits criterion? Please provide any available research or data on the impact of a transit project on water quality. Please identify measures/data sources that would be readily available across the nation without requiring an undue burden on project sponsors to gather the information and FTA to verify the information.

Cost Effectiveness Criterion (New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity Improvements)

FTA currently evaluates Cost-Effectiveness by measuring the annual capital and operating and maintenance cost per trip on the project (New Starts); the annualized capital Federal share of the project per trip on the project (Small Starts); or the annualized Core Capacity Improvement share of the project per trip (Core Capacity).

11. As an incentive to encourage project sponsors to consider “green” elements in their proposed CIG projects, FTA currently allows the additional costs of such elements to be excluded from the Cost-Effectiveness calculation for New Starts projects. Specifically, FTA allows 50 percent of the purchase cost of “green” buses and 2.5 percent of the cost of facilities designed to achieve U.S. Green Council Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) or a comparable third-party certification to be excluded. Because the Core Capacity Improvement and Small Starts Cost-Effectiveness calculations are based only on the CIG share or Federal share and not the total annualized project cost, a similar incentive is not provided for those types of projects.

(a) How could FTA further incentivize project sponsors to incorporate

environmentally sustainable project elements into CIG projects? Please be specific in any suggestions provided.

(b) Are there lifecycle cost savings or other benefits that transit agencies have realized from implementing “green” elements (*i.e.*, evidence of fuel, maintenance, or parts savings)? Please provide examples or data.

Mobility Improvements (New Starts and Small Starts)

FTA currently evaluates Mobility Improvements on the total number of linked trips estimated to use the proposed CIG project, with a weight of two given to trips that would be made on the project by transit-dependent persons.

12. Should more emphasis be placed on trips made by transit-dependent persons? Why or why not?

Capacity Needs (Core Capacity Improvements)

The law specifies that to be eligible as a Core Capacity Improvement, a proposed project corridor must be at capacity today or will be in five years and the project must increase capacity by at least 10 percent. FTA currently uses space per passenger in the peak hour in the peak direction to evaluate Capacity Needs for light rail projects and seated load in the peak hour in the peak direction to evaluate Capacity Needs for commuter rail projects.

13. By what methods do transit agencies determine if a transit corridor is at capacity today or soon will be? Please be specific on the measures and calculations used. Are the measures based on readily available data routinely calculated by transit agencies or do they require a situation-specific analysis? Could the measures be applied in a national program evaluating various modes and corridors across the country?

14. What load factor policies do transit agencies use to determine when additional vehicles are needed on a transit line? Please provide specific examples of what load factors are used, and how they are calculated? Please include load factors used for each mode.

Congestion Relief (New Starts, Small Starts, and Core Capacity Improvements)

For New Starts and Small Starts projects, FTA currently evaluates the number of new weekday linked trips resulting from implementation of the proposed project to determine Congestion Relief, which serves as an indirect measure of reduced traffic congestion because those trips typically represent people who have chosen to take transit rather than drive. For Core

Capacity Improvement projects, FTA evaluates the percent increase in capacity in the corridor resulting from the proposed project to determine Congestion Relief.

15. Should FTA evaluate Congestion Relief differently? If so, please identify measures/data sources that would be readily available at transit agencies across the nation without requiring an undue burden on project sponsors to gather the information and FTA to verify the information.

Resiliency/Futureproofing (Not Currently Considered in the Evaluation Process)

FTA regulations, at 49 CFR 602.5, define “resilience” as the “ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to changing conditions and withstand, respond to, and recover rapidly from disruptions such as significant multi-hazard threats with minimum damage to social well-being, the economy, and the environment.”

16. Do transit agencies measure and evaluate resilience benefits of proposed capital projects? Do they use a quantitative approach? Please provide examples of specific metrics or analyses used.

17. Should resilience elements be formally incorporated into the CIG project evaluation process? If so, how might resilience be measured and incorporated? What thresholds would distinguish one project from another? Should FTA use its Hazard Mitigation Cost Effectiveness (HMCE) Tool to measure benefits and costs of resilience elements as it has done for projects considered for emergency relief funding (see <https://www.transit.dot.gov/funding/grant-programs/emergency-relief-program/hazard-mitigation-cost-effectiveness-hmce-tool>)? Please be specific in your responses.

18. The concept of “future-proofing” is often discussed along with resilience to ensure infrastructure projects will continue to be of value into the distant future and not become obsolete quickly. What emerging technologies may have an impact (positive or negative) on a transit system, and how can avoiding this situation be prepared for in the planning and design of CIG capital projects?

Local Financial Commitment (New Starts, Small Starts and Core Capacity Improvements)

Currently, FTA evaluates three factors when examining Local Financial Commitment: (1) The current financial condition of the project sponsor; (2) the amount of committed funds; and (3) the reasonableness of financial planning

assumptions and the resulting financial capacity they demonstrate. After evaluation of those three factors and calculation of a rating for Local Financial Commitment, FTA considers the CIG share request. Specifically, if the CIG share request is less than 50 percent and the calculated Local Financial Commitment rating is at least Medium, the rating is boosted one level. Small Starts and Core Capacity Improvement projects can qualify for financial warrants (automatic financial ratings) under certain circumstances.

19. Project sponsors that do not qualify for warrants (automatic financial ratings) must submit a 20-year cash-flow statement to FTA for evaluation and rating. Should FTA consider accepting cash flow statements for other time periods (e.g., a 10-year, 15-year, or 25-year project cash-flow statement)? If so, please explain why and the suggested time period.

FTA welcomes any additional feedback on the CIG program, including topics not listed in the questions above.

All interested parties are encouraged to respond to this RFI. Submissions are strictly voluntary. Individuals or entities responding to the RFI should state their role as well as knowledge and experience of the CIG program. FTA may request additional clarifying information from any or all respondents. If a respondent does not wish to be contacted by FTA for additional information, a statement to that effect should be included in the response. All information submitted should be unclassified and should not contain proprietary information.

FTA is not obligated to officially respond to the information received, but the responses will greatly assist FTA in developing proposed CIG policy guidance changes.

Comments may be submitted and viewed at Docket No. FTA-2021-0010 at <http://www.regulations.gov>.

Nuria I. Fernandez,
Administrator.

[FR Doc. 2021-15079 Filed 7-14-21; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-57-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Maritime Administration

[Docket No. MARAD-2021-0122]

Request for Comments on a Previously Approved Information Collection: Application for Coastwise Endorsement Eligibility Determinations for Foreign-Built Small Passenger Vessels

AGENCY: Maritime Administration, Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Maritime Administration (MARAD) invites public comments on our intention to request the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) approval to renew a previously approved information collection. The information to be collected is necessary for MARAD to identify the effect of potential foreign-built small passenger vessel coastwise operations on U.S. vessel builders and coastwise trade businesses. We are required to publish this notice in the **Federal Register** by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before September 13, 2021.

ADDRESSES: You may submit comments [identified by Docket No. MARAD-2021-0122] through one of the following methods:

- *Federal eRulemaking Portal:* www.regulations.gov. Search using the above DOT docket number and follow the online instructions for submitting comments.
- *Fax:* 1-202-493-2251.
- *Mail or Hand Delivery:* Docket Management Facility, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, West Building, Room W12-140, Washington, DC 20590, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays.

Instructions: All submissions must include the agency name and docket number for this rulemaking.

Note: All comments received will be posted without change to www.regulations.gov including any personal information provided.

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the Department's performance; (b) the accuracy of the estimated burden; (c) ways for the Department to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information collection; and (d) ways that the burden could be minimized without reducing the quality of the collected information. The agency will summarize and/or

include your comments in the request for OMB's clearance of this information collection.

Electronic Access and Filing

A copy of the notice may be viewed online at www.regulations.gov using the docket number listed above. A copy of this notice will be placed in the docket. Electronic retrieval help and guidelines are available on the website. It is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. An electronic copy of this document may also be downloaded from the Office of the Federal Register's website at www.FederalRegister.gov and the Government Publishing Office's website at www.GovInfo.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James Mead, 202-366-5723, Office of Cargo and Commercial Sealift, Maritime Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590, Email: james.mead@dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: Application for Coastwise Endorsement Eligibility Determinations for Foreign-built Small Passenger Vessels.

OMB Control Number: 2133-0529.

Type of Request: Renewal of a previously approved collection.

Abstract: Owners of foreign-built small passenger vessels desiring a coastwise endorsement to their USCG issued certificate of documentation must first obtain a Maritime Administration (MARAD) eligibility determination. Applications for MARAD small passenger vessel coastwise endorsement eligibility provide justification for a positive determination and a uniform means for MARAD to obtain relevant information necessary to perform its administrative function in accordance with statute.

Respondents: Owners of foreign-built small passenger vessels, prospective vessel owners and operators, vessel brokers.

Affected Public: Maritime businesses.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 138.

Estimated Number of Responses: 138.

Estimated Hours per Response: 1 hour.

Annual Estimated Total Annual Burden Hours: 138.

Frequency of Response: Annually.

Authority: The Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995; 44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended; and 49 CFR 1.93.

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