

The Supporting Statement

Introduction: Traffic Noise Model (TNM)[®] 3.0 Draft Use Comment Period on Model Performance and Usability, new information collection clearance request.

Part A. Justification.

1. Circumstances that make collection of information necessary:

23 CFR 772 Procedures for Abatement of Highway Traffic Noise and Construction Noise Section 772.9(a) states that “any analysis required by this subpart must use the FHWA [Federal Highway Administration] Traffic Noise Model (TNM)”. FHWA recently completed a new version of TNM[®]. It is being released as a draft for public use prior to FHWA requiring its use on Federal Aid Highway projects in the future. This release builds upon an earlier Beta Test and will permit public input on the model, its functionality, and its usability for a variety of project types.

During the Beta Test period the TNM[®] 3.0 was released to eight State Departments of Transportation/State Highway Agencies. The FHWA received 273 comments from seven of the participating States. TNM[®] 3.0 will now be released as a Draft to the general public and FHWA is expecting a considerable volume of questions and comments. The website, which is the subject of this OMB ICR, will help the FHWA respond to comments more quickly and efficiently by automatically sorting and grouping comments into general groups by topic area. This will aid FHWA in prioritizing improvements to the model to better serve the public need.

This Information Collection (IC) supports the *Quality of Life in Communities* and the *Environmental Sustainability Strategic Goals* and pertains to the **Strategic Objectives** titled *Enhance Quality of Life* and *Mitigate Environmental Impacts*. This IC is necessary to confirm a high-quality model based upon new acoustical research will be available to the public. The TNM[®] 3.0 will become part of FHWA’s policy requirements, and will more effectively analyze noise impacts and abatement measures to and for communities during project planning phases.

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

The information will be used by the FHWA’s Office of Planning, Environment and Realty (HEP) - Air Quality and Noise Team, and will be shared with the USDOT’s Volpe Center.

FHWA will use the information to prioritize improvements to the TNM[®] 3.0 and associated Guides/Manuals. Areas with more comments and questions will be categorized as high-priority and will result in improvements to TNM[®], additional guidance documentation, or a new entry in the existing TNM FAQ on the FHWA’s Highway Traffic Noise website.

3. Extent of automated information collection:

The IC is intended to be fully electronic with automated comment categorization. Participation is voluntary and if participants have questions or comments, they will be able to email them to or call FHWA directly or input them into a new online portal.

4. Efforts to identify duplication:

FHWA's intent to release TNM[®] 3.0 in draft format is to avail the public an opportunity to be familiar with the new model and to provide comments and suggestions. Although the model was released for a Beta Test to eight State Departments of Transportation, FHWA did not release it for public review. The comments from eight testers are very limited for a program that is required by Federal Regulations and is used nationwide. FHWA needs to release the model for wider public review and comment in order to ensure the best product and most consistent results when the final model is released for regulatory uses.

Comments and questions based on previous releases of the TNM[®] do not apply due to the extensive changes made to the underlying acoustics and the visible User Interface including new interoperability with independent software packages.

5. Efforts to minimize the burden on small businesses:

Participation is entirely voluntary. The model is available for download free of charge online, and comments may be submitted online at the same location. Overall the largest burden would occur in terms of time, when the participant actually uses the modeling software. Time spent will vary from user to user depending on what projects they choose to model and test. The IC portion of this draft release should not impose an undue burden on small businesses as there will be only four standard questions before a user is directed to a blank comment box with the option to add attachments. Depending on their responses participants may be asked a minimum of one question or the maximum four questions. All participants who choose to submit questions and comments via this website will be required to answer, at a minimum, the first question.

6. Impact of less frequent collection of information:

Information is collected on TNM[®] only at the time of a new version release. The latest version of the model, TNM[®] version 2.5, was released in 2004. Collecting information on user experience and comments in a draft release is necessary to correct model deficiencies before releasing the final version. This would help reduce FHWA staff time spent on technical assistance requests from users.

7. Special circumstances:

None of these circumstances apply.

8. Compliance with 5 CFR 1320.8:

The FHWA published a Notice of Request for Comments on April 28, 2016 (81 FR 82), which solicited public comments regarding this information collection requirement. We received one comment regarding this information collection via email. The commenter requested to be part of the Beta Test for TNM[®] 3.0.

9. Payments or gifts to respondents:

There are no payments or gifts to respondents.

10. Assurance of confidentiality:

Users will not be asked to provide any confidential information. Comments are expected to relate to model functionality and features only.

11. Justification for collection of sensitive information:

No sensitive information will be collected.

12. Estimate of burden hours for information requested:

We expect approximately 200 participants (52 State DOTs, consultant/contractors, researchers, academia and other interested transportation and environmental stakeholders).

The bulk of the burden for this collection will be reviewing guidance and installing the software (5 hours), and inputting the project data (10 hours). The second step will be the inputting comments. Participants are expected to respond whenever they come across an issue, or have an idea, they consider important enough to submit. Based on the Beta testing responses the average amount is expected to be 20 questions or comments from each respondent. It is expected that inputting each response will take no more than 10 minutes.

200 Participants

Project Data Input = 3000 hours (15 hours X 200 participants)

Comment Input = 667 hours (10 minutes X 20 comments per participants X 200 participants)

Estimated Total = 3667 burden hours

There should be no printing costs associated with participating in this effort.

13. Estimate of total annual costs to respondents:

No additional capital/start-up costs will be needed to participate in this effort as it is entirely voluntary.

There should not be any additional operation and maintenance costs from participation other than routine computer care and updating which is recommended outside the scope of the user's participation in this IC.

14. Estimate of cost to the Federal government:

FHWA employees are expected to review all comments, discuss, and make decisions on implementation. Total FHWA staff time is based on 4 staff working 20 hours per week for 3 weeks at a salary rate equivalent to a mid GS 13 (\$40.10/hour) for a total of \$9,624.00.

15. Explanation of program changes or adjustments:

This is a new IC request.

16. Publication of results of data collection:

Responses will be considered, and potentially implemented as improvements to TNM[®] 3.0. As such there will no separate publication of participant questions or comments and FHWA responses to these. The final TNM[®] release for mandatory usage in accordance with 23 CFR 772 is expected to occur toward the end of the 2017 calendar year.

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

The expiration date will be displayed.

18. Exceptions to certification statement:

FHWA is not requesting an exception to the certification station.