DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Transit Administration


National Transit Database: Capital Asset Reporting

AGENCY: Federal Transit Administration, DOT.

ACTION: Notice; Response to comments.

SUMMARY: This notice finalizes the expansion of the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) National Transit Database (NTD) Asset Inventory reporting requirements.

DATES: The reporting requirements will be optional in report year 2017 with full implementation required in report year 2018.

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A. Background

On August 19, 2014, FTA published a Federal Register notice (initial notice) (Docket No. FTA–2014–0006, 79 FR 49146) for comment on proposed revisions to the NTD Reporting Manual. The notice described various proposed changes to the NTD annual module, including a revised capital asset inventory reporting module for urban reporters. In response to the initial notice, commenters requested that FTA postpone the implementation of the expanded asset inventory until after the publication of the Transit Asset Management Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. FTA agreed with this request and a second Federal Register notice was published on November 18, 2015 (Docket No. FTA–2015–0029, 80 FR 72137). The second notice responded to comments received in response to proposals in the initial notice. In addition, in response to comments, the second notice proposed changes to FTA’s initial proposed reporting requirements, and requested comment on these proposed changes. The comment period for this second notice closed on January 19, 2016.

The proposed changes to the NTD Reporting Manual stem from amendments to Federal transit law made by the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP–21) (Pub. L. 112–141, July 6, 2012), which require recipients of chapter 53 funds to report to the NTD any information relating to a transit asset inventory or condition assessment conducted by the recipient. (49 U.S.C. 5335(c)). Currently, the NTD only collects asset inventory information on revenue vehicles and summary counts for other asset categories, such as maintenance facilities and fixed guideway. There are some assets, such as signal or communications systems, for which NTD collects no data. In the both the initial and second notice, FTA proposed to collect additional asset inventory data to meet the asset inventory and condition reporting requirements at 49 U.S.C. 5335(c).

In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, FTA included in the second notice a summary of the burden hours and costs for this enhanced reporting requirement. FTA estimated that the initial year burden nationally would be 18,636 hours for urban reporters and 13,097 hours for state and rural reporters, or 31,097 hours in total. This represents a 10.5% increase to the total NTD reporting requirement in the first year. FTA estimated the burden in subsequent years at 9,318 hours for urban reporters and 6,549 for state and rural reporters, for a total of 15,867 hours, representing a 5.2% increase to the total NTD reporting requirement.

B. Response to Comments on Expansion of Capital Asset Reporting

The comment period for the second notice closed on January 19, 2016. FTA received 25 comments. Following is a summary of the comments received with FTA responses.

Comment: FTA received a number of comments expressing concern over the additional burden imposed by expanding the asset inventory. Twenty commenters stated that the proposal was too burdensome. Thirteen commenters expressed concern that the additional reporting burden may divert resources away from transit service provision. Eight commenters felt the burden estimates provided by FTA were understated.

Response: The final Transit Asset Management (TAM) rule, also published in today’s Federal Register, requires all agencies to (1) create and maintain an asset inventory along with condition assessments, and (2) develop performance targets. FTA calculated a paperwork burden estimate for those tasks and included that estimate in the TAM rule making process. The NTD burden estimate provided in the second NTD notice assumes that an agency will already have an asset inventory in place as part of its compliance with the TAM rule and, therefore, only includes the time and costs estimated to enter existing asset inventory information into the NTD reporting system. In some cases, modifications to existing data may be necessary to enter this information into the NTD. The burden estimates provided in the second notice take into account small modifications of existing information in the asset inventories required by the TAM rule for reporting in the standard formats established by the NTD.

In calculating the burden estimate for NTD reporting, FTA asked several agencies to enter their existing asset inventory information into the proposed format and report the time necessary to complete this task. Three agencies completed an entire report and their experience with the new reporting requirements served as the foundation for the final estimates. A ‘per field’ reporting time was calculated and then multiplied out over the estimated data fields expected to be completed to create a final burden estimate.

FTA remains committed to implementing reasonable data reporting requirements, while also meeting the requirements in the law for reporting asset condition information. In response to the initial round of comments on the asset inventory, FTA made several modifications to reduce the overall reporting burden, including removing replacement cost information for all asset types. FTA believes that this asset inventory fulfills the MAP–21 update to 49 U.S.C. 5335(c) that recipients report asset inventory and condition assessment information to the NTD and allows meaningful data analysis on the national capital needs of the transit industry. While FTA recognizes that the proposed changes would result in an increase over the current reporting requirements, the highest burden would exist in the first year of start-up reporting. Once an asset has been entered into the inventory module, the information would be pre-populated for each subsequent year. Reporters only would be responsible for providing annual updates to new or retired asset inventory items in subsequent years.

Comment: An additional area of concern was related to the new reporting requirements for recipients of funding under 49 U.S.C. 5310 (section 5310). Nine commenters stated that reporting for section 5310 recipients should be limited or eliminated entirely. Ten commenters felt that any reporting done on behalf of section 5310 recipients should be done at the designated recipient or State level rather...
than the subrecipient level to minimize the burden of this new reporting. This same group of commenters suggested that only vehicles used in public transit and, preferably only vehicles purchased with federal money, should be reported. Five commenters requested that performance targets and reporting should be removed for section 5310 recipients.

Response: FTA is committed to developing requirements that are mindful of the burden for small transit providers. FTA understands that direct reporting may prove too difficult for small section 5310 recipients. In order to minimize this burden, FTA concurs with the comment that reporting on the assets for section 5310 recipients should be performed at the designated recipient or State level. The reporting guidance will be updated to reflect this change.

In response to the applicability of reporting for section 5310 reporters: The NTD asset inventory requirements will mirror the reporting requirements established by the Transit Asset Management rule. The final reporting requirements for the National TAM System apply to all chapter 53 recipients or subrecipients who own, operate, or manage public transportation capital assets. FTA currently requires NTD reports from recipients of funds under the Urbanized Area Formula Program (49 U.S.C. 5307 or section 5307) and the Rural Area Formula Program (49 U.S.C. 5311 or section 5311). As such, this new rule replaces references to section 5307 and section 5311 recipients and subrecipients of chapter 53 funds. This change will require recipients and subrecipients of other FTA grant programs, such as the section 5310 formula program for the enhanced mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities, who are not also receiving funds under section 5307 or section 5311, to start reporting to the NTD. FTA will not apply existing NTD reporting requirements to all recipients of chapter 53 funds. FTA will apply only the reporting requirements proposed under the National TAM System to those transit providers that do not currently report.

Comment: Eleven commenters requested a reduced set of reporting requirements for section 5311 recipients. This group of commenters asked to have required reporting reduced below current NTD reporting levels for revenue vehicles.

Response: The revenue vehicle inventory required for section 5311 recipients is a greatly reduced version of vehicle inventory required for urban reporters. In the expanded asset inventory, FTA is only requesting one additional data element for revenue vehicles from section 5311 recipients: A useful life benchmark for each fleet, which is necessary for calculating the performance measures under the TAM rule. Additionally, FTA’s research indicates that no exclusively rural subrecipients provide rail fixed guideway service, so rural subrecipients will not need to report the slow zones metric. For the other two performance measures, facility conditions and service vehicles, FTA is proposing to collect only the minimum data required for these measures.

Comment: Fifteen commenters stated that the proposed inventory should not include contractor assets. One transit agency specifically stated that condition assessments and replacement cost information should not be required for any contractor-owned assets.

Response: FTA understands the difficulty of providing detailed information on contractor assets. However, the NTD plans to follow the decision codified in the final TAM rule that a TAM Plan should, to a certain extent, take into account third party assets used in the provision of public transportation service. The final rule requires that all assets used in the provision of transit service be included in a transit providers’ asset inventory, including those assets that are owned, operated, or maintained by a third party or were procured jointly. However, agencies would only be responsible for conducting condition assessments, establishing performance targets, and reporting these condition assessments and performance targets to the NTD for capital assets for which it has direct capital responsibility. A transit provider has direct capital responsibility for an asset if that asset has been or currently is included in its program of capital projects. A transit provider also has direct capital responsibility for an asset if it can reasonably anticipate that the asset will be included in its program of capital projects during the TAM plan horizon period. Once an asset becomes a part of a transit provider’s capital program, the transit provider must comply with the final rule’s condition assessment, target setting, and investment prioritization requirements.

Comment: A number of comments related to consistency between the NTD’s proposed asset inventory and other FTA reporting requirements and/or requests. Three commenters suggested that the requirements and organization of data in the NTD asset inventory should mirror those of the Transit Economic Requirement Model (TERM). Five commenters stated that the assets reported to the NTD should not necessarily be subject to the Transit Asset Management rule requirements.

Response: FTA developed the proposed asset inventory with the TERM requirements in mind. While the requirements are not identical, the proposed NTD inventory is intended to supplement the data currently available through annual surveys for TERM. In some cases, the data collected through this NTD inventory would contain the same requirement moving forward.

FTA also requires that agencies provide basic information for all passenger stations that they use for transit service regardless of ownership or capital responsibility. Additionally, basic inventory information is required for all track and guideway regardless of ownership or capital responsibility. Inventory information for maintenance and administrative facilities are only reportable if the agency has full or partial capital replacement responsibility for the facility.

Comment: Twelve commenters requested the removal of service equipment from the NTD Asset Inventory.

Response: In order to best align the NTD asset inventory with the TAM rule reporting requirements, FTA believes it is appropriate to keep an inventory of ‘service equipment’ in the NTD. This information will provide verification of the TAM performance targets and performance against those targets. In addition, non-revenue service vehicles and equipment represent a large capital expense for some agencies. Including a basic inventory of these vehicles and equipment in the NTD will provide additional clarity on the state of good repair backlog for the transit industry.

The final TAM rule requires transit providers to report the percentage of non-revenue, support-service and maintenance vehicles that have met or exceeded their useful life benchmark. This is the identified SGR performance measure for equipment. Non-revenue service vehicles are an easily understood and readily identifiable category of equipment, and the age-based performance measure is the most simple and straightforward performance measure available.

Comment: Fifteen commenters stated that the proposed inventory should not include contractor assets. One transit agency specifically stated that condition assessments and replacement cost information should not be required for any contractor-owned assets.
The A–50 and A–55 forms collect information on the guideway and track elements, respectively. The A–50 form is used to capture the structural elements of the guideway, including bridges, viaducts, and other support structures. The A–55 form is used to collect information on the tracks, including the type of track system (e.g., rail, overhead catenary), track gauge, and track conditions.

The A–50 and A–55 forms also require the entry of estimated dollar values for each asset. These dollar values are used to calculate the useful life of the asset, which is defined as the period during which the asset is expected to be road-worthy revenue service vehicles—i.e., the period during which the asset is expected to be safe, reliable, and capable of supporting revenue service.

The A–50 and A–55 forms also require the entry of the estimated physical life of the asset. This is the period during which the asset is expected to be used before it becomes uneconomical to repair or replace it. The physical life of an asset is typically less than its useful life, as assets may become obsolete or damaged before they reach the end of their useful life.

The A–50 and A–55 forms also require the entry of the estimated residual value of the asset. This is the estimated value of the asset at the end of its useful life. The residual value is used to calculate the depreciation of the asset, which is the allocation of the cost of the asset over its useful life.

The A–50 and A–55 forms also require the entry of the estimated depreciation rate of the asset. This is the rate at which the cost of the asset is allocated over its useful life. The depreciation rate is typically based on the asset's physical life and residual value.

The A–50 and A–55 forms also require the entry of the estimated date of acquisition of the asset. This is the date when the asset was first placed in service. The date of acquisition is used to determine the asset's age and, consequently, its useful life and depreciation rate.

The A–50 and A–55 forms also require the entry of the estimated cost of the asset. This is the total amount of money that was spent to acquire the asset. The cost of the asset is used to determine its depreciation and, consequently, its useful life.

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grade ballast, elevated/concrete etc.) and power/signal elements including substations and third rail. The A–55 collects information on the track including linear feet of tangent and curve track as well as crossovers and turnouts.

Comment: A number of commenters submitted feedback on the requirements for the TAM Notice of Proposed Rulemaking under this notice. In general, the comments related to the proposed TAM Plan elements or granularity of data required for the TAM plan.

Response: As these comments are not directly applicable to the NTD Asset Inventory requirements they have not been further summarized or addressed in this notice.

C. Final Reporting Requirements

The finalized reporting requirements can be found on the NTD Web site at: [www.transit.dot.gov/ntd](http://www.transit.dot.gov/ntd).

The reporting requirements will be optional in report year 2017 with full implementation required in report year 2018. An overview of these requirements is as follows:

1. Administrative and Maintenance Facilities. Reported for all facilities for which an agency has a capital responsibility. Collects information on administrative and maintenance facilities used to supply transit service, including facility name, street address, square footage, year built or substantially reconstructed, and primary transit mode supported. Also includes a condition assessment at least once every three years for facilities for which an agency has capital replacement responsibility.

2. Passenger and Parking Facilities. Reported for all passenger and parking facilities used in transit service. Collects information on passenger facilities and passenger parking facilities used in the provision of transit service, including facility name, street address, square footage and number of parking spaces, year built or substantially reconstructed, primary mode and percent of capital responsibility. Also includes a condition assessment at least once every three years for facilities for which an agency has capital replacement responsibility.

3. Fixed Guideway. Reported for all fixed guideway used in transit service. Collects data on linear guideway assets and power and signal equipment, including the length of specific types of guideway and corresponding equipment, reported as network totals by mode and operating agreement. The data includes quantity, expected service years, date of construction or major rehabilitation (within a ten year window) and percent of capital responsibility.

4. Track. Reported for all track used in transit service. Collects data on track assets, including length and total number of track special work, reported as network totals by rail mode and operating agreement. The data includes expected service years, date of construction or major rehabilitation and percent of capital responsibility.

5. Revenue Vehicles. Reporting requirements remain the same for urban/full and rural/reduced reporters with the addition of a useful life benchmark for each vehicle fleet. Section 5310 recipients now report according to the rural/reduced requirements.

6. Service Vehicles. Reported for all non-revenue service vehicles for which an agency has capital replacement responsibility. Collects data on service vehicles that support transit service delivery, maintain revenue vehicles, and perform administrative activities. The data includes quantity, expected service life, and year of manufacture. Also includes a useful life benchmark for each vehicle type.

7. Transit Asset Management Performance Metrics. The metrics included in the Transit Asset Management rule are reported annually to the NTD: (a) Equipment-Service Vehicles. The performance measure for non-revenue, support and maintenance vehicles is the percentage of vehicles that have met or exceeded their useful life benchmark (ULB). To determine the ULB, a Transit Provider may either use the default ULB established by FTA or a ULB established by the Transit Provider in consideration of local conditions and usage and approved by FTA. The NTD system will automatically calculate performance based on these reports. Reporters are also required to provide an annual target for each facility type. FTA will provide additional technical assistance and guidance on how to measure a performance restriction.

(b) Rolling Stock. The performance measure for rolling stock is the percentage of revenue vehicles within a particular asset class that have either met or exceeded their useful life benchmark (ULB). To determine the ULB, a recipient may either use the default ULB established by FTA or a ULB established by the recipient in consideration of local conditions and usage and approved by FTA. Reporters are required to provide one target for each vehicle category. Also includes a useful life benchmark for each service vehicle category.

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SUMMARY: FTA has placed in the docket and on its Web site proposed guidance in the form of two FTA guidebooks to facilitate implementation of FTA's Transit Asset Management program: (1) “Guideway Performance Restriction Calculation” and (2) “Facility Condition Assessment.” The purpose of the proposed guidebooks is to inform the transit community of calculation methodologies for state of good repair performance measures for infrastructure and facilities. By this notice, FTA seeks public comment on the proposed guidebooks.