

The current audit team did not observe any progress on this corrective action.

**Non-Compliance Observation #3:
Deficiencies in Environmental
Commitment Tracking**

During Audit #3, ADOT was unable to provide FHWA with a process manual or consolidated report documenting the tracking of environmental commitments made during the environmental review process. The ADOT was unable to identify a meaningful tracking and monitoring system for environmental commitments and mitigation compliance. Since the last audit, ADOT has developed a spreadsheet for EP responsibilities and has rolled out the EPIC tracking sheet process which covers the Contractor responsibilities—non-standard specification commitments only. There is still no process manual or consolidated reporting of all environmental commitments required for each project.

**Non-Compliance Observation #4:
Incomplete Project File Submission and
Standard Folder Structure Issues**

As was observed in previous audits, during Audit #3, the audit team found several inconsistencies between ADOT's procedures for maintaining project files and the project file documentation provided to FHWA. Since that audit, ADOT's IT Group worked with the AZ Division to resolve the project file issue on the technological side. The ADOT IT Group determined that the electronic transfer process is working and is therefore not the cause of the incomplete project file submissions.

**Observation #3: Minor Edits Needed To
Resolve Deficiency in Section 4(f)
Evaluation of Archaeological Resources**

During Audit #1 and #2, FHWA identified inconsistencies with ADOT's Section 4(f) evaluation and documentation of archaeological sites. In response to the Audit #2 finding, ADOT updated their Section 106 Federal-aid Programmatic Agreement Manual with new preservation in place language and in Audit #3 FHWA recommended edits to the new language. The ADOT has made the recommended edits.

**Observation #5: Inconsistent Use and
Absence of the 327 MOU Disclosure
Statement**

During Audit #3, the audit team project file reviews found inconsistent use of the disclosures statement on agency correspondence and technical reports, as well as absence of the statement in public involvement materials. The audit team found no

consistent process or procedure for inclusion of the 327 MOU disclosure statement in the ADOT manuals and guidance as required by MOU Part 3.1.3. The ADOT has drafted a new PIP that contains disclosure statement guidance, but no updates were found in the ADOT EP manuals.

**Observation #6: QA/QC Procedures
Lack Assessment of Compliance and
Observation #8: QA/QC Procedures Do
Not Inform the Performance Measures**

The audit team identified continuing issues with ADOT's QA/QC procedures, including the fact that ADOT does not check for compliance of the decision making and it is therefore unclear how the project-level QC reviews inform the program. These observations were also found with Audits #1, #2, and #3. In addition, it is unclear how the QA/QC procedures, such as the use of QC checklists, are informing ADOT about the technical adequacy of the environmental analyses conducted for projects and thereby inform the performance measures. No updates to the ADOT QA/QC procedures were made.

**Observation #8: Incomplete
Development and Implementation of
Performance Measures**

During Audit #2 and #3, the audit team reviewed ADOT's performance measures and reporting data submitted for the review period and concluded that ADOT had made progress toward developing and implementing its performance measures. For Audit #4, FHWA continues to identify this program objective as an area of concern, described in the observations above, and will continue to evaluate this area in subsequent audits.

Observation #9: Training Gaps

The audit team reviewed ADOT's 2021 training plan and ADOT's PAIR responses pertaining to its training program. The ADOT's EP staff training matrix indicates that while ADOT identifies the availability of staff training, many staff have not taken advantage of the opportunity for training, including other ADOT divisions subject to the 327 MOU provisions. The ADOT's training plan identifies that the training interval for some topics, such as the NEPA Assignment Program, is once only per staff member regardless of the period of time since the previous round of training. Staff may benefit from regular "refresher" type training, especially as regulatory requirements and policy may change over time. No changes in

response to this observation were made to the 2023 training plan.

Finalizing This Report

FHWA provided a draft of the audit report to ADOT for a 14-day review and comment period pursuant to Part 11.4.1 of the MOU, as well as notification of the non-compliance observations. The ADOT provided comments which the audit team considered in finalizing this draft audit report. The audit team acknowledges that ADOT has begun to address some of the observations identified in this report and recognizes ADOT's efforts toward improving their program. This includes an action plan defined by ADOT and the AZ Division Office to address non-compliance observations identified in the AZ Program reviews to date. FHWA published the draft audit report for public comment pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327(g)(2)(B) and no comments were received. FHWA is publishing this notice in the **Federal Register** for the final audit report.

[FR Doc. 2026-04353 Filed 3-4-26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

[Docket No. FHWA-2026-0199]

**Renewal Package From the State of
Ohio to the Surface Transportation
Project Delivery Program and
Proposed Memorandum of
Understanding (MOU) Assigning
Environmental Responsibilities to the
State**

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of proposed Second Renewal MOU and request for comments.

SUMMARY: This notice announces that FHWA received and reviewed a renewal package from the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) requesting participation in the Surface Transportation Project Delivery Program (Program). This Program allows for FHWA to assign, and States to assume, responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), and all or part of FHWA's responsibilities for environmental review, consultation, or other actions required under any Federal environmental law with respect to one or more Federal highway projects within the State. The FHWA has determined the renewal package to be

complete and developed a draft Second Renewal MOU with ODOT outlining how the State would implement the Program with FHWA oversight. The FHWA invites the public to comment on ODOT's request, including its renewal package and the proposed Second Renewal MOU, which includes the proposed assignments and assumptions of environmental review, consultation, and other activities.

DATES: Please submit comments by April 6, 2026.

ADDRESSES: To ensure that you do not duplicate your docket submissions, please submit them by only one of the following means:

Federal eRulemaking Portal: Go to www.regulations.gov and follow the online instructions for submitting comments.

Mail: Docket Management Facility; U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, West Building Ground Floor Room W12-140, Washington, DC 20590-0001.

Hand Delivery: West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20590 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. e.t., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

Instructions: You must include the agency name and docket number at the beginning of your comments. All comments received will be posted without change to www.regulations.gov, including any personal information provided.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

For FHWA: David Snyder by email at David.Snyder@dot.gov or by telephone at 614-280-6896. The FHWA Ohio Division Office's normal business hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Eastern Time), Monday-Friday, except for Federal holidays.

For the State of Ohio: Tim Hill by email at Tim.Hill@dot.ohio.gov or by telephone at 614-644-0377. State business hours are the same as above although State holidays may not completely coincide with Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Electronic Access

You may submit or retrieve comments online through the Federal eRulemaking portal at: www.regulations.gov. The website is available 24 hours each day, 365 days each year. Please follow the instructions. Electronic submission and retrieval help and guidelines are available under the help section of the website.

An electronic copy of this document may also be downloaded from the Office

of the Federal Register's home page at: www.federalregister.gov and the U.S. Government Publishing Office's web page at: www.govinfo.gov.

Background

Section 327 of title 23, United States Code (U.S.C.), allows the Secretary of the DOT to assign, and a State to assume, the responsibilities under NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*) and all or part of the responsibilities for environmental review, consultation, or other actions required under certain Federal environmental laws with respect to one or more Federal-aid highway projects within the State. The FHWA is authorized to act on behalf of the Secretary with respect to these matters.

The ODOT entered the Program on December 28, 2015 after submitting its application to FHWA, obtaining FHWA's approval, and entering into a MOU in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 327 and FHWA's application regulations for the Program (23 CFR part 773). The MOU was amended on June 6, 2018. On December 6, 2019, after coordination with FHWA, ODOT submitted the renewal package in accordance with the renewal regulations in 23 CFR 773.115. The First Renewal MOU was executed on December 14, 2020 and currently set to expire on December 28, 2025. On November 5, 2025, FHWA extended the First Renewal MOU to June 28, 2026.

Under the proposed renewal MOU, FHWA would assign to the State, through ODOT, its responsibility of making project-level decisions in relation to NEPA on highway projects within the State of Ohio that are proposed to be funded with Title 23 funds or otherwise require FHWA approval, and that require preparation of a categorical exclusion determination, environmental assessment, or environmental impact statement with the exception of the following: (1) highway projects authorized under 23 U.S.C. 202 and 203, highway projects under 23 U.S.C. 204 unless the project will be designed and constructed by ODOT; (2) projects that cross State boundaries; (3) projects that cross or are adjacent to international boundaries; (4) recreational trails projects under 23 U.S.C. 206; and (5) any project advanced by a Non-ODOT Direct Recipient of Federal-Aid Highway Funds, *i.e.* a project in which the Federal funds do not pass through ODOT and there is no Local Public Agency Federal project agreement between ODOT and the Non-ODOT entity.

The assignment would give the State the responsibility to conduct environmental review, consultation, and

other related activities for project delivery under the following laws and requirements:

Air Quality

- Clean Air Act (CAA), 42 U.S.C. 7401-7671q, with the exception of project level conformity determinations (42 U.S.C. 7506)

FHWA-Specific

- Planning and Environmental Linkages, 23 U.S.C. 168, with the exception of those FHWA responsibilities associated with 23 U.S.C. 134 and 135
- Programmatic Mitigation Plans, 23 U.S.C. 169 with the exception of those FHWA responsibilities associated with 23 U.S.C. 134 and 135

Fisheries and Wildlife

- Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 668-668d
- Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661-667d
- Migratory Bird Treaty Act, 16 U.S.C. 703-712
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, 16 U.S.C. 1531-1544
- Marine Mammal Protection Act, 16 U.S.C. 1361-1423h
- Anadromous Fish Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 757a-757f
- Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 1976, as amended, 16 U.S.C. 1801-891d

Hazardous Materials Management

- Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), 42 U.S.C. 9601-9675
- Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA), 42 U.S.C. 9671-9675
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), 42 U.S.C. 6901-6992k

Historic and Cultural Resources

- Archeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, 16 U.S.C. 470(aa)-470(mm)
- Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act, 25 U.S.C. 3001-3013; 18 U.S.C. 1170
- Archeological and Historic Preservation Act, 54 U.S.C. 312501-312508
- National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 54 U.S.C. 300101, *et seq.*
- Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 [Section 4(f)], 23 U.S.C. 138, 49 U.S.C. 303 and implementing regulations at 23 CFR part 774

Noise

- FHWA noise regulations in 23 CFR part 772
- Noise Control Act of 1972, 42 U.S.C. 4901–4918

Parklands and Other Special Land Uses

- Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, 54 U.S.C. 200302–200310
- Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, 23 U.S.C. 138, 49 U.S.C. 303 and implementing regulations at 23 CFR part 774

Social and Economic Impacts

- American Indian Religious Freedom Act, 42 U.S.C. 1996
- Farmland Protection Policy Act, 7 U.S.C. 4201–4209

Water Resources and Wetlands

- Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1251–1387 (sections 319, 401, 402, 404 and 408)
- Emergency Wetlands Resources Act, 16 U.S.C. 3901 and 3921
- FHWA wetland and natural habitat mitigation regulations, 23 CFR 777
- Flood Disaster Protection Act, 42 U.S.C. 4001–4130
- General Bridge Act of 1946, 33 U.S.C. 525–533
- Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899, 33 U.S.C. 401–406
- Safe Drinking Water Act, 42 U.S.C. 300f–300j–26
- Wetland Mitigation, 23 U.S.C. 119(g) and 133(b)(14)
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, 16 U.S.C. 1271–1287
- Coastal Barrier Resources Act, 16 U.S.C. 3501–3510
- Coastal Zone Management Act, 16 U.S.C. 1451–1466

The Secretary's responsibilities for government-to-government consultation with Indian Tribes, as defined in 36 CFR 800.16(m), are not assigned to or assumed by ODOT under the proposed MOU. The FHWA will retain responsibility for conducting formal government-to-government consultation with federally recognized Indian Tribes. ODOT will conduct routine consultation with Indian Tribes and understands that an Indian Tribe has the right for government-to-government consultation with FHWA upon request.

Nothing in the proposed MOU shall be construed to permit ODOT's assumption of the Secretary's responsibilities for conformity determinations required by Section 176 of the CAA (42 U.S.C. 7506) or any responsibility under 23 U.S.C. 134 or 135, or under 49 U.S.C. 5303 or 5304.

On the cover page of all environmental analyses prepared under the authority granted by this MOU,

ODOT shall insert the following language in a way that is conspicuous to the reader, or include it in a CE project record: The environmental review, consultation, and other actions required by applicable Federal environmental laws for this project are being, or have been, carried out by ODOT pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 327 and a Memorandum of Understanding dated [MMDDYYYY] and executed by FHWA and ODOT.

ODOT will also disclose to the public, agencies and Tribes as part of agency outreach and public involvement procedures, the above disclosure.

ODOT will not make any determination that an action constitutes a constructive use of a Section 4(f) property under 49 U.S.C. 303/23 U.S.C. 138 without first consulting with FHWA and obtaining approval of such determination.

A copy of the proposed Second Renewal MOU and renewal package may be viewed on the docket at www.regulations.gov, as described above, or may be obtained by contacting FHWA or the State at the addresses provided above. A copy also may be viewed on ODOT's website at <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/programs/nepa-odot/nepa-assignment-documentation>.

The FHWA Ohio Division, in consultation with FHWA Headquarters, will consider the comments submitted when making its decision on the proposed MOU. FHWA and ODOT may revise the MOU based on substantive comments and will make the final renewal MOU available to the public.

(Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Program Number 20.205, Highway Planning and Construction. The regulations implementing E.O. 12372 regarding intergovernmental consultation on Federal programs and activities apply to this program.)

(Authority: 23 U.S.C. 327; 42 U.S.C. 4331, 4332; 23 CFR 771.117.)

Sean McMaster,

Administrator, Federal Highway Administration.

[FR Doc. 2026–04354 Filed 3–4–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–22–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**Federal Railroad Administration**

[Docket Number FRA–2025–0324]

Notice of Petition for Waiver of Compliance

AGENCY: Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: This document provides the public notice that Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad (RBMN) petitioned FRA for relief from certain regulations concerning stenciling and reflectorization of rail cars.

DATES: FRA must receive comments on the petition by April 6, 2026. FRA will consider comments received after that date to the extent practicable.

ADDRESSES:

Comments: Comments related to this docket may be submitted by going to <https://www.regulations.gov> and following the online instructions for submitting comments.

Instructions: All submissions must include the agency name and docket number. All comments received will be posted without change to <https://www.regulations.gov>; this includes any personal information. Please see the Privacy Act heading in the **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** section of this document for Privacy Act information related to any submitted comments or materials.

Docket: For access to the docket to read background documents or comments received, go to <https://www.regulations.gov> and follow the online instructions for accessing the docket.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Michael Barron, Railroad Safety Specialist, FRA Motive Power & Equipment Division, telephone: 202–493–1367, email: Michael.Barron@dot.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Under part 211 of title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), this document provides the public notice that by letters received July 7, 2025 and January 21, 2026, RBMN petitioned FRA for a special approval pursuant to 49 CFR part 215 (Railroad Freight Car Safety Standards), and a waiver of compliance from certain provisions of the Federal railroad safety regulations contained in part 215, Subpart D (Stenciling) and part 224 (Reflectorization of Rail Freight Rolling Stock). The relevant Docket Number is FRA–2025–0324.

Specifically, RBMN requests a special approval pursuant to § 215.203, *Restricted cars*, in this docket for caboose RBMN 478044, which is more than 50 years from the date of original construction. RBMN also seeks relief from § 215.303, *Stenciling of restricted cars*, and part 224. In support of its request, RBMN explains that the car has a “sound body” and will not be interchanged with another railroad.