

whether a motor vehicle or item of replacement equipment complies with an applicable motor vehicle safety standard or contains a defect that relates to motor vehicle safety. 49 U.S.C. 30162(a)(2); 49 CFR 552.3. Upon receipt of a properly filed petition, the Agency conducts a technical review of the petition, material submitted with the petition, and any additional information. 49 CFR 552.6. The technical review may consist solely of a review of information already in the possession of the Agency or it may include the collection of information from the motor vehicle manufacturer and/or other sources. *Id.* After conducting the technical review and considering appropriate factors, which may include, but are not limited to, the nature of the complaint, allocation of Agency resources, Agency priorities, the likelihood of uncovering sufficient evidence to establish the existence of a defect, and the likelihood of success in any necessary enforcement litigation, the Agency will grant or deny the petition. *See* 49 U.S.C. 30162(a)(2); 49 CFR 552.8.

2. Defect Petition Summary

In a letter dated February 5, 2026, Mr. James A. Palmer submitted a Petition concerning his MY 2006 Nissan Frontier. The Petition alleged two main hazardous conditions: an odor of raw gasoline indicating a potential fuel leak, and engine stalling during startup and vehicle operation. The Petition cited prior NHTSA safety recalls, specifically Recalls 10V517 (ECM Relay), 07V435 (Fuel Filler Tube), and 10V075 (Fuel Tank/Sender), arguing that his vehicle's symptoms resemble the defects associated with these actions and asserting that a safety defect is not subject to expiration.

3. Office of Defects Investigation Analysis

In evaluating a defect, ODI considers a range of factors, including the age and mileage of the subject vehicle fleet, failure frequency, defect trends, and whether component degradation is attributable to an inherent design or manufacturing flaw versus expected end-of-life wear and tear.

The subject vehicle is a model year 2006 vehicle that has been in service for approximately 20 years. Standard automotive components including fuel hoses, rubber seals, gaskets, electrical relays, and engine sensors have a finite useful lifecycle and are subject to environmental exposure, operational stress, and natural degradation over extended timeframes.

ODI routinely distinguishes between an inherent manufacturing or design defect and normal lifecycle wear-out (*see, e.g.,* Denial of DP18-002, 87 FR 16823, finding underbody component issues late in vehicle life to be “indicative of normal, wear and tear failures”). As vehicles reach advanced age, individual component degradation and maintenance requirements are a standard expectation of vehicle ownership. Isolated component failures on high-age vehicles do not, in themselves, establish the presence of an actionable safety defect across a vehicle fleet.

The Petition references three historic NHTSA safety recall campaigns, Recalls 07V435, 10V075, and 10V517, arguing that because the subject vehicle exhibits fuel odors and engine stalling, these conditions demonstrate an unaddressed or persistent safety defect. However, a technical review of these cited recall campaigns demonstrates that they do not provide compelling support for the petitioner's allegations.

Regarding Recall 07V435, the action pertained exclusively to MY 1997–2001 Nissan Pathfinder and Infiniti QX4 vehicles to address corrosion of the lower fuel filler tube bracket in specific salt-belt states. At the time Recall 07V435 was initiated, the subject vehicles were 6 to 10 years old, and the consequence of the defect was a potential vehicle fire. This campaign did not involve the MY 2006 Nissan Frontier platform. Merely experiencing a general symptom such as a fuel odor on a 20-year-old vehicle does not establish a link to a localized corrosion issue on an entirely different vehicle generation produced years prior. In the case of MY 2006 Frontiers, the Agency is not aware of a trend of fire complaints on a product with over 20 years of exposure.

Recall 10V075 addressed a fuel sender float arm contacting an internal tank embossment, which caused the fuel gauge on certain MY 2006 and 2008 Frontier vehicles to inaccurately display a one-quarter tank level when the fuel tank was empty. That campaign was directed strictly at instrument gauge accuracy and engine stalling from fuel exhaustion, not a physical fuel leak or a breach of fuel system integrity. The petitioner's allegation of raw fuel odors reflects a potential physical leak or vapor loss, which is completely distinct from the fuel-gauge indication flaw remediated under Recall 10V075.

Recall 10V517 addressed silicon oxide accumulation on Engine Control Module (ECM) relay contacts within the Intelligent Power Distribution Module on select MY 2005–2006 vehicles. After

approximately 20 years of operational service and environmental exposure, engine stalling can be caused by a wide range of normal, age-related maintenance conditions. The presence of engine stalling on a 20-year-old vehicle does not, by itself, indicate the presence of the original manufacturing defect addressed in Recall 10V517.

The Petition must present specific data establishing a defect trend that poses an unreasonable risk to safety. Broadly associating general, late-life vehicle symptoms with historic, non-applicable, or previously remediated recall campaigns on multi-decade-old vehicles does not satisfy this requirement. Furthermore, NHTSA's oversight of recall execution ensures that campaign parameters (such as affected VIN ranges and build dates) are chosen based on specific defect determinations; therefore, individual component degradation on high-age vehicles outside these parameters likely represents routine wear and tear rather than an unaddressed defect trend.

The Agency has thoroughly assessed the material submitted by the Petitioner, consumer complaint information in NHTSA's databases, and other relevant information already in possession of the Agency. NHTSA does not believe that the issues presented by the Petitioner indicate the likely existence of a safety-related defect that would warrant a formal investigation. After full consideration of the available information, and in view of NHTSA's enforcement priorities, the Petition is denied.

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 30162(d) and 49 CFR part 552; delegation of authority at 49 CFR 1.95(a).¹

Eileen Sullivan,

Associate Administrator for Enforcement.

[FR Doc. 2026–19685 Filed 9–24–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–59–P

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Bureau of Transportation Statistics

[Docket No. DOT–OST–2026–1882]

Notice of Request for Clearance of a Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection: National Census of Ferry Operators

AGENCY: Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology (OST–R), DOT.

¹ The authority to determine whether to approve or deny defect Petitions under 49 U.S.C. 30162(d) and 49 CFR part 552 has been further delegated to the Associate Administrator for Enforcement.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the requirements of section 3506(c)(2)(A) of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice announces the intention of the BTS to request the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) approval for new iterations of an on-going biennial information collection related to the nation's ferry operations. The information collected from each census will be used to produce a descriptive database of existing ferry operations. A summary report of census findings will also be published by BTS on the BTS web page: www.bts.gov/ncfo.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before October 26, 2026.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Kenneth Steve, (202) 579-0672, NCFO Program Manager, BTS, OST-R, Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, Room E36-308, Washington, DC 20590. Office hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., E.T., Monday through Friday, except Federal holidays.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Title: National Census of Ferry Operators (NCFO).

Type of Request: Approval modifications to an existing information collection.

Affected Public: There are approximately 260 ferry operators nationwide.

Abstract: In 1998, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) (Pub. L. 105-178), section 1207(c), directed the Secretary of Transportation to conduct a study of ferry transportation in the United States and its possessions. In 2000, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Intermodal and Statewide Planning conducted a census of approximately 260 ferry operators to identify: (1) existing ferry operations including the location and routes served; (2) source and amount, if any, of funds derived from Federal, State, or local governments supporting ferry construction or operations; (3) potential domestic ferry routes in the United States and its possessions; and (4) potential for use of high speed ferry services and alternative-fueled ferry services. In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) Public Law 109-59, Section 1801(e)) required that the Secretary, acting through the BTS, shall establish and maintain a national ferry database containing current information regarding routes, vessels, passengers and vehicles carried, funding sources

and such other information as the Secretary considers useful. In 2012, MAP-21 legislation [Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (Pub. L. 112-141)] continued the BTS mandate to conduct the NCFO and also required that the FHWA use the NCFO data to set the specific formula for allocating federal ferry funds. The funding allocations were based on a percentage of the number of passenger boardings, vehicle boardings, and route miles served. In 2015, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act (Pub. L. 114-94, sec. 1112) continues the BTS mandate to conduct the NCFO on a biennial basis and extended the requirement that the FHWA use the NCFO data to set the specific formula for allocating federal ferry funds as required in MAP-21.

BTS conducted the first NCFO in 2006. The census was conducted again in 2008, 2010, 2014, 2016, 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024. Preparations are already underway for the 2026 NCFO in 2027. The overall length of the revised questionnaire for the 2026 NCFO will remain consistent with that of previous years. The 2028 questionnaire will be updated based on research performed between the 2026 and 2028 NCFO cycles with the goal to reduce burden and promote operators to respond. These information collections were originally approved by OMB under Control Number 2139-0009.

The census will be administered to the entire population of ferry operators (estimated 260). The census will request the respondents to provide information such as: the terminals served; the type of ownership; the number of passengers and vehicles carried in the past 12 months; vessel descriptions (including type of fuel), federal, state and local funding sources, and intermodal connectivity. All data collected for 2026 and 2028 NCFOs will be added to the existing database.

Data Confidentiality Provisions: The NCFO may collect confidential business information. The confidentiality of these data will be protected under 49 CFR 7.29. In accordance with this regulation, only statistical and non-sensitive business information will be made available through publications and public use data files. The statistical public use data are intended to provide an aggregated source of information on ferry boat operations nationwide. Business sensitive information may be shared with FHWA to support FAST Act funding allocations.

Frequency: This census will be performed every other year.

Estimated Average Burden per Response: The burden per respondent in

2026 is estimated to be an average of 30 minutes. This average is based on an estimate of 20 minutes to answer questions that require answers specific to that year and an additional 10 minutes to review (and revise as needed) previously submitted data that will be pre-populated for each ferry operation. The burden for conducting research into the questionnaire instrument will include no more than 9 cognitive interviews of operators as they interact with and answer different versions of the instrument. These changes will be implemented in the 2028 NCFO and should decrease burden.

Estimated Total Annual Burden: The annual burden for the 2026 NCFO (in the year that the census is conducted) is estimated to be 130 hours (that is 30 minutes per respondent for 260 respondents equals 7,800 minutes).

Response to Comments: A 60-day notice requesting public comment was issued in the **Federal Register** on July 9, 2026. One comment was received by Texas DOT. Texas DOT stated appreciation for the NCFO and suggested several changes or improvements. These improvements included streamlining the questionnaire by making previous submissions available and providing follow-up logic following entry of route origin and destination, providing alternate ways of submitting responses, increasing the type of data collected, and information about operators' fleets and plans for vessels and infrastructure. Texas DOT also expressed concern with the statement that the questionnaire takes on average 30 minutes, as it takes them closer to 60 minutes.

We appreciate Texas DOT's comments and their use of the NCFO data. Responses from previous years are available to download for operators that provided responses in the previous questionnaires, for their convenience. These responses can be downloaded and used to fill in the instrument questions. We prefill some data fields that are generally consistent among censuses and includes certain information on operators, vessels, segments, and terminals, totaling 40 pre-filled data fields. We appreciate Texas DOT's interest in expanding our data coverage to include more elements on vessels and current and planned infrastructure work. However, some of the requested types of data may increase burden on respondents and be interpreted as Business Sensitive by many operators, preventing their inclusion or utility. Other questions we might be able to include in future NCFO cycles, and we will investigate other

data sources, such as administrative data, for some of the additional data types requested. We are currently working to streamline the questionnaire and make it more user friendly. We recognize that the time it takes operators to fill out the questionnaire varies depending on the complexity of the operator. While it takes some longer than the average 30 minutes, there are many operators for whom it only takes approximately 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Texas DOT also suggested an Excel format for the questionnaire, where the responses can be directly loaded from the sheet to the instrument, and we will discuss this option with our IT team. We greatly appreciate the suggestions and comments provided by Texas DOT and taking the time to help improve the NCFO.

Public Comments Invited: Interested parties are invited to send comments regarding any aspect of this information collection, including, but not limited to: (1) the necessity and utility of the information collection for the proper performance of the functions of the DOT; (2) the accuracy of the estimated burden; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, clarity and content of the collected information; and (4) ways to minimize the collection burden without reducing the quality of the collected information. Send comments to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, 725–17th Street NW,

Washington, DC 20503, Attention: BTS Desk Officer.

Issued in Washington, DC.

Cha-Chi Fan,

Director, Office of Data Development and Standards, Bureau of Transportation Statistics, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Research and Technology.

[FR Doc. 2026–19636 Filed 9–24–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4910–9X–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Internal Revenue Service

Open Meeting of the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel Joint Committee

AGENCY: Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Treasury.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: An open meeting of the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel's Joint Committee will be conducted. The Taxpayer Advocacy Panel is soliciting public comments, ideas, and suggestions to improve customer service at the Internal Revenue Service. This meeting will be held as a virtual video conference via the Microsoft Teams platform.

DATES: The meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Fred N. Smith, Jr. by email at taxpayer.advocacy.panel@irs.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 10(a)(2) of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App. (1988), that an open meeting of the Taxpayer Advocacy Panel's Joint Committee will be held on Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time.

The public is invited to attend the meeting virtually, or by phone, and may provide oral comments or submit written statements for consideration. Due to meeting structure and time limitations, advance registration is required to attend or make public comments during the meeting. To register and receive meeting access information, please contact Fred N. Smith, Jr. at the contact information above no later than Friday, October 16, 2026.

Meeting materials, including the agenda and any handouts, will be made available prior to the meeting at www.improveirs.org.

The agenda will include a committee discussion of new and continuing issues and other activities related to the new TAP year.

Dated: September 23, 2026.

Saul M. Hernandez,

Designated Federal Official, Taxpayer Advocacy Panel.

[FR Doc. 2026–19690 Filed 9–24–26; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 4830–01–P