

United States
Department of Transportation

Procedure for Moving an Area from One Time Zone to Another

Ways to Change a Time Zone

Under Federal law, there are two ways in which an area in the United States can be moved from one time zone to another:

- **By statute:** Congress may enact a statute changing the time zone.
- **By regulation:** The Secretary of Transportation may issue regulations making changes.

This Web site discusses only the second since the first has not been used in over 60 years.

Submission of a Request to Change a Time Zone

1. **Requesting Party.** The request must be made by the highest political authority in the area which is the subject of the request.
 - a. **State Government:** For any part of the State, a request by the governor or the legislature meets this requirement; however, requests from this level are quite rare.
 - b. **Local Government:** Usually, the request covers one or more counties or parts of a county; hence, the request should come from the board of county commissioners or similar body.
2. **Information Required.** The request must be accompanied by the following:
 - a. **Certification.** A formal certification from the appropriate governmental official that the request is the result of official action by the requesting party, if the requesting party is a legislative body.
 - b. **Contact Information.** The name, address, telephone number, and title or position of a person representing the requesting party whom DOT may contact for further information.
 - c. **Supporting Information.** Detailed information supporting the requesting party's contention that the requested change would serve the convenience of commerce, as discussed below.
3. **Address.** Submit the request to:

Secretary of Transportation
Attention: General Counsel (C-50)
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.

Washington, DC 20590

Substantive Requirements

The principal standard for deciding whether to change a time zone is the convenience of commerce, which is defined very broadly to include consideration of all of the impacts upon a community that would result in a change in its standard of time. Examples of some of these considerations that should be addressed in the supporting information are the following:

1. Where do businesses in the community get their supplies and to where do they ship their goods or products?
2. Where does the community receive television and radio broadcasts from?
3. Where are the newspapers published that serve the community?
4. Where does the community get its bus and passenger rail services; if there is no scheduled bus or passenger rail service in the community, where must residents go to obtain these services?
5. Where is the nearest airport; if it is a local service airport, to what major airport does it carry passengers?
6. What percentage of residents of the community work outside of the community; where do these residents work?
7. What are the major elements of the community's economy; is the community's economy improving or declining; what Federal, State, or local plans, if any, are there for economic development in the community?
8. If residents leave the community for schooling, recreation, health care, or religious worship, what standard of time is observed in the places where they go for these purposes?

DOT Handling of Requests

The General Counsel's Office reviews requests for time zone changes. If there is enough information to conclude that the change may in fact serve the convenience of commerce, the General Counsel issues a proposed rule to make the change and invites written public comment on the proposal. Normally, a public hearing is held by DOT in the community so that those affected by the issue can make their views known, and the public is given approximately 2 months in which to submit their written comments, which should address the proposal's impacts upon the convenience of commerce. After analyzing all of the comments, the General Counsel decides whether the change would in fact serve the convenience of commerce. If the General Counsel believes that it would not, he or she ends the proceeding and leaves the time zone unchanged. If the General Counsel believes that it would serve the convenience of commerce, his or her recommendation is forwarded to the Secretary of Transportation, who alone has authority to change a time zone. A typical time zone rulemaking to change one county normally takes between 6 months and 1 year to complete.

Effective Date of Any Change

If the decision is made to change the time zone boundary, DOT attempts to make the change effective at the next changeover to or from Daylight Saving Time, whichever is appropriate, to minimize confusion and disruption.

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Connect with us

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