

Office of Realty Services Newsletter

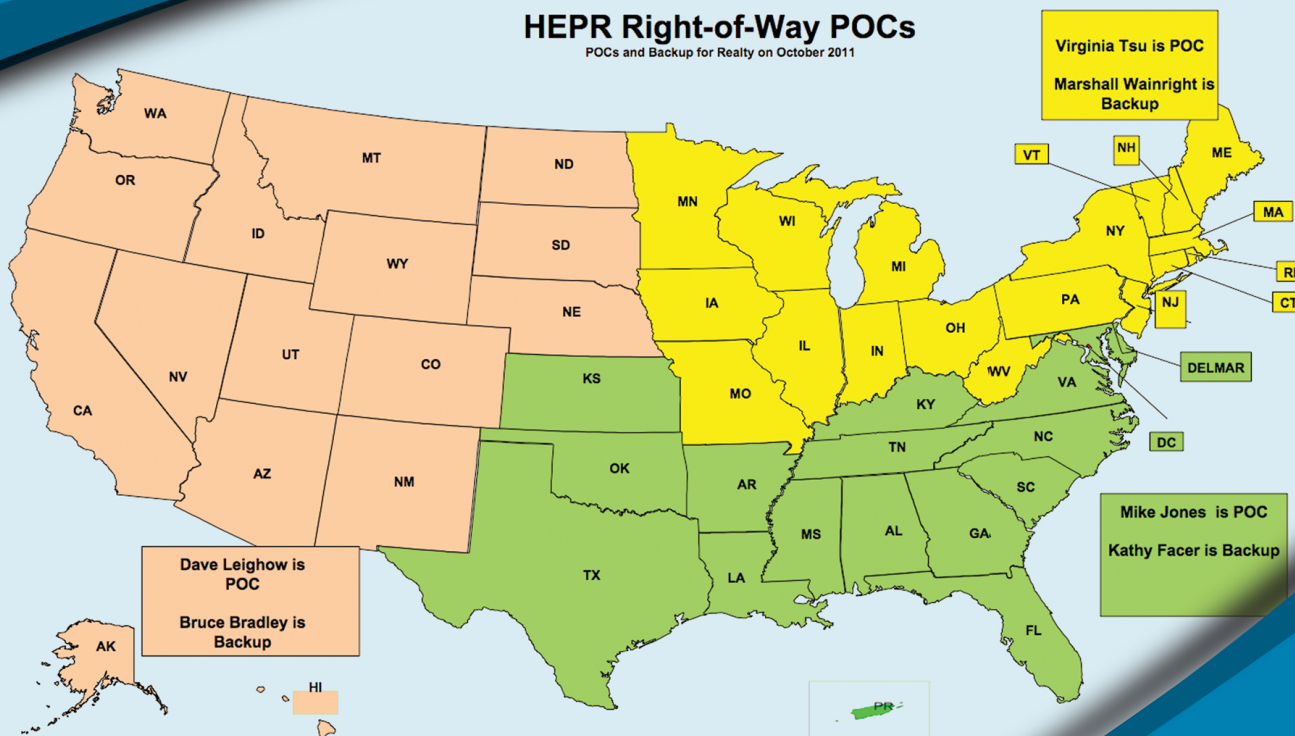


U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

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HEPR Right-of-Way POCs

POCs and Backup for Realty on October 2011



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Message from the Director



Nelson Castellanos

Introducing the New Headquarters Realty Office Structure

One of my goals as the Office of Real Estate Services (HEPR) Director is to enhance communication and collaboration between the field and Headquarters. To help achieve this goal, we instituted a new Point of Contact (POC) structure in which there is one HEPR staff person (and one back-up person) who is specifically assigned as the POC for all of the Divisions within a Field Services Region (North, South, and West). There is also a POC who serves both Federal Lands Highway and Tribal Governments.

Hopefully this new structure will provide those in the field with the tools they need to do their job. It will help ensure a consistent message from Headquarters and enable Headquarters staff to be more engaged with the Divisions through the monthly meetings with the Division Realty Officers. The next step will be to involve key leadership from State Departments of Transportation (DOTs) in

these monthly meetings. The Realty POCs and back-ups for the regions are:

- North – Virginia Tsu (Marshall Wainwright – back-up)
- South – Mike Jones (Kathy Facer – back-up)
- West – Dave Leighow (Bruce Bradley – back-up)
- Federal Lands Highway and Tribal Government – Rich Coco

In addition to the POCs, we identified Headquarters staff to serve as the primary contacts for the various program areas. We also worked with the staff in the Resource Center to create a new realty services function that will provide training and technical assistance to those in the field. The program specialists in Headquarters and the staff in the Resource Center are:

- Appraisal & Appraisal Review – John Turpin and Mike Jones
- Outdoor Advertising Control – Mary Jane Daluge and Cathy O'Hara
- Locally Administered Federal-Aid Projects – Carolyn James
- Acquisition & Property Management – Bruce Bradley and Mike Jones
- Relocation Assistance – Marshall Wainwright
- Resource Center – Christina Currier and Michele Palicka

In a time of limited resources, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is faced with the challenge of continuing to fulfill its stewardship responsibilities and maintaining the same high-level technical assistance to its partners and stakeholders. I believe that the new HEPR organizational structure and Resource Center functions will enable us to be more effective and deliver a stronger realty program.

To those in the field, I strongly encourage you to reach out to your respective POC. By working together, we can fulfill our stewardship responsibility and achieve our shared goal of supporting our State and local partners with the acquisition and management of real property.

– Nelson Castellanos, Director, Office of Real Estate Services, Nelson.Castellanos@dot.gov

News from FHWA Headquarters

Janis Gramatins Retires after 35 Years at FHWA



Janis Gramatins

To hear Janis Gramatins reflect on his 35 years at FHWA, one might mistake him as an eager, entry-level candidate for a new FHWA career rather than an accomplished professional looking forward to retirement on December 30, 2011. “I seem to have an affinity for being tossed at weird and unusual things,” he says, “I like to stay challenged.”

Since Janis began with FHWA as a trainee in 1977, he has successfully tried his hand at a number of diverse and challenging projects. “You might have a hazardous waste site on one side and a Native American burial ground on the other,” he says of his typical projects, “almost all of them are like that now.” Along with his first job on the I-10 capping project in Phoenix and a stint on the Big Dig project in Massachusetts, Janis lists Federal land transfer and bio-remediation projects as some of the more memorable and challenging highlights in his portfolio. His professional

interests also include outdoor advertising control, utilities accommodation and pavement needs, particularly as related to broadband deployment.

Janis believes that projects today are more complex than when he started out as a trainee, but he credits his success to the mentoring he received from more seasoned employees in his early years. For that reason, Janis has taken the “mentoring phase” of his later career quite seriously. As the Team Leader for the Program Implementation Team, Janis began developing discipline support activities three years ago to provide training and materials that would eventually transfer institutional and technical knowledge to new and future FHWA employees. He notes that newcomers may encounter, for example, old but still relevant programs and regulations from the 1960s and 1970s that need to be applied to present-day situations. Webinars, SharePoint, and other technical training modules currently under development are meant to stand in for the “journeymen,” as Janis calls them, who he was able to turn to when encountering those types of challenges early in his career.

The skills that Janis identifies as the most important to today’s Office of Real Estate Services (HEPR) positions, however, remain the same as when he began; namely, “people” skills and the ability to listen and uncover the facts of every problem. “As long as current and upcoming employees ‘stay loose’ and are willing to constantly reeducate themselves,” he says, “they will enjoy the ability to work in multiple areas and with a variety of complicated subject matters.” This is an attitude that Janis has applied to his own career; he has worked and lived in several States and gone from a Real Estate trainee in right-of-way (ROW) to policy development to even serving at times as the Interim Director of HEPR.

Following his departure from FHWA, Janis plans to teach a semester at Riga Technical University in Latvia, a country his parents left as refugees and where he volunteered with the highway department in 1991. As he departs, he wishes to thank those colleagues who helped him along the way, and to let all fellow FHWA employees know that, “I’ve enjoyed it.”

Flexibilities in Right-of-Way: Current Opportunities in FHWA's "Every Day Counts" Initiative

Victor Mendez, FHWA Administrator, launched the [Every Day Counts](#) (EDC) Initiative in summer 2010. FHWA designed the initiative to identify and deploy innovation aimed at enhancing the safety of roadways and protecting the environment, while ultimately shortening the transportation project development process.



The ROW process, which involves property acquisition and relocation assistance activities, is one component of project delivery where significant time and cost savings can be achieved. FHWA has identified the following "flexibilities" in the current ROW practice that can help lead to better decisions and streamline project delivery:

- *Functional Replacement*
Sometimes real property to be acquired for a highway project includes a public facility, such as a school or a police or fire station, the loss of which would have an adverse impact on essential public services for the affected community. In such circumstances, functional replacement—the replacement of the public facility in lieu of providing monetary compensation—can be an option, assuming that the public agency opts for this approach and FHWA concurs. The intent is that the replacement property would provide equivalent utility as the acquired property.
- *Conditional ROW Certification*
ROW certification for highway projects identifies the acquisition status of ROW needed to advance a project to construction. In some unusual cases, there may be a few properties that the acquiring agency has not yet acquired or does not have right of occupancy and use for, and/or that still have displaced persons on them. When this occurs, a conditional ROW certification can sometimes be used. Specifically, when the State or Local Public Agency (LPA) ensures that any occupants who have not yet moved are protected against unnecessary inconvenience, disproportionate injury, or any coercive action, the State can use a conditional ROW certification. The State or LPA must also provide a realistic date when physical occupancy and use is anticipated as well as substantiation that such date is realistic.
- *Appraisal Waiver Valuation*
An appraisal waiver valuation is an optional valuation process used and the product produced when an acquiring agency determines that an appraisal is not required. The appraisal waiver flexibility might be appropriate when (1) the use of appraisal waivers is permitted under State law, (2) the acquisition is uncomplicated, (3) the estimated amount of just compensation is below the dollar threshold set forth in the State Department of Transportation's (DOT) ROW manual, and (4) the person performing the waiver valuation has sufficient understanding of the local real estate market to be qualified to do so. A benefit of this flexibility is that it allows appraisers to address more complex valuation assignments.

- *Incentive Payments*
Incentive payments are payments that are over and above the just compensation offer or computed relocation assistance benefits set by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Uniform Act). Incentive payments can be effective options to expedite project delivery since they encourage early settlement and the minimization of potential litigation and other associated project costs.
- *Appraiser/Negotiator Flexibility*
Federal regulations allow the same person who appraised, conducted the appraisal review, or made an appraisal waiver determination to also negotiate the acquisition of the property when certain conditions are met. Notably, the value of the property in question must be \$10,000 or less, and the person preparing the appraisal, waiver valuation, or appraisal review should not have any interest, direct or indirect, in the real property being valued. This flexibility could provide efficiency in the project delivery process by allowing one person to manage two functions.
- *Right-of-Entry for Federal Lands Transfers*
A right-of-entry is a right to enter and begin construction on a property that will be acquired for a highway project. Similarly, a Federal land transfer is the conveyance of Federal property, usually by a highway easement deed, to a State or LPA either directly by a Federal land management agency or by FHWA on behalf of the land management agency. These transfers are made to allow the construction or improvement of a highway facility on Federal land. This flexibility allows the State or LPA to begin project construction immediately rather than waiting for what may be weeks or months to execute a highway easement deed to transfer the land to the State or nominee.

Each of these six flexibilities is already allowed in statute and FHWA regulations. Any can be used whenever transportation officials deem it appropriate and consistent with other legal requirements protecting property owners and tenants affected by acquisition and relocation activities. FHWA's Office of Real Estate Services has several initiatives underway to encourage State DOTs to effectively implement the six ROW flexibilities to the greatest extent possible.

For more information about the six flexibilities or the EDC initiative, please contact Virginia Tsu at virginia.tsu@dot.gov.

The National Alliance of Highway Beautification Agencies (NAHBA)

The National Alliance of Highway Beautification Agencies (NAHBA) is composed of individuals who direct or manage their State's outdoor advertising control program, along with associate members from the Federal Highway Administration, local governments, beautification organizations, and the outdoor advertising industry. NAHBA's mission is to advocate for developing and promoting innovative ideas and consistent business practices for outdoor advertising control, junkyards, and scenic and beautification programs; streamline the Federal outdoor advertising control program through improved communication; facilitate the dissemination of information to members; and encourage the integration of competing interests that serve the motoring public.

Each year, NAHBA hosts an educational conference on outdoor advertising control. The 14th annual conference was held in Charlotte, North Carolina on August 7-10, 2011. Session topics included:

- Nonconforming sign issues, such as solar panels, wind turbines, and standard definitions;
- Iowa's Bonus State buy-out program; and
- North Carolina's recently passed Selective Vegetation Removal legislation.

At its annual conference, NAHBA presents Awards of Excellence to deserving individuals or work units that excel in the outdoor advertising control program. The 2011 NAHBA Awards of Excellence were presented to the following individuals and agencies:

- John Garner with the Florida DOT was the recipient for the Chairman's Award. In 1996, John was part of a core group of State regulators who created NAHBA. For the 15 years of NAHBA's incorporation, John has served as an officer, director, and problem-solver for the organization. Those who have worked with John appreciate his ability to take complex issues and apply to them very practical applications for resolution.
- South Carolina DOT was awarded the Streamlining and Innovation in Outdoor Advertising Control Award for their Outdoor Advertising System (ODAS). The goal of ODAS was to create an automated process where permit actions can be accomplished online while bringing three permitting systems into one database allowing for easy access of data, timely retrieval of information, and a system that puts the department on the cutting edge of billboard management.
- The Oklahoma DOT received the 2011 Innovations in Outdoor Advertising Control Award. For its recent statewide sign inventory project, the agency implemented a cost-effective methodology for collecting, organizing, and utilizing data from billboards along regulated routes throughout the State of Oklahoma. The method is designed as a continuous cycle, and involves coordination between the Outdoor Advertising Control Division and Geographic Information System (GIS) personnel. By incorporating GIS services, all information for advertisements becomes centrally located and easily accessible. This greatly reduces the time spent on researching and makes it possible to access all data from one location.

In addition to hosting an annual conference, NAHBA maintains a website (<http://nahba.org/index.html>) with a wide range of resources relating to outdoor advertising control and hosts bi-annual teleconferences. Additional information related to NAHBA can also be found by contacting Catherine O'Hara at Catherine.O'Hara@dot.gov.

News from the Northern Corner

Northeast Realty Cluster: An Example of Innovative Resource Sharing

Division Offices throughout the country are faced with the challenge of delivering a high-quality transportation system with limited financial and staff resources. When tasked with the need to “do more with less,” the Division Offices in the Northeast region developed an innovative resource sharing program to efficiently and effectively meet the region’s realty needs. As part of their resource sharing arrangement, which is known as the Northeast Realty Cluster, four realty staff provide coverage for seven Divisions, including the New England States, New York and the Port Authority of New York, and New Jersey.

The Northeast Realty Cluster grew out of an agency task force initiative to study and provide recommendations for resource sharing throughout the country. The Northeast Board of Division Administrators identified several disciplines, with realty being one of them, which could be addressed at a regional scale. Realty Officers in the Northeast region worked collaboratively to develop an approach to turn the idea into a reality and, on June 1, 2008, the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) Executive Director Jeff Paniati formally announced the implementation of resource sharing and thus the birth of the Northeast Realty Cluster.

With the creation of the cluster, Realty Officers in Rhode Island, Maine, Massachusetts, and New York handle realty issues for not only their States, but also Vermont, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and the Port Authority. The team, which includes Michael Butler (Rhode Island Division, Team Leader), Cheryl Malin (New York Division), Mark Hasselmann (Maine Division), Dawn Horan (Massachusetts Division), and Clifford Pearson (former Professional Development Program member in New York), successfully leverages each team member’s individual skill-set to deliver services throughout the Northeast in a more consistent and efficient manner. Michael Butler, the Cluster’s team leader, notes that despite the limited staff, the Northern Cluster has produced impressive results over the past several years. Since 2008, the Northern Realty Cluster has completed seven program and process reviews, involving acquisition, outdoor advertising, and property management.

Peter Osborn, Division Administrator in Rhode Island, notes that in a small Division Office constrained resources often require staff to perform multiple collateral duties; at times, this may limit their ability to be effective in a specialized program area. In contrast, the Realty Cluster provides an opportunity for staff to focus full time on the right-of-way (ROW) program area. By having greater access to staff with technical expertise, each Division Office is able to provide better service to its customers and delivery high-quality projects and results for the American public.

The Northeast Realty Cluster exemplifies the benefits that can be achieved when Division Offices collaborate to fulfill FHWA’s mission and provide the best value to the American public. In recognition of the team’s contribution to making substantial improvements to the New England State’s ROW program and its quality work, the Northeast Realty Cluster received a 2011 FHWA Administrator’s Award.

For more information about the Cluster, please contact Michael Butler at Michael.Butler@dot.gov.

News from the Southern Corner

POC Framework in the Southern Region

"Well begun is half done" - Aristotle, Greek critic, philosopher (384 BCE–322 BCE)

One of the key initiatives that Office of Real Estate Services (HEPR) Director Nelson Castellanos has created is the establishment of a new Headquarters Point of Contact (POC) framework for realty staff who are located in the field. One of the significant components of my role as the POC for the Southern region is to schedule, coordinate, and deliver a monthly web/teleconference with our Division and field staff partners.

The objectives in these meetings are to:

- Facilitate more effective communication between HEPR, the Division Realty staff, the Resource Center, and Federal Lands Highway;
- Deliver more effective and efficient customer service to our Division Realty partners; and
- Provide a forum in which Division Realty staff can raise and openly discuss issues and problems they are facing in the performance of their duties.

We are all committed to the success of our partners and stakeholders in carrying out the Federal Highway Administration's national realty and outdoor advertising control program. From my perspective, these monthly meetings must be topical, interesting, and interactive if they are to have value. As the saying goes, "We're all in this together," and that definitely applies here. For those who work in the Divisions, it's important to realize that you have a major role, even a major responsibility, in contributing to the success of our POC efforts.

Please do not hesitate to contact your POC or POC Back-Up at any time to ask a question, suggest a discussion topic for the regional meetings, or offer feedback about ways we can improve the process. Each of us is only a phone call or an email away.

HEPR is now just about one month into our new structure and relationship with the Division Realty staff and the Resource Center. I know that my new role has given me a lot of new things to consider and do (on a daily basis)! I'm getting to know some of the Division staff very well, which is a very good indication to me that the process is yielding positive results.

Establishing and maintaining effective communications in any setting is not a destination but a journey. To be sure, there are many opportunities to improve the relationship between Headquarters and our Division partners. But I'm very optimistic about the prospects, based on everything that I've seen and heard in just the first month of the new structure. The process is well on its way. Now we just have to keep at it.

For more information, please contact Mike Jones at John.M.Jones@dot.gov.

Streamlining Project Delivery: Mississippi State Route 9 Project

The latest right-of-way (ROW) success story in the State of Mississippi is State Route 9 in Pontotoc County, which is a relatively rural area in North Mississippi. In 2007, Toyota Motor Corporation announced the selection of this area for the construction of a new automobile manufacturing plant. As a part of the negotiations for economic development with Toyota, the State of Mississippi committed to reconstructing State Route 9 from a two-lane highway to a four-lane highway.

In early 2010, Toyota kicked off construction of its new plant, with the goal of opening it by the end of 2011. As a result, the Mississippi DOT (MDOT) had a compacted timeframe in which to complete the four-lane highway in time for the opening of the car plant. In mid-2010, MDOT selected a consultant to develop the design plans and deliver a completed ROW project by June of 2011. The scope of the ROW project included acquisition of 95 parcels, 20 residential relocations, and one business relocation. In addition, the project required nine utilities companies to make adjustments at local road crossings.

Construction of the roadway began in late 2011 and is expected to be completed by the time Toyota is ready to roll cars off its assembly line. The State Route 9 project represents the shortest delivery of a ROW project that MDOT has been able to accomplish. One of the key elements to the streamlined process was the selection of one consultant to manage the project from design through the ROW phase, into having the project ready for construction. This enabled the consultant team to have quick, efficient communication between the various team members involved in the project.

MDOT also made several modifications to its normal process, which enabled this project to move forward in a timely manner. Pursuant to specific statutory authority, an escrow account was established with a local attorney in order that payments for closings, relocations, and utility adjustments were handled in an efficient and time-saving manner, rather than utilizing the normal payment processing involved in a State agency. This account was closely monitored and all deposits and payments coming from that account were audited successfully after the project was completed.

Another key element in this project was the use of relocation incentives, one of the flexibilities promoted by the Federal Highway Administration's *Every Day Counts* Initiative. The use of relocation incentives helped to streamline the relocation process and enabled MDOT to successfully relocate all 20 residential properties impacted by the project without the use of eminent domain.



A residence impacted by the State Route 9 project (source: MDOT)

The State Route 9 project is a testament to creative solutions and thinking in a different paradigm. This project is also a testament to communication and cooperation for a common goal.

For more information, please contact Daniel Smith of MDOT at DBSmith@mdot.state.ms.us.

Realty Officer Receives Superior Achievement Award

Each year the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Administrator presents Honor Awards to individuals in recognition of sustained high-level achievement. In 2010, Karen Hider (now Karen Orton), Realty Officer with the Oklahoma Division, received the Administrator's Superior Achievement award. This award is the highest honor given by the FHWA Administrator. It recognizes individuals who have contributed to the exceptional accomplishment of a specific Department of Transportation (DOT) or FHWA program.



Karen Hider Orton accepts her 2010 FHWA Administrator's Award. From left to right: Executive Director Jeff Paniati, Karen Hider Orton, and Administrator Victor Mendez.

Karen received the 2010 award in recognition of her leadership and exceptional efforts in the delivery of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and Local Public Agency (LPA) right-of-way (ROW) programs in Oklahoma.

Shortly after Karen joined the Oklahoma Division Office, she began carrying out a mandated review of all the LPA-administered ARRA projects. The review indicated a number of areas where the Oklahoma DOT (ODOT) needed to improve its oversight of the LPA program. Karen played a critical role in working with the ODOT to develop procedures and

policies to improve compliance with Federal and State regulations and to improve oversight of LPA-administered projects. Due to Karen's leadership and support the State's LPA oversight program has greatly improved over the past two years.

News from the Western Corner

Western Roundup

"Go West, young man."- Horace Greeley

The Division of Field Service's Western Division is made of up of 16 Division Offices. The Realty Officers in these Divisions are busy working on a number of exciting projects. Here's a taste of what's happening out west:

- In Los Angeles, California, the Division Office and the California DOT are working together on several major Federal land transfers with the General Services Administration and the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- In Idaho, the Division Office and the Idaho Transportation Department are grappling with the issue of a Canadian oil venture trying to ship megaloads of equipment, some towering three stories high, along scenic U.S. 12 into Canadian oil fields.
- In South Dakota, the Division Office is working with the South Dakota DOT and the city of Sioux Falls on a project that entails the relocation of a railroad switching yard.
- The Division Offices and State DOTs in Oregon and Washington are teamed up with the Columbia River Crossing group on a major bridge replacement project on I-5 crossing the Columbia River between Portland and Vancouver.

These are just a few of the many challenges and opportunities being dealt with daily by the Realty staffs in the 16 West Division Offices. In addition to working with the State DOTs and local public agencies, many of the Western Divisions are working with Federal land management agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, on Federal land transfers and interacting with tribal governments on a variety of issues. For example, on a major urban project on Lake Washington in Seattle, the Division Realty Officer and the Washington DOT are working with the Muckleshoot Tribe to mitigate potential project impacts on tribal fishing areas.

For more information about these and other activities underway in the Western Region, please contact Dave Leighow at Dave.Leighow@dot.gov.

The Western Region's "New Kid on the Block"

The California Division Office welcomed Melani Millard as its newest Realty Specialist on July 5, 2011. Prior to joining the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Melani served in numerous right-of-way (ROW) roles with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

Melani earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) in 1998. Shortly after graduation, Melani accepted a position with Caltrans as a ROW Agent in District 4 (Oakland, CA). From there, she transferred to District 3 (Marysville, CA) and spent the next 10 years working on cross-functional ROW Project Delivery Teams. Melani performed and supervised a wide

variety of ROW tasks, including acquisitions, appraisals, condemnation, ROW certification, relocation, and local programs oversight.

In 2008, Melani accepted a two-year position as a Capital Delivery Project Manager with the Caltrans, District 3 Division of Program Project Management. Upon completion, she accepted a position with Caltrans Division of Right of Way and Land Surveys at Caltrans Headquarters in Sacramento and worked in the Planning and Management and Local Programs Oversight sections.

For fun, Melani enjoys traveling, cooking, gardening, boating, and spending time with friends and family.

Please welcome Melani to the FHWA Realty family!

Acquisition before a Programmed Project

[NOTE: This article, written by Elizabeth Healy of the Washington Division Office, initially appeared in the Washington State Department of Transportation's (DOT) Local/Tribal Technical Assistance Program (LTAP/TTAP) Newsletter. It is specifically directed toward local public agencies in Washington State. We are publishing it in the Realty Newsletter, however, to give readers a look at how a resource such as a State DOT's LTAP can be a valuable source for informing locals of Federal Highway Administration and State DOT requirements. So, while the information contained in this article is specific to Washington State, we believe it may be instructive for other Division Offices.]

What should you do when a property is listed for sale, is situated at the corner of an intersection with a high crash rate, and you know that your agency is going to prioritize a safety project there at some point, but that project is not currently funded? The answer to this question is complicated and requires you to really think about the funding source for the future project. Projects funded with local or even State funds will potentially proceed differently than those that use Federal funds.

If the potential funding source is unknown, it is important to remember that for a project to be eligible for Federal funding on any phase of the project, the project's right-of-way (ROW) must be acquired in accordance with the requirements of this manual. What exactly does this mean? Let's explore this more.

If you want to be able to use Federal funds in ANY project phase, then you need to acquire the property for the project following your approved procedures, even if you are buying the property before you have an actual capital improvement project. This means that if you buy property for the project before you receive Federal funding approval, you need to buy the property following the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (URA) and other applicable regulatory requirements.

The only exception to the regulatory requirements is if you buy property for some other documented non-project purpose, and this land can be incorporated into your project. For instance, if you want to buy the same parcel mentioned above to site a new fire station, and the front 20 feet of the parcel is not needed for the station and could be used to improve the intersection, then the URA and other regulatory requirements would not apply.

Remember, unless you are sure that you will not be using Federal funds on a future project, you should preserve your Federal-aid eligibility by following the URA and regulatory requirements as set up through your approved procedures. Saying that you bought property before you knew your project

would be utilizing Federal funds does not remove the requirement to follow the URA and other applicable regulatory requirements.

For more information, please contact Elizabeth Healy at Elizabeth.Healy@dot.gov.

News from the Resource Center

Realty in the FHWA Resource Center

On January 14, 2011, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Executive Director Jeff Paniati announced the creation of the Realty Services function in the Resource Center as a part of the Environment Technical Service Team. Other FHWA disciplines

have been in the Resource Center for years and have done great things to strengthen the knowledge and quality of those programs. The new Realty Services function will create the same benefits for the right-of-way (ROW) discipline at FHWA, as well as for the State and local ROW programs around the country.



In August, Michele (Lindberg) Palicka and Chrisy Currier were selected to serve as the Realty staff in the Resource Center. For up to two years, Michele and Chrisy will spend 25 percent of their time on Resource Center assignments. Michele is the FHWA Realty Officer in the Georgia Division and began working for FHWA through the Professional Development Program in 2001. Prior to FHWA, Michele worked for the Florida DOT as a ROW agent. In addition to realty duties, Michele also works on environmental issues in Georgia. Chrisy is the Realty Specialist in the Texas Division and began working for FHWA's Office of Real Estate Services in 2001. Chrisy also worked for the Texas DOT as a Senior Research Specialist in the Government and Public Affairs Division. In addition to realty duties, Chrisy has environmental and planning duties in the Texas Division.

Both Michele and Chrisy have worked with seasoned Realty Officers and have gained their own experience in the field and are ready to provide assistance to other ROW professionals. As the designated Realty Resource Center staff, they are tasked with improving the Realty program and ROW knowledge and providing expertise to the field offices.

The new Realty Services team is available to assist FHWA Realty Officers and their State and local partners via on-site visits, webinars, and teleconferences. Below is an explanation of the different types of assistance the team can provide.

Process Reviews - Sometimes it helps to have another FHWA Realty professional on the review team to speed up the process of a review, talk over issues, and make recommendations on State and local programs. The Resource Center Realty team can help meet these needs by supporting reviews of critical programs and projects.

Training Needs - The Resource Center will bring the most up-to-date training information and best practices from around the country to your State and local partners. The team can provide customized

training to States and seek out experts in a particular field to make the training worthwhile and interesting for all in attendance.

Technical Assistance - Division Offices are encouraged to contact the Realty Services team with any questions about ROW issues. The team, in coordination with subject matter experts, will help determine the right answers or identify options.

Presentations - The team is available to present at workshops, meetings, and conferences on various ROW topics.

The Resource Center's Realty Services team is proactively working to make the most positive impact on the ROW program. Division Offices may contact the Resource Center staff as a need arises, or can make service requests during the Resource Center Quarterly Call for Service. The Call for Service is an online database that allows Division Offices to simply request training or technical assistance that is needed in their Division or State.

For assistance from the Resource Center, please contact Chrisy Currier (Christina.Currier@dot.gov) or Michele Palicka (Michele.Palicka@dot.gov).

Calendar of Events

For a listing of Planning, Environment, and Realty program meetings, events, and National Highway Institute training opportunities, please visit: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/calendar.cfm>.