



FHWA's Office of Real Estate Services (HEPR) develops and implements programs and activities to advance the practices and processes necessary to ensure the fair and equitable acquisition of real property.

The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty supports and conducts research to improve transportation decision making and promote efficiency while protecting communities and the environment. The Office's research:

- ◆ Informs Decisions
- ◆ Reduces Environmental Impacts
- ◆ Enhances Quality of Life
- ◆ Accelerates Project Delivery
- ◆ Advances Transportation Planning

HEPR Research Focus

The Office's research activities focus on:

- Improving the regulations, policies, and practices for acquiring and managing highway real property interests.
- Fostering and encouraging innovative processes, practices, and policies.
- Developing training, tools, and techniques for practitioners to improve, promote, and ensure equity and fairness for persons that are displaced from their properties or that move as a result of projects or programs receiving Federal financial support.
- Advancing improved methodology, innovative technology, processes, and systems that streamline right-of-way acquisition processes.
- Developing and promoting automation and tools that save time, cut administrative costs, and help ensure timely assistance for public transportation agencies at the state and local levels.

Staff Contact: [Melissa Corder](#), 202-366-5853.

FEATURED RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Alternative Uses of the Right-of-Way

State DOTs and local public agencies increasingly receive requests to use highway right-of-way for uses other than vehicular travel. HEPR has completed the 1st phase of a multi-phased nationwide study to explore these requests, and potential flexibilities in right-of-way use. The study examined existing operational and safety requirements, current property management processes, the feasibility of alternative uses and identified opportunities for streamlining property management and approval processes. FHWA's Alternative Uses of Right-of-Way Study, phase 1, final report is available on HEPR's website:

https://fhwatest.fhwa.dot.gov/real_estate/right-of-way/corridor_management/.

Staff Contact: [Lindsey Svendsen](#), 202-366-2035.

Appraisal for Federal-Aid Highway Programs Training Material Update

This project updated and redeveloped the training materials for the National Highway Institute's (NHI) Appraisal for Federal-Aid Highway Program's classroom-based instructor led course into two web-based courses. NHI-141053, Foundations of Federal-Aid Highway Program Appraisals is an on-demand student directed self-paced web-based training course. NHI-141054, Practical Applications in Federal-Aid Highway Program Appraisals is designed to follow after completion of NHI-141053 and is a 7.5-hour online instructor led course. The new courses' primary focus is to explain and illustrate how to incorporate the Uniform Act and 49 CFR part 24 appraisal requirements when appraising real

property interests acquired for Federal-Aid highway programs. Both of the new courses are approved for seven hours of accreditation from the International Distance Education Certification Center (IDECC) and are available through the NHI website:

<https://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/>.

Staff Contact: [Kevin O’Grady](#), 202-961-0903.

Relocation for Federal-Aid Highway Programs Training Material Update

These courses update and redevelop the training materials for the National Highway Institute’s (NHI) 3-day classroom-based instructor led course NHI-141029 Basic Relocation Under the Uniform Act course into two separate web-based courses: NHI 141055 Basic Residential Relocation Under the Uniform Act and NHI 141056 Basic Nonresidential Relocation Under the Uniform Act. Each course is comprised of both self-directed Web-Based Training (WBT) and instructor led Web-Conference Training (WCT) components. The primary focus of each course is to provide relocation practitioners with a working knowledge of regulatory requirements, best practices, and techniques for successful relocation of nonresidential and residential displaced persons in accordance with the Uniform Act and implementing regulations in 49 CFR part 24. Registration for these courses is available at the NHI website:

<https://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/>.

Staff Contact: [Melissa Corder](#), 202-366-5853.

State of the Practice – Use of The Waiver Valuation Provision; 49 CFR 24.102(c)(2)

This project documents the waiver valuation’s current use among acquiring agencies in the Federal and Federal-Aid Realty Programs and identifies potential regulatory revisions that might result in greater efficiencies through enhanced use of waiver valuations. The final report for this study will be published on HEPR’s website in the Fall of 2023.

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State of the Practice – Federal Lands Transfer (FLT) Process

This multi-phased research updates FHWA’s understanding of the current state of the FLT practice (e.g., frequency and extent of use); and develops information and tools that will enhance the ability of FHWA, Federal Land Management Agencies, and State DOTs to efficiently and effectively complete the FLT process.

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Use of Automated Valuation Models to Expedite Right-of-Way Acquisition Processes within the Nationwide Federal-Aid Program

This project is a “proof of concept” effort for determining if Automated Valuation Models (AVMs), and their internet-based real estate transaction databases can assist in expediting simplistic valuation/appraisal processes for Federal-Aid right-of-way projects. The research focuses on identifying existing AVMs developed for the mortgage market to see if these tools can be used to support value estimates for a whole property, and simplistic valuations/appraisals for a portion of a parcel. A final report will be posted on HEPR’s website in the Winter of 2024.

Staff Contact: [Kevin O’Grady](#), 202-961-0903.

On-Premise Signs Legal Research Study

This project had the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress research and catalogue states’ legislative responses to recent First Amendment-based court challenges to states’ highway sign laws that were largely based on the Federal Highway Beautification Act (HBA) language. Pertinently, changes in state laws modeled after the language of 23 USC 131 (c) (2) and (3) pertaining to signs hereafter referred to as “on-premises signs”, which allow signs, displays and devices “advertising activities conducted on the property on which they are located.” Seven states that had identified as having already enacted such laws were Colorado, Iowa, Kentucky, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, and Texas.

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