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

**Research Focus**

The Office’s research activities focus on:

- Improving the regulations and polices for acquiring and managing highway real property interests, developing improved methodology, technology, and systems for right-of-way agencies.
- Advancing technological innovations and research that streamlines right-of-way acquisition processes.

The Office's research goals include:

- Streamlining current acquisition and property management processes.
- Fostering and encouraging innovative processes, practices, and policies.
- Developing 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.

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**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 will quantify existing operational and safety requirements, examine current property management processes, determine the feasibility of alternative uses, and identify opportunities for streamlining property management and approval processes.

**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 a student directed self-paced web-based training course which is designed to be followed by the NHI-141054 Practical Applications in Federal-Aid Highway Program Appraisals, which is an instructor led online 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 courses have each received 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**

This project will update training materials and redevelop the current classroom-based instructor led NHI 141029 Basic Relocation Under the Uniform Act course into 2 web-based courses. The 2-day NHI 141055 Basic Residential Relocation course and the 1-day NHI 141056 Basic Nonresidential Relocation Course will be comprised of self-directed Web-Based Training (WBT) and instructor led Web-Conference Training (WCT) components. A primary focus will be on procedures, techniques, and regulatory requirements for relocation of nonresidential and residential displaced persons in accordance with the Uniform Act and implementing regulations in 49 CFR Part 24. Register at the NHI website: https://www.nhi.fhwa.dot.gov/ the Spring of 2022.

**Staff Contact:** Melissa Corder, 202-366-5853.

**State of the Practice – Use of The Waiver Valuation Provision; 49 CFR24.102(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 the FHWA Realty website in the Spring of 2022.

**Staff Contact:** Kevin O’Grady, 202-961-0903.

**Streamlining of Nonresidential Moving Cost Determinations and Claims**

This study examines and quantifies the time, staffing, and cost to carry out nonresidential moves.

It also documents how streamlining methods for low-cost, uncomplicated moves would reduce time and costs for both the displacing agency and the nonresidential person displaced by highway projects. The final report will be published on the FHWA Realty website in the Spring of 2022.

**Staff Contact:** Kevin O’Grady, 202-961-0903.

**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.

**Staff Contact:** Carolyn James, 202-493-0353.

**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 focus is to identify 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 completed by July 30, 2022.

**Staff Contact:** Kevin O’Grady, 202-961-0903.