



## Message from the Director

Since Virgil Pridemore retired as Director of the Office of Real Estate Services early last year, Arnold Feldman and I have each separately had the opportunity to serve as Acting Directors, an experience in which we have both grown. It's always exciting and challenging to be in a position to shape a program and we would not have been able to succeed in this role without the support and patience of everyone in HEPR as well as all the Realty Officers. Over the last year, we have developed a better appreciation for what an Office Director is asked to do on a daily basis. Managing people is important; but leading is perhaps more important, and we've learned that leading is not a skill one develops overnight.

Instead, we believe leading means listening to staff and keeping them informed about how their work contributes to decision-making and ultimately to meeting the agency's mission. It means knowing how and when to notify the most senior managers about issues that have arisen or that may arise so that "surprises" are minimized. It means always remaining flexible to meet the multiple demands made of us all—a sentiment that readers will see echoed by staff across the country in this newsletter's "Introducing Realty Colleagues" section. We believe it means these things and many, many more.

In looking back at our last several months, we have been busy and are excited about several upcoming activities. We continue to work on the final roll out pieces for 23 CFR 710, which include a set of FAQs and other outreach sessions on the early acquisition flexibilities. We continue to work to refine a draft NPRM proposal on 49 CFR part 24. Staff are currently planning or carrying out the final round of SIP reviews with the Division offices. We have initiated or are developing several research projects that will be launched in the next several months. These projects will focus on Waiver Valuation usage and improvement, redeveloping our instructor led NHI course on appraisal into a web based interactive course with web based instructor led sessions, an analysis of alternative uses of the ROW needs, and an analysis of opportunities to streamline some business relocation processes. We are also excited about two planned meetings coming up: our discipline support seminar that will be held in Fairfax, VA and the Joint AASHTO Committee on Right of Way, Utilities and Outdoor Advertising Control and National Alliance of Highway Beautification Agencies Conference in Baltimore, MD.

As you may know the advertisement for our next office director was reposted in late February. We look forward to supporting the next Director, whoever it may be, in his or her transition in order to let their leadership qualities shine from day one.

*Dawn Horan, Acting Director (August 2017-Present)*

*and*

*Arnold Feldman, Acting Director (March-August 2017)*

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## News from the States



### California

The California division is facilitating two upcoming workshops presented by the Resource Center. One workshop will focus on ROW Program Management and one will cover Appraisal and Acquisition.

### Colorado

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) Headquarters ROW team has been selected to receive Technology Transfer Deployment (T2) funds and hopes to learn about available state of the art enterprise management systems. The use of a system such as this would further ensure that the Colorado's property owners and displacees on State and local agency projects are served with consistently high quality assistance, in conformance with Uniform Act, Title VI, State law and the CDOT ROW Manual. CDOT Representatives plan to travel around August 2018 to visit Wisconsin and Oregon DOTs who have successfully implemented ROW Enterprise Management Systems to identify which software would best interface with existing software systems (SAP and GIS), project and program data and workflow needs and funding ability. CDOT hopes to in the long run save substantial amounts of time and money in the execution of acquisition and relocation phase in Colorado's highway projects using a comprehensive data and workflow management system.

### Florida

The Florida DOT recently completed their I-75 Nonconforming Sign Acquisition Project which began in 2008. FDOT was able to acquire and remove 134 legal nonconforming signs along a northern segment of I-75 at a total cost of \$14.4 million.

### Mississippi

The Mississippi Division Office welcomed Shundreka Givan, as the new Team Leader for the Realty Program. Prior to the Mississippi division, she was Planning Programs Manager for the Florida / Puerto Rico Divisions. She also served as a Planning and Environmental specialist in Texas.

### Oklahoma

In April there will be a FHWA/ODOT ROW workshop that will be conducted on Right of Way Acquisitions for LPAs. This training was coordinated with the LTAP program to assist with the logistics.

### Texas

The Texas Division Office continues to be actively involved in mitigation for a Title VI complaint that was filed against FHWA related to the Harbor Bridge project in Corpus Christi. The resolution to the complaint was to enter into a Voluntary Resolution Agreement to acquire and relocate property owners and tenants in the Hillcrest neighborhood who have been disadvantaged by living in the shadow of the Harbor Bridge for decades. The properties are not in the footprint of the highway project but as of December 2017, 152 offers had been made and 71 properties had been acquired. The Division is conducting an electronic file audit at the request of the FHWA Office of Civil Rights to insure the Uniform Act is being followed.



Port of Corpus Christi's Deputy Executive Director and Chief Operating Officer, third from left is Chrisy Currier, FHWA Texas Division Realty Officer, and to her right is Don Toner, former ROW Director of TxDOT's Strategic Projects Division.

## News from the Resource Center



### On the Move with the Resource Center Realty Team

*(Article by the FHWA Resource Center)*

WOW! The Realty Team for the Resource Center kept the roads hot in 2017. The Realty Team has completed 23 resource center workshops, 8 program/project reviews, 5 NHI courses, 4 SIP reviews, and attended 8 National/Regional/State conferences. That is a total of approximately 48 weeks the 3 members of the realty team have been traveling the country. That does not even include the countless hours offering technical advice/service by electronic means and working with HEPR on research studies and policy.

Getting out in the field is critical to understanding what our customers are facing in the ROW world. Understanding and working with our partners/customers on realty issues drive the need for uniformity throughout the United States. The realty team is a critical resource for open communication and dialogue between all disciplines of ROW. We are here to assist with any of your needs, if it is assisting with a ROW manual review or a specific technical question, we are here for you. Furthermore, we are able to customize any workshop you feel is needed to meet your needs. For example, LPA training is a hot topic that can be combined with other right of way disciplines.

Michele Palicka was certified as a NHI master trainer in 2017 joining Marshall Wainright. Chad Crawford continues to progress to become a NHI instructor and has developed a basic appraisal workshop that he has had the opportunity to instruct. He is now working on an intermediate appraisal workshop that he hopes to roll out soon.

The Realty Team is here to serve you, your division and your state and local partners. 2018 has started off with a bang, so contact us with any request and we will gladly assist you with your needs.

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## Featured Articles



### Going Out with a Bang

The saying is “Go Big or Go Home”, well... Layne Patton did both. On November 30th, after 17-plus years as a ROW Officer with FHWA, Layne retired. A sixth generation Texan, whose ancestors were part of the original 300 Texas settlers, Layne is excited to settle down for his retirement years near family in the hill country outside of Austin, TX. While Layne was certainly excited to return home he didn't spend his final year in public service as a stereotypical “short timer”. Instead, he spent his time presenting webinars on Federal Land Transfers and mentoring new and mid-career ROW Specialists.



Layne Patton receiving a U.S. DOT Certificate of Service for his 17 years of service at FHWA.

Layne started his career with FHWA as a PDP in 2000. He spent time in Florida, Washington D.C., and California before heading to Arizona for the final 13 years of his career. He worked with many notable ROW Professionals like Bill Wade, Victor Otero, Bill Todd and Dave Leighow, to name a few. Whether he was participating in HQ initiatives or webinars, covering two state ROW programs at once, or leading pilot projects, he always made time to answer questions from his colleagues and act as a mentor. His motto always was that he “wants to help wherever he can, while he can.”

On June 2, 2017, Layne was awarded the Recreation Coalition Legends Award for his work with the Recreational Trail Projects. This award is given to only one person per year from each of the eight Federal agencies involved in the program. There is a similar award presented to a state each year. This is the first occurrence where the State (Arizona Parks & Trails) and its Federal partner (Arizona Division) received its respective awards in the same year. This personifies Layne's work efforts and assistance.

As one of the few FHWA senior ROW Officers, Layne's institutional knowledge and uniquely “Texan” sayings will be deeply missed. The

ROW discipline is lucky that his future plans include not only buying land and raising livestock in Texas but his interest in working in ROW as an occasional consultant.

### Joining Realty from Another Discipline

Nervous excitement is not uncommon when starting a new job. That feeling can be amplified when the new job also entails a new discipline. The FHWA Pennsylvania Division Office's Barbara Shaffer points out that it can also be a motivator. The prospect of learning something new is what helped her decide to move from a career as a Cultural Resources Specialist with a consulting firm, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, Pennsylvania DOT, and then an Environmental Protection Specialist with FHWA, to one as an FHWA Transportation Specialist who focuses on ROW and realty.

Having an environmental background, Barbara was drawn to the idea that working in the realty field could provide a means for her to help protect property owners' rights; the environmental justice aspects of the realty discipline were intriguing. As such, when an opportunity to step into a realty position presented itself, she seized the day (she'll tell you she didn't actually take the leap of faith until the job was posted a second time!).

One and a half years later, Barbara thinks it was a good decision. She's enjoyed learning how interconnected the realty and environment disciplines are and believes she's been able to help her colleagues better appreciate the linkages as well. "If I had known then...", Barbara says about her time as consultant, "some decisions could have probably been streamlined."

One thing that's been surprising to Barbara during her tenure in the realty field is how much people in the FHWA realty community are willing to help one another. She didn't experience the same level of connectedness on the environment side. While she admits that may be because she did not have had as many environment-related questions as she does realty-related questions, Barbara affirms that anyone and everyone in the realty discipline, from those at Headquarters to those at the Division Offices and on regional groups such as the Northeast Right-of-Way team, has been welcoming and willing to help answer questions. Barbara believes FHWA's realty colleagues go out of their way to help make people feel comfortable in their positions. Accordingly, her advice to others who've made the transition from another discipline is to do what she did: find a mentor and don't be afraid to ask questions. She's confident that realty staff will make an effort to help everyone succeed.

Daniel Hawk of the FHWA Nevada Division Office might agree. In August 2016, he left the California Department of Transportation as an Outdoor Advertising Specialist in order to join FHWA as a Civil Rights/Realty Specialist. Although Daniel didn't join FHWA from an entirely different field, the change from state government to the Federal government took some adjustment similar to switching disciplines. His coworkers made him feel at home from the outset, and that has helped allow him to enjoy the "interesting twists" that realty presents versus being overwhelmed or bogged down by them. No matter what though, Daniel has found treating whoever calls or whoever he encounters with respect to be a key trait to carry to any job. When asked if anything has been surprising about his move to FHWA, Daniel says, "It's a lot more fun than one might expect."

## Introducing Realty Colleagues



### Cheryl Malin, FHWA New York

"I've met a lot of people." That's Cheryl Malin of the New York Division Office on one of the benefits of working at FHWA since 2001—a tenure she also describes in a word as "long." While regular readers of *Introducing Realty Colleagues* (and perhaps some physicists) may suggest that all time is relative, one thing that is hardly debatable is that Cheryl's experience has cultivated a lot of knowledge. First at Florida DOT and then with FHWA in Iowa and Florida before her current position, Cheryl has been fortunate to see many of the realty issues more than once. This has helped her not only work effectively in the diverse urban and rural settings of New York but to also be an active contributor at various realty and ROW settings regionally and nationally, including on multi-state teams (e.g., Northeast Right-of-Way Team) and at conferences (e.g., IRWA workshops).



Cheryl Malin visiting a farm with her daughter during the New York fall.

Over her career, Cheryl says she has tried to always be reliable. She emphasizes the importance of calling back DOT counterparts when they're told they'll be called back, and following up on actions when follow-up was promised. Reliability is only reinforced by the good rapport Cheryl has tried to maintain with her DOT counterparts. She notes that when everyone involved in a work problem are comfortable with talking through issues, fixes can be identified and carried out without tension or hard feelings.

Outside of work, Cheryl has a daughter who plans to get married in 2019, and, as it turns out, is not the only family member with some news: her sister is the Resource Center's Michele Palicka, who wrote this newsletter's *Updates from the Resource Center* section. Cheryl also has a Pembroke Welsh Corgi that she jokes, "Herds cats."



### Charles Harkless, FHWA Louisiana

Charles Harkless's path to FHWA as an Equal Opportunity and Realty Specialist with the Louisiana Division Office can be traced back to his 21 years of service in the United States Air Force, where he retired as an Assistant Engineer. Throughout his Air Force career he traveled across the country working on construction projects, and was involved with design work, drafting, surveying, and soils testing, among other activities. After his military career, Charles joined a private engineering firm where he got experience working on transportation projects with Mississippi DOT.

Charles Harkless cites his ability to self-motivate and multitask as critical traits to succeed in his position.

Now, Charles reliably wears several hats at the Louisiana Division Office, which keeps things busy yet interesting for him. In addition to his day-to-day responsibilities in the civil rights and realty fields, Charles also serves as the Division Office's emergency coordinator—a job that can keep him very busy given the state's recent history with devastating storms. Charles cites his ability to self-motivate and multitask as critical traits to succeed in his position, noting that there are many days where he starts off working on a civil rights issue and then must shift gears midday to address a realty question, or vice versa.

When not at work Charles is likely to be found at church, cooking something delicious, or on the sidelines of a soccer field cheering on his three daughters (or more likely behind the wheel making sure each of his girls gets



to their practices and games on time). As a former high school athlete himself, Charles takes pride in helping his daughters prepare mentally and physically for their games.

While those who know him may know that Charles is a family man, they may be surprised to learn that he was struck by lightning in 2002. One evening that year, he went outside during bad weather to feed his dog and when he touched a fence, lightning indirectly jumped from the fence to his head. After falling to the ground for some time, Charles was able to get himself to the hospital.

When his time with FHWA is over, Charles envisions himself working with veterans. Charles noted how much his time in the military has contributed to where he is today and would like the opportunity to give back.



**Eric Deitcher, FHWA Kansas**

Eric Deitcher is a Kansan through-and-through. He was born in Kansas, has raised his two children with his wife there, and – except for a brief stint in Kansas City, Missouri – has spent his career there. His love for the state has been consistent, as has his affinity for his day-to-day work as the Civil Rights/ROW Coordinator in FHWA's Kansas Division Office. One of the aspects of the job he likes most is the fact that the job is always evolving and new tasks and problems to solve are always presenting themselves. According to Eric, many days he commutes into work thinking about the tasks he needs to complete that day; but then inevitably, the day will deliver something completely unexpected, and necessitate flexibility. Eric believes the ability to identify high risk issues and prioritize them is a key skill.

Eric Deitcher of the Kansas Division Office is very involved in his local community.

The spirit of public service permeates Eric's personal life as well. He is very involved in his local community. He was elected to and has served on the school board for the past six years and is on the Board of Advisors for a local hospital. In his spare time, Eric enjoys spending time in his workshop where he rebuilds and refurbishes furniture and machine odds and ends that he found on online in hopes of upselling, or "flipping," them later. He's also a track official certified for startings and horizontal jumps; Eric loves to get a run in with his sons when his joints allow!

Early in his life, Eric thought he might become a Secret Service agent or work for the FBI. Nevertheless, he is happy that he ended up in the realty world and thinks an ideal future job might be to work at the Resource Center where he could spend his time doing one of the things he enjoys most – teaching classes to local public agencies on all things realty related.



**Greg Heitmann, FHWA New Mexico**

Greg Heitmann joined FHWA as a mid-career professional after working at the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). His tenure at FHWA has involved stints in several Division Offices, first as an engineer in Iowa starting in the year 2000, then two years in the Texas Division before joining the New Mexico Division in 2004, where he still works today, splitting his time between the environment and realty disciplines and managing the division's research program.

An engineer at heart, Greg has historically liked schedules and predictability. However, the issues DOTs need help with often require flexibility, and accordingly Greg has learned to adapt so he can provide meaningful assistance day-to-day and maximize his effectiveness long-term. He prides himself on having good working relationships with his state DOT counterparts—a key factor in upholding the strong stewardship and oversight agreement between the DOT and Division Office.

Greg with his trusty .50 caliber muzzleloader venturing out for the deer season in the Santa Fe National Forest.

Outside of work Greg has a passion for writing and aspires to have his work discovered. He has written over a dozen screenplays, about half of which he has converted to novels. With the influx of the movie industry into New Mexico over the last decade or so, Greg plans to continue marketing his pieces when opportunities arise. Greg's website can be found here: [www.thegmann.com](http://www.thegmann.com). In addition to writing Greg also enjoys hunting, which is something he's been doing since his youth growing up in South Dakota. In fact, Greg thinks if he weren't working at FHWA, he might be working with an organization such as Ducks Unlimited to help expand duck populations. Or, he might be working as a disc jockey at a radio station. Greg has quite the fondness for music. He has a recurring thematic music list that can be found in the FHWA News publication. Click here for the latest edition of Greg's list: [Buzz-Dot-List](#).

## **Peter Clark, FHWA Headquarters**

Peter Clark is the realty point of contact for the southern region.

When questions or issues come up in that region, Peter helps to connect the DOT with the appropriate subject matter expert by facilitating resolutions. In addition, he responds to local public agency questions and issues since he is the lead and has experience managing LPA right-of-way programs and projects. Peter promotes the LPA Toolkit by attending FHWA local public agency workshops and explaining the benefits of the Toolkit. He supports Federal agencies with realty programs. For instance, Peter leads Uniform Act training by negotiating Memoranda of Understanding, establishing a training plan, and creating a Statement of Work to hire instructors. He started an online discussion group for Federal agencies to exchange information about relocation, acquisition, and appraisal issues. Peter believes good communication skills and collaboration are essential to success.



Peter Clark on his recent vacation to Alaska.

In his personal time, Peter enjoys playing golf and tennis. Some of his favorite golf courses are in Montgomery County, Maryland. His most memorable golf outing was playing a round at Pebble Beach Golf Links in California. Peter also enjoys reading and traveling. He recently took a trip to Alaska and read a John Maxwell book.