



Right of Way Manual

July 2026

PREFACE

This *Right of Way Manual* was developed to provide technical guidance to professionals in several fields who are responsible for delivering property rights to support the Maine Department of Transportation's transportation program. It complies with the Maine Revised Statutes (MRSA) and Federal laws and regulations that control the process for acquiring private property rights for public purposes. Importantly the *Manual* encourages sensitivity to the needs and concerns of citizens who are called on to relinquish property, and sometimes home or business, for the overall public good. **Right of way is not merely a financial transaction to acquire real estate. It is a human endeavor that requires the highest level of tact, understanding and respect from the people who represent the State of Maine in this activity. Persons who survey, appraise, acquire property and assist relocation, are aware that public trust and confidence in the highway program rests in high degree with the professionalism and skill they display in carrying out their work.** The *Manual* supports this understanding of the sensitivity and importance of the right of way process

The *Right of Way Manual* will be used not only by Department staff, but also by local agency personnel who acquire property for State funded projects, and by private service providers including land surveyors, contract appraisers, title professionals and acquisition specialists. The *Manual* addresses the specific topics of interest to each user, and also indicates the close relationships and interdependencies of the distinct right of way disciplines.

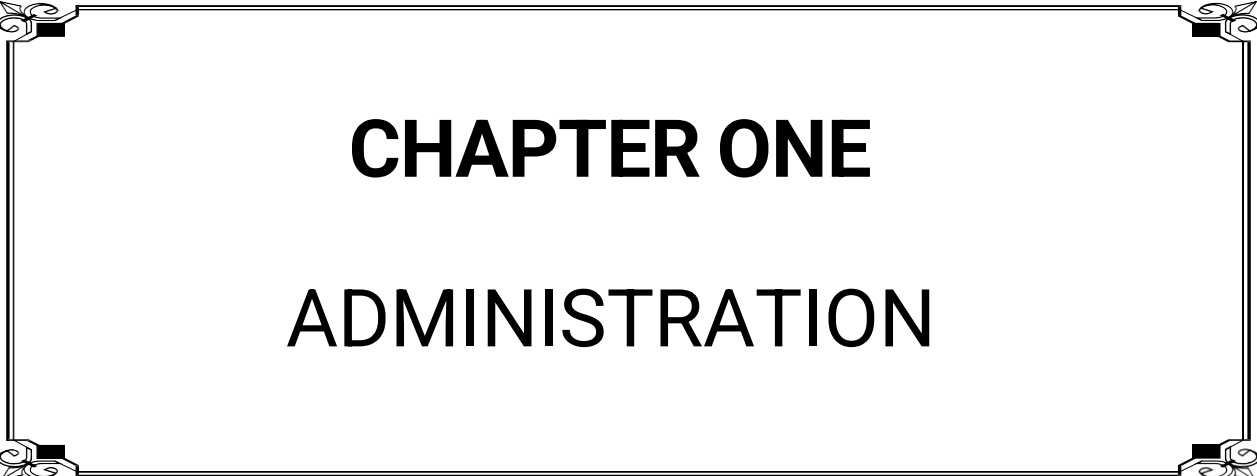
The *Right of Way Manual* is a living document that will change as controlling laws and regulations change, and more effective management practices develop. The text, headings and page numbering systems are designed to permit insertions or replacement of text without changing the basic structure of the *Manual* or replacement of full chapters or sections. The *Manual* is produced to permit traditional print publication as well as electronic publication.

The Property Office in the Bureau of Project Development is responsible for continued maintenance and update of the *Manual*. Users are encouraged to advise the Director of the Property Office of need for corrections or provide suggestions that would improve the content of the *Manual*. Correspondence should be addressed to:

Maine Department of Transportation
16 State House Station
Augusta ME 04333-0016
Attn: Director, Property Office

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CHAPTER ONE

ADMINISTRATION

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

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CHAPTER ONE

ADMINISTRATION

1-1 ADMINISTRATIVE OVERVIEW

Right of way functions performed by the Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) are how real property is acquired for transportation programs and projects. The right of way program is administered to efficiently deliver real property for project construction and operation while treating property owners and occupants fairly and equitably. **The Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution** provides that private property cannot “be taken for public use without payment of just compensation” to the owner. **The Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution** requires due process of law be accorded to private property owners before the taking of property by the governmental power of eminent domain. Article I, section 21 of the Maine Constitution provides that: “Private property shall not be taken for public uses without just compensation; nor unless the public exigencies require it.”

The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, Title 42 ***United States Code*** Chapter 61 (***Uniform Act***), as amended, and its implementing regulations (49 ***Code of Federal Regulations*** Part 24) (***CFR***) interpret the legal meaning of the Federal constitutional provisions and define procedures for establishing just compensation and providing due process to property owners. These just compensation and due process requirements apply to all Federally-funded MaineDOT activities, including those carried out by local public agencies and some private parties. Additional provisions affecting right of way functions appear in Title 23 ***United States Code***, Chapter 1. Title 23 of the ***Maine Revised Statutes***, Chapter 3, subchapters III, VII, among others, contain state equivalents to some of the Federal protections.

1-1.01 **Purpose and Use of the Manual**

1-1.01(a) Overview

The construction and operation of transportation projects frequently involve impacts to people who live or own property on or near the project location. There can be a wide variety of impacts, ranging from the loss of a small part of a home’s front yard to the relocation of a family or business to a new site. The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) has a legal and ethical duty to ensure that it acquires the property interests necessary for its activities, and that the affected individuals are treated fairly and in accordance with procedures outlined in law and regulation. Personnel performing right of way functions are the principal points of contact between MaineDOT and affected property owners and tenants. Their role is to help avoid and minimize impacts, identify compensable impacts that will occur, and carry out valuation, acquisition and relocation activities in accordance with State and Federal requirements and MaineDOT policies. This ***Right of Way Manual*** provides information to guide Department personnel, local agencies, and consultants in performing those crucial tasks. In addition, the ***Manual*** is a declaration to the public,

auditors and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as to how MaineDOT performs its property acquisition responsibilities.

This *Manual* describes operating procedures for all right of way functions. These functions include public information and research, the preparation of right of way plans and title acquisition documents, the valuation of property interests, negotiation and acquisition of title, residential and business relocation, property management, contracting procedures and standards, quality assurance/quality control, and various administrative activities. The *Manual* also includes guidance for local public agencies performing right of way functions for transportation projects. Appendices to the *Manual* incorporate important reference material including relevant sections of the **Maine Revised Statutes Annotated (MRSA)**, and Federal right of way regulations.

All persons with right of way responsibilities, including MaineDOT personnel, local agency personnel, and consultants must use this *Manual* as a reference tool for basic information about how to carry out right of way assignments. 23 CFR 710.201(d) states that Non-SDOTs and partners must prove they use approved procedures by adopting an approved manual, submitting their own, or submitting a project-specific RAMP. Because the *Manual* cannot address every problem or circumstance that may occur, MaineDOT expects and encourages personnel to use independent judgment in carrying out their tasks. The Department also encourages personnel to consult with the Property Office and R/W Supervisors for clarification of right of way procedures and standards, and for assistance with solving specific right of way issues.

1-1.01(b) *Manual* Updates

The Department will revise this *Manual* as relevant laws, regulations, procedures and practices change. Any revisions will be submitted to FHWA for approval (23 **CFR** 710.201(c)(2)(iii)). In addition, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) regulations require MaineDOT to update and recertify the *Manual* and obtain FHWA approval for it every 5 years after the approval date of the *Manual* (23 **CFR** 710.201(c)(2)).

The Property Office (see Section 1-1.03(a)) is responsible for timely and necessary revisions to the *Right of Way Manual*. This Office will identify when a modification is needed, coordinate changes with the Bureau of Project Development (Project Development), assign the preparation of new text or other material as appropriate, and submit the revised *Manual* to FHWA for approval on the 5-year cycle. The Department expects R/W Supervisors and other personnel involved with right of way activities to notify the Property Office whenever they believe a revision may be appropriate. The Director of the Property Office and the Chief Property Officer will meet annually with the Director of Project Development to discuss the status of the *Manual* and provide necessary updates.

The *Manual* is divided into sections with sections being represented by the number between the dash and decimal point, for example (1-5.1). Users can determine the publication date of the *Manual* by looking at the page header for the section in question. Whenever the Department revises a section of the *Manual*, within the 5-year cycle, the revision date will appear in the page header for that section.

1-1.02 Department, Bureau and Right of Way Missions

The Department and its organizational units have formal statements that define their purposes and objectives. Personnel performing right of way functions are guided not only by the statements of the Department and Project Development, but also by a mission statement developed by the Property Office to govern the delivery of right of way services.

The MaineDOT *Long-Range Transportation Plan* (2024) provides the following guidance:

VISION

MaineDOT will provide a transportation system that:

Within available resources, supports the economic opportunity and the quality of life that makes Maine a world-class and welcoming place for all.

Reinvigorates quintessential New England charm and provides for natural resource, manufacturing, technology and tourism-based economies.

Enhances the lives of Maine people, supports our businesses to prosper locally and globally, and demonstrates leadership in sustainability.

GOALS

Provide a safe transportation system for all users and modes of transportation.

Effectively manage Maine's existing transportation system within reliable funding levels to provide levels of service that are acceptable to our customers.

Invest in transportation initiatives that support economic opportunity for Maine people, communities, and businesses.

Invest in practical transportation solutions that mitigate impacts on the natural world and prepare for the realities of climate change.

Ensure that all Maine people have access to safe and reliable transportation regardless of who you are or where you are.

1-1.03 Right of Way Organization, Functions and Activities

The right of way function operates within the Department's Bureau of Project Development. The organization chart, Figure 1-1, shows the placement and organizational relationships of the Property Office in the Bureau of Project Development.

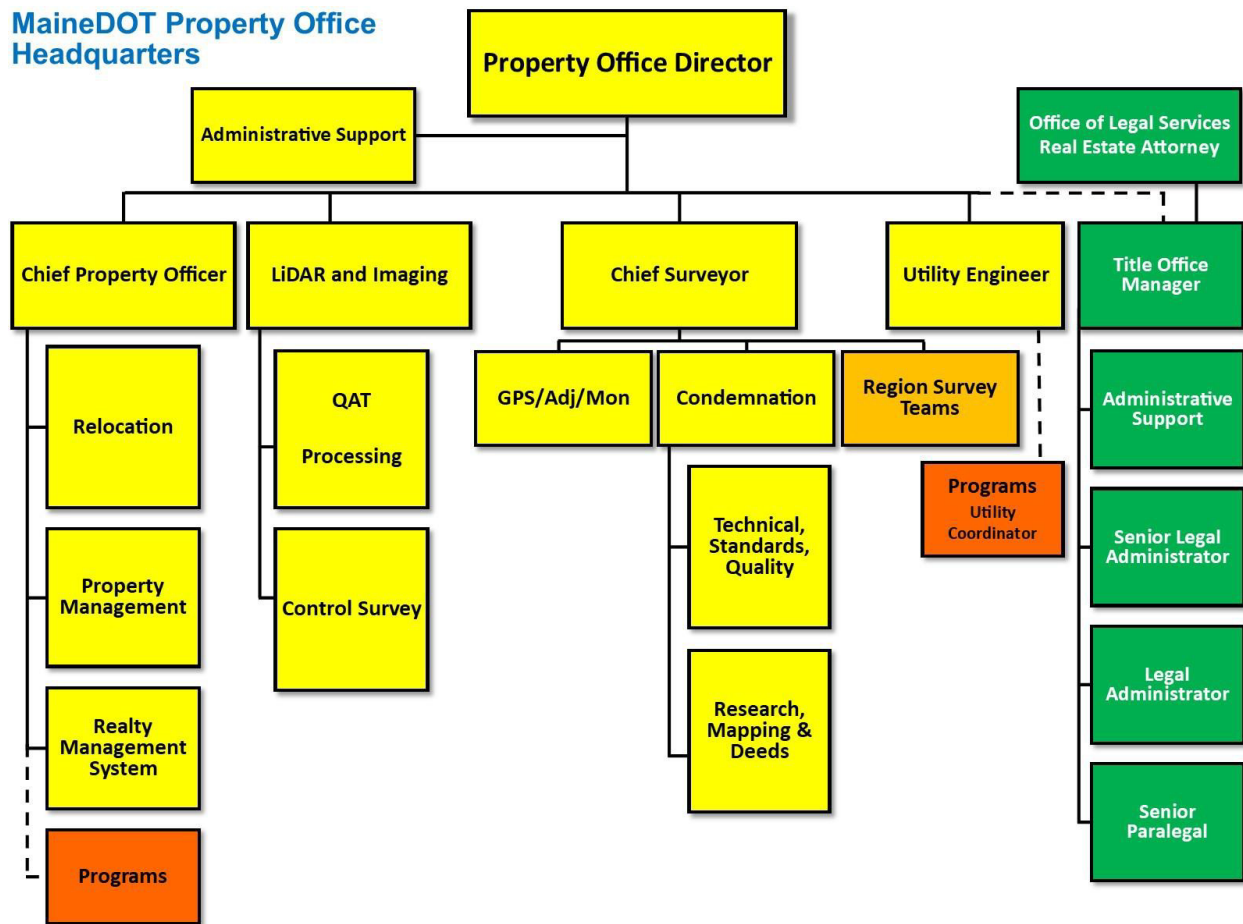


FIGURE 1-1 — Property Office

1-1.03(a) Property Office

The Property Office was formed in July of 2004 as a result of a review of the Right of Way process. The Property Office provides support for the Programs in the area of the traditional Right of Way functions of appraisal, appraisal review, negotiations, and relocation. Additionally, the Office provides technical support for traditional mapping, utility coordination, title and condemnation functions. The Property Office is responsible for the following functions:

1. Ensuring consistency and quality in the performance of right of way activities;

2. Serving as an interface between MaineDOT and FHWA, as well as the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), on right of way issues;
3. Developing and revising MaineDOT Right of Way policies & procedures, including revisions to this *Manual*;
4. Determining core training and experience requirements for Right of Way professionals at MaineDOT; and
5. Guiding the Programs in the delivery of Local Public Agency (LPA) administered projects that include R/W acquisition.

1-1.03(b) Objectives of Right of Way Functions

The overall objective of right of way activities is to help achieve the best balance possible among the competing needs of public transportation facilities and adjacent property owners and tenants. The role of the Property Office team members in recognizing and addressing potential project impacts on people and property begins at the earliest planning stage for a project. That role continues through design, construction, and sometimes operation, of the project. Many right of way activities are shaped by the need to satisfy the requirements of the 5th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution, and Article I, Section 21 of the Maine Constitution. Those provisions mandate due process in the taking of private property for public use and the payment of just compensation for such takings. Additional standards for right of way actions appear in the ***Federal Uniform Act***, 42 ***United States Code*** Chapter 61, and in Title 23 of the ***Maine Revised Statutes***. The ***Uniform Act*** applies to all projects involving the use of Federal funds in any phase of a project. All MaineDOT activities are subject to Maine State law.

The significance of right of way concerns in the delivery of transportation programs is demonstrated further by the inclusion of these impacts within the scope of analysis required under the ***National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)***, 42 ***United States Code Chapter 55*** and implementing regulations at 40 ***Code of Federal Regulations*** Part 1500 -1508, and 23 ***Code of Federal Regulations*** Part 771 (USDOT) for any project involving a major Federal action. Federal funding of transportation projects, as well as most Federal permits for projects, are considered major Federal actions triggering application of ***NEPA*** (see 40 ***Code of Federal Regulations*** Section 1508.18).

It is important to keep in mind that, for most transportation projects, the Department must acquire the necessary property interests and complete relocation activities **before** the project can be put out to bid for construction. This places right of way activities on the critical path for MaineDOT project delivery. As MaineDOT team members handle project budget and schedule issues, they must ensure that the projects will comply with the substantive and procedural requirements of Federal and State law. In addition, they must keep in mind MaineDOT's obligations of equity and good-faith dealing with affected property owners and tenants. Primary responsibility for meeting these mandates lies with the Department team members responsible for the right of way activities.

1-1.03(c) Right of Way Role in Planning

Transportation projects typically originate through planning proceedings within the MaineDOT Bureau of Planning. Other occasional sources of projects include MaineDOT's Office of Freight and Business Services, Bureau of Maintenance & Operations and Office of the Commissioner of Transportation.

Property Office team members act as advisors to the Bureau of Planning for both near-term and long-term transportation planning activities. The Bureau of Planning is responsible for the identification of needed transportation projects across the State. It conducts long range planning that takes a comprehensive look at Statewide transportation needs, goals and objectives. The Bureau of Planning also prepares the project-specific Annual Capital Work Plan which MaineDOT submits to the Maine Legislature for funding. The Property Office helps the Bureau of Planning identify potential major impacts on people and property and advises them on early location and design decisions. The Bureau of Planning often requests right of way studies, including preliminary cost estimates, for particular programs or projects. Property Office team members provide similar services to other entities (e.g., Office of Freight and Business Services), as they plan and execute projects within their areas of expertise.

1-1.03(d) Right of Way Role in Project Development

Most projects move to Project Development for detailed design, project approvals and permits, right of way acquisition, and construction. Property Office team members are a part of the multidisciplinary team that assumes responsibility for each project as it enters the project development phase. Property Office team members work directly with other Project Team Members to identify and understand right of way impacts, as well as to prepare schedules and budgets that incorporate the necessary right of way activities. Those activities include the following:

1. Research to gather information on existing conditions in the area of the proposed project. The type of information obtained includes existing highway layouts, apparent owners' names and addresses, boundaries of adjacent properties property boundary markers and the location of existing improvements on adjacent land (e.g., houses, septic systems, wells). See Chapter 2 for guidance on right of way mapping.
2. Mapping of existing right of way limits and proposed right of way limits, and determining the type and physical extent of property interests needed for the project. This information is included in the preliminary and final design plans. The right of way plans are the information base used for the preparation of acquisition documents including deeds, easements and notices of condemnation. See Chapter 2 for guidance on right of way mapping.
3. Valuation of property interests the Department will acquire for the project. This process determines just compensation for the property, which is required by both State (Maine Constitution Article 1, Section 21, and Title 23 **Maine Revised Statutes** Chapter 3,

Subchapter III) and Federal law (see Fifth Amendment to the US Constitution and 49 **Code of Federal Regulations** Part 24). Right of Way personnel use a variety of procedures to value property interests, depending on the nature of the property interests MaineDOT intends to acquire and the complexity of the valuation problem. See Chapters 3 and 4 for process and procedures on valuation.

4. Negotiation to acquire property based on the determined just compensation. Negotiators for the Department are required by law to follow certain procedures relating to the timing and content of offers and other negotiation activities in order to protect property owners interests and rights. See Chapters 3 and 5 for process and procedures on acquisitions.
5. Relocation of property owners and tenants may occur in cases where the impacts of the project require the acquisition of a residence or business location. For example, in negotiation for the purchase of underlying real property, there are specific legal requirements pertaining to notice, determination of compensation and other aspects of the relocation process. The Property Office Relocation Specialist, that works under the direction of the Chief Property Officer, works closely with the affected individuals. For residential relocations, MaineDOT must ensure that the replacement housing is decent, safe and sanitary. For both residential and business relocatees, the goal is to make their move to a new location as financially neutral and trouble-free as is reasonably practical. See Chapter 6 for process and procedures on relocation.
6. Management of property acquired by the Department for transportation projects. Most often, this is a short-term activity that focuses on issues such as asbestos inspection and abatement, and also the demolition of existing structures. In some cases, management of a particular property may extend over a number of years. Where appropriate, Property Office team members may elect to rent property until a project begins. The Property Manager coordinates with the team members and the Legal Division to handle the sale of excess property. See Chapter 7 for process and procedures on property management.
7. Administrative services required in support of right of way activities. Critical administrative functions include the preparation of notices to property owners, requisitioning of checks for acquisition and relocation payments, and management of records and data relating to right of way activities on projects.

The Property Office also provides technical assistance, oversight, and support to local public agencies (LPAs) (e.g., municipalities that are carrying out project development activities funded by MaineDOT). This is handled through the Multimodal Program (see section 1-1.04(a)). The role of Multimodal's involvement in these cases is to help ensure the LPA understands and complies with the right of way requirements for its project and that it submits the required right of way certification for the project. However, LPAs remain responsible to MaineDOT for compliance with applicable laws and regulations. See Chapter 8 for additional guidance on right of way and local public agencies.

1-1.03(e) Right of Way Role in Maintenance and Operations

Once Project Development completes a project, responsibility for it is transferred to the Maintenance and Operations (M&O) Region in which it is located. The 5 M&O Regions hold broad responsibility for managing and maintaining transportation facilities within their geographic area. M&O maintenance projects on existing facilities occasionally require the acquisition of additional property rights. Those acquisitions must comply with MaineDOT's acquisition criteria. R/W Supervisors in the Highway Program provide M&O with assistance on these tasks..

1-1.04 Administrative Structure and Operations

1-1.04(a) Overview of Bureau of Project Development

Project Development holds primary responsibility for the design and construction of transportation projects. Its organizational structure is based on programs and project teams. The objective is to provide each MaineDOT program with control of all of the functional skills and resources needed to develop and deliver transportation projects. The programs in Project Development, and the types of projects they handle, include:

1. Highway Program. All highway construction and most rehabilitation projects that need Right of Way.
2. Bridge Program. All bridge and most other structure projects.
3. Multimodal Program. Rail, air, bike, pedestrian, traffic, marine, and locally administered projects.
4. Regional Program. Rehabilitation projects, small culverts and paving projects.

These programs report to the Assistant Director of Project Development. The Director of Project Development oversees overall Bureau operations. That position is responsible for Bureau policy, administration and management.

1-1.04(b) Right of Way Role in Project Teams

Project Development's program-based organization, adopted in 2000, emphasizes the placement of technical skills at the project level. Team members assigned to the project teams provide the right of way function. The composition and organizational structure of right of way services in each program are described below.

Highway, Regional and Bridge Programs

The Highway, Regional and Bridge programs are structured around teams. These teams have permanent members from various disciplines who are responsible for projects within specified geographic areas that are based on MaineDOT's Maintenance Regions. Each team in these 3 programs has functional resources covering Right of Way Appraisal and Negotiations. When the teams need relocation or property management services, they may request them from the

Property Office. Property Office members on the teams report to the Project Manager for prioritization of work assignments and for guidance on matters relating to project scope, schedule, budget and project resources. The Property Office provides the R/W Supervisors with technical guidance on right of way matters. The Chief Property Officer is responsible for the technical proficiency of Property Office team members. The R/W Supervisors report to the Program Manager on project and program delivery matters. Program Managers hold overall responsibility for the performance of their programs.

A majority of the projects handled by Highway and Bridge Programs are Federally funded. New alignment projects are likely to have the most significant potential right of way impacts. However, reconstruction and widening projects also can cause significant right of way impacts, including relocations. This means that personnel who perform right of way activities for these programs must have a full understanding of applicable State and Federal requirements. Projects handled by the Regional Program typically have fewer impacts but will follow a similar process to acquire rights needed for a project.

Multimodal Program

Multimodal Program is responsible for projects that primarily involve transportation modes other than highways. The smaller number of projects handled by the Multimodal Program, together with the highly-specialized nature of the services the Multimodal Program often requires, dictates that the program seek Project Team Members on a case-by-case basis. Multimodal projects often are not Federally funded, but usually do involve Federal permits. Multimodal projects frequently present unusual characteristics, such as cooperative and joint-ownership ventures and the acquisition of heavy industrial sites or infrastructure. This necessitates particularly careful consideration of the right of way, **NEPA**, hazardous waste and other issues in the development of the projects.

While major highway intersection projects are handled by the Highway program, Multimodal is responsible for smaller intersection and signal improvement projects. The projects handled by Multimodal are most always designed by consultant staff and may or may not have right of way needs. In the event right of way is needed, the Project Manager in the Multimodal Program requests assistance from the R/W Supervisor assigned to that Program.

1-1.04(c) Property Office Records and Research Units

R/W Mapping Support and Research is a part of the Property Office. There are two main right of way service areas in this unit. Right of Way Mapping (Mapping) prepares parcel descriptions for MaineDOT condemnation actions, reviews Right of Way plans for conformity and completeness, records completed right of way plans and leads the policy setting for Right of Way mapping standards. Right of Way Research (Research) fields public requests for information about highway boundaries and ownership details relating to completed and pending MaineDOT projects, and requests for historic data on highways around the State. Both of these functions are under the direction of a Regional Professional Land Surveyor that reports to the Chief Surveyor. The Mapping and Research function is described in Chapter 2.

1-1.04(d) Property Office Job Classifications

For Right of Way positions, the Department uses job classifications that encompass right of way and general real estate knowledge, skills and abilities. The specifications are guidelines and are not all-inclusive of the knowledge, skills, and abilities involved in right of way work, or the duties that MaineDOT may assign to an employee in a given classification.

The following job titles are typically used for property related team members:

1. Director, Property Office: This position has the overall responsibility for all survey and title functions, property identification, valuation, Just Compensation determination, acquisition, property management and relocation administration.
2. Chief Property Officer: This position is responsible for developing, implementing and maintaining quality control standards and specifications to ensure uniform and consistent performance of Property Office technical staff across all programs and operations.
3. R/W Supervisor: The Right of Way Supervisor is well versed in the five major right of way functions, appraisal, appraisal review, negotiations, relocation and property management. They conduct appraisal reviews, and appraisals on complex properties, and provide general right of way guidance to the teams as needed.
4. Property Officer (Appraiser II & III): Primary responsibilities include the valuation of property, including appraisals and review of appraisals. Also negotiates with property owners and may appear as a witness for the Department in compensation hearings before the State Claims Commission and the Maine Superior Court.
5. Assistant Property Officer (Appraiser I and Right of Way Agents): Primary responsibilities include negotiations with property owners and administrative acquisitions. Also may appear as a witness for the Department in compensation hearings before the State Claims Commission and the Maine Superior Court.
6. Property Manager: Manages, under the direction of the Chief Property Officer, property acquired by MaineDOT for projects, including safety and demolition issues, leasing and the sale of excess property.
7. Relocation Services Specialist: Works with residential and business owners and tenants to relocate them off the project site. This position is responsible for determining relocation benefits and ensuring MaineDOT compliance with notice and other procedural requirements relating to relocation.
8. Transportation Aide, Assistant Technician, Technician, and Senior Technician: Primary responsibilities include gathering property information, preparing Right of Way Plans for MaineDOT projects, maintaining public records pertaining to the highway rights of way, responding to public requests for information about rights of way, property negotiations, administrative acquisitions, utility coordination and management.
9. Chief Surveyor: Establishes and assures compliance with surveying and mapping standards. Reviews and seals existing conditions plans, Right of Way maps and boundary surveys.

1-1.04(e) Project Development Work Flow and the Team Process

When projects move from the Bureau of Planning to Project Development, the Bureau of Planning forwards informational reports to the Bureau of Project Development. These reports serve as the

starting point for Project Development's work. The Bureau uses a multidisciplinary Team approach to the project development process. Project Managers head each Team and hold the primary responsibility for performance and project delivery. Technical disciplines represented on the Teams include right of way valuation and acquisition, design, survey, mapping, geotechnical, utilities, construction, environmental and technical support. Team activities include research and data gathering, determination of project scope, engineering design, determination of right of way and environmental impacts, right of way and design plan preparation, right of way relocation and acquisition, public participation and local coordination, utility and railroad coordination, permitting and other project approvals, budget and schedule management, maintenance of project data in the ProjEx Information Management System, and construction.

1-1.04(f) Integration of the Right of Way Function into Project Development Process

One goal of the Project Development Team process is to achieve integration of all necessary disciplines and considerations into the management and decision-making for a project. This is especially critical for right of way functions because of the interdependencies among project scope and design, project budget and schedule, and right of way acquisition and relocation activities. The integration of right of way activities at MaineDOT is accomplished through the use of Project Team Members qualified to handle preliminary and final right of way mapping, negotiations, property valuation and property acquisition documentation. Mapping activities are handled by Right of Way Mapping Team Members, while the remaining right of way activities are carried out by Property Office Team Members. Relocation and property management services are available to the Teams upon request from Relocation Services Specialist and the Property Manager.

Right of way activities are interwoven throughout the project development process. Major right of way activities, in the approximate order of occurrence on a project, include:

1. Participation in Team meetings and site visits;
2. Preparation of the names and addresses mailing list;
3. Completion of Property Owner Reports;
4. Plotting existing right of way on Plans;
5. Participation in a preliminary public meeting, as needed;
6. Review of proposed alignment for highway projects;
7. Preparation of requests for title abstracts on affected properties given significant identified impacts;
8. Preparation of estimates of project acquisition costs;

9. Determination of relocation needs and preparation of a preliminary Relocation Plan and estimates (including sign relocations);
10. Contact of affected property owners and tenants;
11. Review of a preliminary Design Plan;
12. Review of Approach Plans for bridge projects;
13. Review of Design Plans Impacts Complete;
14. Preparation of Titles;
15. Preparation of final Right of Way Plans;
16. Gathering of data for the valuation of affected properties;
17. Valuation of property rights to be acquired for the project including Just Compensation determinations;
18. Negotiation with affected property owners and tenants for project acquisition and relocation;
19. Acquisition of necessary property rights, by voluntary transaction or condemnation through recording of the condemnation or document;
20. Completion of relocations of all displaced persons, which includes items of personal property;
21. Completion of a Right of Way Certificate for the project, specifying that MaineDOT has acquired all property rights necessary for the project in accordance with State and Federal law and regulation, and all displacees have been relocated (the Certificate becomes a part of the Plans, Specifications and Estimates (PS&E) Package that is used for project bidding and construction);
22. Identification and execution of property management activities required pending project construction (e.g., rental, rodent control, asbestos inspection and abatement);
23. Resolution of unsettled claims for acquisition and relocation compensation through negotiation, State Claims Commission proceedings or judicial proceedings;
24. Recording of the Right of Way Plans; and
25. Notification of acquired properties upon construction closeout to the Property Manager.

Later parts of this *Manual* discuss these activities in greater detail.

1-1.04(g) Legal Mandates Affecting Right of Way Activities

Right of way activities, more than any other aspect of project development, **are controlled by State and Federal laws and regulations**. Personnel performing right of way functions must be constantly alert to the content of those laws and regulations, and to the appropriate interpretations of them in the field. Property Office staff and the FHWA Maine Division Right of Way Officer can provide guidance to Property Office team members.

The following Sections of Title 23 ***Maine Revised Statutes Annotated (MRSA)*** apply to the Property Office:

1. Section 61 – Vacation, Sale or Lease of Acquired Land.
2. Section 62 – Record of locations and changes.
3. Section 63 – Records of Right of Way Division Confidential.
4. Section 73 – Sensible Transportation Policy Act.
5. Sections 151 to 161 – State Claims Commission.
6. Sections 241 to 247 – Relocation Assistance.
7. Sections 301 to 307 – Controlled Access Highways.
8. Sections 651 to 654 – Laying Out, Altering and Discontinuing Highways.
9. Section 2952 – Longtime Buildings and Fences as Bounds – Estoppel.
10. Sections 3021 to 3035 – Acquisition of Property for Highway Purposes (Towns).

The primary Federal laws pertaining to Right of Way are in Title 23 and Title 42 of the ***U.S. Code (USC)***. The ***USC*** is implemented through regulations published in the ***Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)***. Right of Way is addressed in 23 ***CFR*** Part 710. and in 49 ***CFR*** Part 24.

The hyperlinks to the text of the above ***MRSA*** and ***CFR*** references are in Appendices A and B. The content of this *Manual* fully complies with the State and Federal law and regulations. Property Office team members should secure interpretations of the law and regulations from the Chief Property Officer when unique or complex situations are encountered that are not addressed in this *Manual*.

1-1.05 Integration of Right of Way Functions with Functions of Other Organizational Units

1-1.05(a) Legal Services Office

The Legal Services Office plays a major role in the execution of Departmental right of way functions. Successful MaineDOT operations require close cooperation and consultation among Legal Services and Property Office team members.

To facilitate cooperation and consultation, the Title Office is physically located in the Property Office.

The Title Office performs a range of property title services to identify the owners of property to be acquired for projects. These include a preliminary deed investigation to secure descriptions used by Mapping, deed searches for all properties expected to have either permanent easements or temporary construction rights acquired for a project, acquisition to date searches for small strip acquisitions, and a full 40-year title search for significant acquisitions. The Title Office delivers to the project team members a list of the property owners and other parties of interest to whom MaineDOT must give notice in any condemnation action for a project. The Title Office verifies ownership and parties of interest immediately before a condemnation. The Title Office also does a final title check when it records title transfer documents in the appropriate Registry of Deeds. Once the recording of the condemnation is complete, the Title Office delivers to the Property Office team member a notification that MaineDOT has acquired good and sufficient title to the property in question. The Title Office also facilitates the acquisition of voluntary property conveyances.

Legal Services also performs research on a wide variety of legal issues that arise in the course of a project and that affect right of way work. Typical matters include determining the legal status of a highway layout, the interpretation of property boundaries, the legal status of structures, property ownership and proper payees for acquired property affected by multiple liens or mortgages.

Legal Services also provides guidance to Appraisers on issues of compensability, interpretation of property interests and ownerships, and interpretation of case law as it relates to the valuation function. With the requirement that each appraisal have a written scope of work, it is important that Legal Services guidance is provided in a format that can be included as part of the valuation documentation.

Legal Services and project team members work together to handle unsettled compensation claims for property that is acquired for projects. Whenever compensation for an acquisition remains unsettled 60 days after the condemnation date, the case is automatically referred to the State Claims Commission, which is an administrative hearing body that offers affected parties a chance for a neutral review of their claim. Once a case is referred to the State Claims Commission, the opportunity for an administrative settlement by the Property Office team members is reduced, and Legal Services assumes responsibility for negotiation and settlement. Close coordination continues between Legal Services and Property Office team members during this process. Project team members often serve as witnesses and as informal resources during the proceedings. Legal Services seeks a Property Office review and recommendation on many proposed administrative settlements. If a case continues to the Maine Superior Court after completion of State Claims Commission proceedings, Legal Services retains responsibility for the matter. Coordination with the Property Office, and Property Office assistance to Legal Services, continue in a manner similar to that during the State Claims Commission phase.

Non-compensation claims also may arise during the project development process. Property Office team members and Legal Services staff work in close coordination whenever claims appear to present a threat of litigation. The extent of Legal Services involvement is established cooperatively on a case-by-case basis up to the time that a lawsuit actually is filed. Once a court case starts, Legal Services assumes responsibility for managing the case, including creating strategy and conducting negotiations. Throughout the litigation process, Legal Services and Property Office personnel continue to coordinate closely with each other. Legal Services works on these cases primarily with the Property Office Director.

In special cases, Legal Services may handle all negotiations and documentation for the acquisition of property. This typically occurs on projects that involve highly controversial acquisitions, projects with unusual schedule requirements or special-purpose projects that require the acquisition of a small number of significant parcels. In these cases, Property Office team members serve as a resource to Legal Services.

Coordination with the Legal Services Office

Property Office personnel maintain an open line of communication on all levels with the Legal Services Office. Consultation is generally informal. This enables appropriate and timely right of way actions involving legal issues. When a formal opinion is needed, a request will be made in writing to the Chief Counsel through the Chief Property Officer.

The R/W Supervisors work with the Legal Division on the following activities:

1. Title certifications,
2. State Claims Commission activities,
3. Superior Court Appeals on compensation,
4. Closings - acquisition by deed,
5. Legal advice on acquisition compensability questions, and
6. Legal settlements after Superior Court filing.

1-1.05(b) Environmental Office

A mutually supportive relationship exists between the right of way process and environmental activities. The Environmental Office is responsible for determining the human and natural resource impacts of proposed MaineDOT activities and for securing necessary environmental permits and approvals. This creates several interdependencies between the Environmental Office and the Right of Way process. The analysis of human environmental impacts by the Environmental Office includes consideration of right of way impacts, especially the effects of displacement caused by acquisition of homes and businesses. Natural resource impact determinations rely heavily on a consideration of the boundaries of proposed acquisitions, as determined and mapped by Right of Way mappers. Documentation requirements and resulting scheduling requirements vary with the nature and extent of the potential project impacts. Completion of the **NEPA** review and documentation process is a prerequisite for beginning the

negotiation phase of right of way acquisition. Delays in either environmental or right of way functions can have an enormous effect on project delivery. Good communication and coordination between the Environmental Office and Property Office personnel from the beginning to the end of a project is critical to its success.

1-1.05(c) Other Multi-Unit Activities

Property Office team members perform a number of other activities that require coordination across unit boundaries. These include the review of private developer's projects involving changes to transportation facilities and the management of access to highways.

Developer project reviews are managed by the MaineDOT Traffic Engineering Division. This unit refers developer proposals to Right of Way Mapping for evaluation of the right of way impacts of the proposed design, the accuracy of the right of way layout, the scope of acquisition requirements and the completeness of acquisition documents. Based on its review, Right of Way Mapping makes a recommendation to the Traffic Section. The recommendation may be to approve, approve with conditions or reject the proposal. A more detailed explanation of the developer review process appears in Chapter 2.

Management of access to highways from adjacent properties and roadways is the responsibility of the Traffic Engineering Division. Right of Way Mapping and the Property Manager in the Property Office will provide support on right of way issues. Their assistance typically includes property ownership information, right of way layouts, and preparation of acquisition and disposition documents. Property Office team members also provide assistance with valuation and negotiation as needed.

1-2 DECISION-MAKING FOR RIGHT OF WAY ACTIVITIES

1-2.01 Goals and Policies

MaineDOT has a legal and social obligation to ensure that individuals affected by the construction, operation and maintenance of transportation facilities are treated consistently and equitably. Property owners, tenants and business owners are entitled to protections, benefits and advisory assistance, as discussed in detail in Chapters 3 through 6. Applicable due process requirements include notice to a party from whom property will be acquired, payment of just compensation for property rights acquired by MaineDOT, and assistance in locating replacement housing and business sites. The goal for Property Office team members is to find ways to meet MaineDOT project needs while fully complying with property owner protections. Simply put, **the mission of the Property Office is to fairly and efficiently identify, acquire, and manage the property rights needed for MaineDOT activities.**

1-2.02 Major Decision Points

1-2.02(a) Right of Way Milestones

As the right of way process unfolds, there are a number of major decision points that significantly affect the course of a project. Table 1-2, on the following page, shows major right of way decision points, the decision makers and the related project development process steps.

TABLE 1-2 — RIGHT OF WAY MILESTONES

Right of Way Milestone	Decision Maker(s)	Related Project Development Process Step
Approve initial right of way estimate for project (First Phase Right of Way)	Project Manager & R/W Supervisor.	Project Kick-off
Set scope of initial property title and valuation work	Senior Property Officer & R/W Mapper.	Preliminary Design Report
Complete initial relocation plan and estimate	Relocation Manager & R/W Supervisor.	Preliminary Design Report
Approve final right of way programming estimate	R/W Supervisor.	Preliminary Design Report and Preliminary Project Plans
Approve final relocation plan and estimate	Relocation Specialist & R/W Supervisor.	
Identify appraisal process level for affected parcels	R/W Supervisor.	Preliminary Design Report and Preliminary Project Plans
Review valuation process decision for required modifications	R/W Supervisor or Chief Property Officer if necessary.	Plan Impacts Complete
Coordinate on nature of final acquisitions	Senior Property Manager & R/W Mapper.	Final R/W Mapping
Notice of Interest to Acquire	R/W Supervisor.	Final R/W Mapping Complete
Determine "Fair Market Value"	Assigned Property Officer or Review Appraiser	
Determination of Just Compensation	Property Office Director or Designee.	Fair Market Value Determination
Authorize initiation of acquisition negotiations (Second Phase Right of Way)	R/W Supervisor.	NEPA Review Complete (for federally funded projects)
Decide to seek administrative settlement in excess of just compensation	R/W Supervisor, Team Member up to limits of financial authority, then Legal Services and the Acquisition Review Committee.	Prior to or after Right of Way Certification
Determine need for condemnation	Title Manager, R/W Supervisor and Chief Property Officer.	
Certify that all necessary property rights for the project have been acquired (Right of Way Certification)	Chief Property Officer, Director Property Office.	Right of Way Certification
Refer unsettled property claims to SCC		Required by law after 60 days Condemnation Unit.
Review proposed legal settlements and make recommendations	Chief Property Officer, R/W Supervisor, & Acquisition Review Committee.	
Approve final right of way plans	Chief Surveyor or Designee.	

1-2.02(b) Right of Way Certification

As a prerequisite to advertising a federally funded project for physical construction, MaineDOT must certify the relocation and acquisition status of property needed for the project. The Right of Way Certificate, Form AD-3, is used for this purpose. The Certificate is required by 23 **CFR** 635.309(b), (c), (g), and (h). The project Right of Way Certificate is to be completed and submitted by the project R/W Supervisors to the Property Office. The project Right of Way Certificate must be executed by the Chief Property Officer or Director Property Office and copies delivered with the Plans, Specifications & Estimates (PS & E) to the Contracts Unit and Project Manager before the project can be advertised for construction bids.

As a prerequisite to authorizing advertisement for construction, regardless of funding source, the Right of Way Certificate shall reflect a fact situation as indicated in 1, 2, or 3 below:

1. Class 1 Certificate: All necessary rights-of-way, including legal and physical possession and control of access rights, have been acquired. State Claims Commission actions, or Superior Court appeals may be pending, but MaineDOT has obtained title and legal possession to all property. There may be some improvements remaining on the right-of-way, but all occupants have vacated the lands and improvements. The great majority of projects authorized for advertisement by MaineDOT will be in this category. A Class 1 Certificate may be issued with personal property located within the taking provided the owners of the personal property have received a 90 day notice; and the personalty is addressed in the bid contract; and arrangements have been made for its move/removal. Arrangements can include an agreement for relocation with a private contractor, or by the personalty owner, or removal by the contractor after the expiration of the 30 day notice as outlined in Chapter 6 Section 6-7.06. Note: In the event the project is delayed as a result of issues arising from this process, FHWA will not participate in any additional costs or delay claims.
2. Class 2 Certificate: Although all necessary rights of way have not been fully acquired, MaineDOT has obtained the right to occupy and use all rights-of-way required for the project. Appeal of some parcels may be pending in a Superior Court, or rights of entry may have been obtained on some parcels. The occupants of all lands and improvements have vacated. MaineDOT has delegated authority on their use for all projects. Class 2 Certificates are filed "with exception". In the event the project is delayed as a result of issues arising from this process, FHWA's participation in any additional costs or delay claims will be considered case by case per 23 CFR 635.124.
3. Class 3 Certificate: The acquisition or right of occupancy and use of a few remaining parcels is not complete, but all occupants of residences on such parcels have had replacement housing made available to them in accordance with Chapter 6-1.03 of this *Manual* and 49 **CFR** 24.204 (Availability of Comparable Replacement Dwelling Before Displacement). Class 3 Certificates are filed "with exception".

- (i) MaineDOT has delegated authority on their use for all projects.
- (ii) MaineDOT **must** receive prior concurrence from FHWA for physical construction under a contract or through force account work based on a conditional certification for all projects. The FHWA will approve the request only if FHWA finds there are exceptional circumstances that make it in the public interest to proceed with construction before acquisition activities are complete.
- (iii) Whenever a conditional certification is used, the State shall ensure that occupants of residences, businesses, farms, or non-profit organizations who have not yet moved from the ROW are protected against unnecessary inconvenience and disproportionate injury or any action coercive in nature.
- (iv) When MaineDOT requests authorization under a conditional certification to proceed with physical construction where acquisition or right of occupancy and use of a few parcels has not been obtained, full explanation and reasons therefor, including identification of each such parcel, will be set forth in the State's request along with a realistic date when physical occupancy and use is anticipated as well as substantiation that such date is realistic. Appropriate notification must be provided in the request for bids, identifying all locations where right of occupancy and use has not been obtained. Prior to the State issuing a notice to proceed with construction to the contractor, the State shall provide an updated notification to FHWA identifying all locations where right of occupancy and use has not been obtained along with a realistic date when physical occupancy and use is anticipated.
- (v) Participation of title 23 funds in construction delay claims resulting from unavailable parcels shall be determined in accordance with [§ 635.124](#). The FHWA will determine the extent of title 23 participation in costs related to construction delay claims resulting from unavailable parcels where FHWA determines the State did not follow approved processes and procedures.

For all projects, MaineDOT will make a statement that the use of conditional certification is in the public interest. This statement will be placed in the project file with the conditional certification.

A project will not be advertised for construction if the status of right of way is not as described under 1, 2 or 3 above.

A statement on the certification is also required that either Relocation is not required as part of the project or all relocations on the project conform to the standards established by Federal regulation.

1-2.02(c) Signatory and Financial Authority

The Department's Administrative Procedures Memorandum No. 10 (APM 10) establishes the authority of MaineDOT staff to sign documents and commit the State of Maine to expenditures. Provisions relevant to the Right of Way process primarily relate to the authority to make binding offers to property owners and tenants, to execute a Right of Way Certificate and to enter into contracts for consultant services. For applicable limits, consult the current Administrative Procedures Memorandum No. 10.

1-2.02(d) FHWA/MaineDOT Oversight Agreement

Under the provisions of Section 1305 of the *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century of 1998* (TEA-21), States can assume responsibility for a broad range of **USC** Title 23 functions that were formerly overseen and approved by FHWA. The FHWA/MaineDOT Agreement for the Partnering and Shared Oversight of Federal Aid Projects (September 2024 or current version) defines shared responsibility in Maine. The management of project right of way certifications is identified as a MaineDOT responsibility.

Under the Oversight Agreement, lead project units primarily are responsible for compliance with applicable legal requirements. In the case of certification, Project Development is the responsible party for projects in the Highway, Bridge, and Multimodal Programs. Compliance with the Federal laws and regulations is delegated to Project Managers and Property Officers

The shared oversight pertains only to activities under US Code Title 23. **Right of way activities performed pursuant to other US Code titles remain under Federal approval and oversight.** This includes all real property related activities (US Code Title 49). The Oversight Agreement does not alter requirements for FHWA approvals on MaineDOT non-project activities. This affects several property management activities including modification in the degree of access control, and disposal of property acquired for Interstate highways.

1-3 QUALITY ASSURANCE/QUALITY CONTROL

MaineDOT strives for quality in all of its products and services. MaineDOT management and project personnel share responsibility for quality. Quality control rests with those persons performing services or creating products. It reflects their obligation to perform their jobs well. Quality assurance, on the other hand, is a management oversight responsibility. It is management's duty to monitor, evaluate and modify work performance and processes to ensure that MaineDOT achieves its desired quality goals.

All MaineDOT employees and consultants performing right of way activities are expected to understand the quality assurance standards applicable to their tasks and to strive to meet them. They must work with management to coordinate quality assurance and quality control efforts. Each functional chapter in this *Manual* contains information on the quality assurance expectations for that function. Additionally, there is a separate Quality Assurance/Quality Control Chapter, Chapter Ten that summarizes functional quality assurance standards and describes in detail the quality control responsibilities of right of way management.

1-4 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

1-4.01 Confidentiality of Right of Way Records relating to Appraisals and Negotiations

The general policy of the State of Maine is that the Government will conduct its proceedings openly and will make its records available for public inspection (1 **MRSA** Section 401). The definition of public records contained in 1 **MRSA** Section 402(3) is quite broad and includes most MaineDOT records. However, the Maine Legislature created a specific and limited exception to the open records law for right of way in 23 **MRSA** Section 63. Under that statute, right of way records and correspondence relating to negotiations and appraisals of property are confidential until the later of the following 2 events:

1. Final settlement of all parcels on the project to which the records and correspondence relate; or
2. Nine months after the completion date of the project according to the records of MaineDOT.

Records for claims appealed to Superior Court remain closed to public inspection until after the award of the court.

1-4.02 Right of Way Role in Public Involvement Activities

Experience has shown that good communication between MaineDOT and the public is the best means for ensuring that transportation activities satisfy public needs while avoiding and minimizing unnecessary harm to persons, property and natural resources. MaineDOT's public involvement objective is to achieve 2-way communication. Information should flow from MaineDOT to people who are interested in or affected by a proposed project, to help them understand the transportation needs, the choices for how to address those needs and the project development process that applies. The flow of communication to MaineDOT should include the interests and concerns of property owners and the public, the local conditions relevant to the design and operation of the facility, and the effectiveness of the process in fostering public knowledge and participation. MaineDOT tailors the structure of its public involvement process to the needs of each project and the applicable public involvement requirements under the **Sensible Transportation Policy Act** (23 **MRSA** Section 73(3) (G) and implementing regulations), **NEPA**, and 23 **CFR Section 771.111**. In Project Development, design of the public involvement plan for a project is the responsibility of the Project Manager.

As the main link between MaineDOT and property owners and tenants, Property Office team members perform critical communication functions through both formal and informal methods. Formally, Property Office Team members are a part of the public involvement process for MaineDOT projects. Depending on project needs, the Property Office team members or staff may participate in the preliminary public meeting or virtual public involvement and other public information sessions held in the early stages of a project. At those meetings or virtual public involvement, Property Office team members explain the existing right of way layout and conditions. Typically, a plan sheet showing existing conditions is available for the meeting.

Property Office team members also gather information from participants that contributes to the Department's knowledge of the project area. In some cases, Property Office team members may offer a brief summary of the right of way process. Perhaps most importantly, Property Office team members use these occasions to begin informally to build relationships with the local residents with whom they will negotiate as the project moves forward.

A formal public hearing or virtual public involvement typically occurs after the Project Team approves the preliminary Plans and Preliminary Design Report. For most projects, opportunity for public hearings or virtual public involvement is the action that meets public notice and comment requirements under the ***Sensible Transportation Policy Act*** and ***NEPA***. A transcript is made of the hearing. Full plans, showing existing and proposed conditions, are posted during the hearing. The formal role of Property Office Staff at the public hearing or virtual public involvement includes:

1. Explaining the right of way process, including a summary explanation of the rights of property owners and tenants affected by the project; and
2. Discussing the right of way impacts of the proposed project, including any alternatives under consideration.

Informally, the public hearing or virtual public involvement is another opportunity to gather information for the project and to enhance the channels of communication with local residents and officials.

Beyond these scheduled public involvement sessions, Property Office team members have repeated opportunities during their fieldwork for communication with local residents. Some of those contacts are a part of formal right of way procedures, but many are casual contacts as Property Officers gather information needed for their work. It is important to appreciate the important role these contacts play in developing the relationships that will dictate the course of negotiations with affected property owners.

1-5 ACQUISITION, RELOCATION AND CONDEMNATION PAYMENTS

1-5.01 Payment Process

All claims for payment of property acquisition and relocation costs are processed through the Property Office, Title Office, and Condemnation Unit. Checks for property acquisition are delivered by certified mail, with return receipt requested.

Certain relocation payments are hand delivered by the project right of way staff person. Hand delivery is the preferred method for relocation replacement housing payments, as MaineDOT must assure that the claim amount is applied to the purchase cost of replacement housing. Checks for relatively minor amounts, such as for residential moving costs, may be sent to the claimant by certified mail.

Property owners should be personally advised that the check for property acquisition will include the names of all parties that have an interest in the property as shown on the title report. This will include co-owners, and lien holders, including mortgagees. It is the property owner's responsibility to clear liens and secure lien holder signatures on the State check. Additional cost to owners, such as paying a lien release fee to the mortgage holder to sign a check, are also reimbursable.

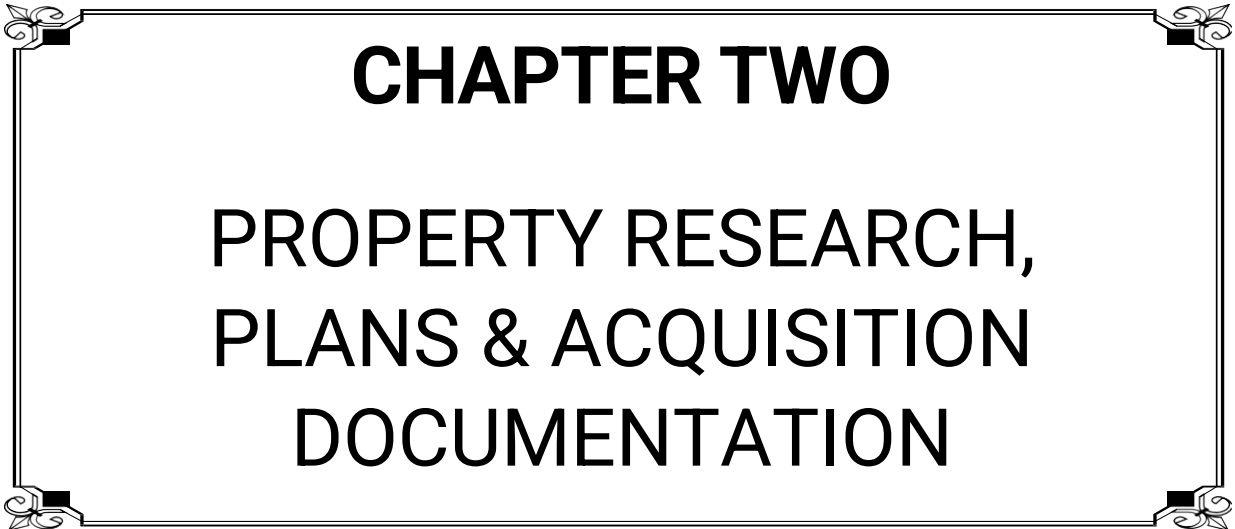
Lost or missing checks may be replaced. The project staff member who is advised of a missing check should report this to the Condemnation Unit. The owner or other claimant will be required to sign an affidavit attesting that a check is lost or missing. A replacement check will be issued after checking with the State Treasury to assure that the check has not been paid, and to cancel payment on the missing check.

1-6 RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Each program maintains right of way records within the program project files. The Program Managers are responsible for the organization, security and storage of files. Operational personnel who create and use file documents are expected to exercise discretion and care as reflected in the following guidelines:

1. Place original documents only (not multiple or duplicate copies) in the project file.
2. Minimize removal of original documents from MaineDOT offices. Use photocopies or written notes if information from documents is needed for reference outside the office.
3. Record personal or financial information only if it is relevant to the program purpose for which a record is kept.
4. Make sure that official forms are completed and blank spaces are lined out before finalizing forms and other official documents.
5. Consult the Chief Property Officer before releasing information from MaineDOT files to any person. MaineDOT right of way documents contain personal and financial information that is protected from public disclosure.
6. Project acquisition records shall be retained for a period of 3 years as required by 23 CFR 710.201(e)(1).
7. Property Management records will include inventories of excess property as well as Right of Way use Agreements as outlined in 23 CFR 710.201(e)(2).

Title 1 **MRSA** Sections 402 and 408-A control disclosure of State records for public inspection. Disclosure of right of way records is further controlled by 23 **MRSA** 63. Right of way staff that originate or control official records, including appraisals, negotiation diaries, property owner reports, cost estimates and relocation benefit determinations, should be familiar with these statutes. Any question about what records can be made available for inspection or produced to a requesting party, should be directed to the MaineDOT FOAA officer in the Office of Legal Services.



CHAPTER TWO

PROPERTY RESEARCH, PLANS & ACQUISITION DOCUMENTATION

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

CHAPTER TWO

PROPERTY RESEARCH, PLANS AND ACQUISITION DOCUMENTATION

2-1 ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

2-1.01 Overview of Property Research, Plan Development and Acquisition

Property Office Survey and Title Office personnel are responsible for gathering and managing real property information, determining existing right of way limits and preparing the right of way plans and acquisition documents necessary to acquire property for MaineDOT projects. The flow of Survey and Title Office work in the project development process is illustrated in Table 2-1. The personnel performing these duties are located in the five DOT Regional Offices and in the Central Property Office in Augusta.

Preliminary data gathering of current ownership and important abutting property information is typically performed by technical staff assigned to the Property Office. The research and interpretation of physical evidence to determine property boundaries and preparation of plans and property descriptions for acquisition is performed by licensed surveyors or mapping personnel. (For this chapter, this function will be referred to as 'Survey/Mapping'). These efforts are managed by the Chief Surveyor and Regional Professional Land Surveyors.

Title examination to determine all parties of interest in a property to be acquired is performed by qualified title abstractors. Preparation of the complete acquisition document, notification and payment documents for the property owners and recordation of ownership transfer documents are performed by personnel in the Property Office's Title Office. These efforts are overseen by the Manager of the Title Office.

The Property Office Records and Research Unit responds to internal and external requests for information on highway layouts, MaineDOT ownership rights and other data relating to the real property aspects of the transportation system. Research activities include gathering and maintaining documentation relating to MaineDOT's transportation systems and compiling and retaining relevant municipal and county records as needed. A major part of the Research function is to make the information in these public records available to and understandable to, interested parties outside of MaineDOT.

2-1.02 Organization

Property research, property plan development and property acquisition documentation are the responsibilities of Property Office personnel located in Regional Offices as members of the Regional Survey Teams, or located in the central Property Office in Augusta. Project Managers and designers from the various program project teams coordinate this work with Region Survey

Supervisors and Surveyor/Mapper dedicated to that team or the region where the project is located. The determination of new right of way needs is a collaborative effort between designers, appraisal staff and Survey/Mappers. The Title Office, located in the central Property Office provides mapping support and review services to Surveyor/Mappers, resolves complex mapping problems and performs property title examinations of impacted property owners. The Title Office also reviews and approves the condemnation documents, owner condemnation packages and any other acquisition documents. The Property Office Records and Research Unit in the central office handles public information research functions and maintains an array of right of way and other property records and documents.

Survey/Mapping personnel are drawn from the following classifications:

1. Transportation Aide. This position field locates evidence of property ownership to prepare Property Owner Reports (PORs), gathers and compiles data for right of way documentation, plots and graphs data using computer software programs to assist in map preparation, sorts and files documentation and assists higher level Technicians with project work.
2. Assistant Technician. Typical job duties for an Assistant Technician include drafting right of way maps using computer-aided drafting software; assisting higher level Technicians with the drafting of maps; researching and interpreting legal documents, town records, tax maps, survey plans and ownership documents to interpret right of way limits for straightforward requests and preparing basic documents that serve as legal references, including PORs.
3. Technician. The Technician researches and interprets legal documents, town records and property ownership information to determine property ownership and prepare proposed ownership limits and rights for moderately complex projects; handles PORs functions, including preparing documents and providing training on POR processes; drafts moderately complex documents that serve as legal references; develops moderately complex procedures using computer-aided drafting software and creates software macros for others to use.
4. Senior Technician. This position usually researches and interprets legal documents, town records and property ownership information to determine ownership and draft ownership and right of way limits for complex projects; evaluates and resolves lost boundary roadway layouts and complex wrought portion locations; interprets laws and regulations relating to right of way and property rights; trains, coaches and evaluates skilled and semi-skilled technical personnel; provides information to the public on complex right of way matters and assists in policy development and process improvements.
5. Professional Land Surveyor. This position is responsible for managing the work of the technical/professional personnel performing the survey/mapping efforts from early property owner information gathering to the development of descriptions and plans for property to be acquired for a project.

2-1.03 Project Development Team Activities

The major Survey/Mapping activities performed for Project Teams, and the personnel responsible for them, are shown in Table 2-1 on the next page.

TABLE 2-1 — Survey/Mapping and Title Office Activities in the Team Process of Project Development

Survey/Mapping and Title Office Activity	Responsible Party
Ascertain existing right of way from MaineDOT records and assemble background map for other Team members.	Surveyor/Mapper
Prepare Names and Addresses List; Add Property Owner Report information to Realty Management System	Surveyor/Mapper or other qualified program personnel
Initiate POR process, including the completion of POR forms by the property owner and locating property ownership evidence in field (e.g., pins, monuments, fences)	Surveyor/Mapper or other qualified program personnel
Initiate preliminary highway research, as appropriate.	Surveyor/Mapper
Prepare Right of Way Base Map: existing right of way and tax map property lines for Public Hearing use only.	Surveyor/Mapper
Brief Project Manager about existing right of way, especially in the case of prescriptive easement highways (wrought portion).	Surveyor/Mapper
Request title work by Title Office	Surveyor/Mapper
Prepare Title Reports.	Title Office Abstractors
Prepare preliminary right of way plans: existing right of way, property lines from title abstract and POR's, property owner information.	Surveyor/Mapper with review by Title Office Condemnation Unit
Review preliminary alignment prepared by Design Team Member; provide comments on changes needed to avoid undesirable right of way impacts and on project schedule.	Project Team Designer, Appraiser and Surveyor/Mapper
Merge elements of design with relevant property ownership information, topographic data, existing right of way and proposed new right of way; prepare parcel setups (parcel-specific acquisition data) for all necessary acquisitions; request any needed survey topography updates;	Surveyor/Mapper
Create final right of way plans; submit completed design and right of way plans to R/W Supervisor; for concurrence and discussion of potentially sever impacts to properties.	Project Team Designer and Surveyor/Mapper with review by Title Office Condemnation Unit
Revise plans to reflect any changes requested by Project Team in the nature or scope of rights to be acquired resulting from the negotiations with property owners. These are changes that do not typically require recycling the valuation or other processes.	Project Team Surveyor/Mapper

TABLE 2-1 — Survey/Mapping and Title Office Activities in the Team Process of Project Development
(Continued)

Survey/Mapping and Title Office Activity	Responsible Party
Order R/W Plan verifications.	Surveyor/Mapper
Verify property ownerships and review title work and plan (includes title updates if required due to passage of 6 months or more).	Title Office
Prepare Notification List.	Title Office
Prepare Notice of Layout and Taking to condemn properties for project.	Surveyor/Mapper reviewed by Title Office Condemnation Unit.
Record Notice of Layout and Taking and update title reports.	Title Office
Send property owner condemnation packages, consisting of right of way map, copy of Notice of Layout and Taking, statement of determined damages and payment check for rights acquired.	Title Office Condemnation Unit
Send copy of Notice of Layout and Taking to Project Team Surveyor/Mapper.	Title Office Condemnation Unit
Refer any unsettled acquisitions to the State Claims Commission 60 days after the date of the recording of the Notice of Layout and Taking.	Title Office Condemnation Unit
Update right of way plans to reflect any changes generated by construction phase activities or parcel settlement activities and to display right of way control information and monumentation.	Surveyor/Mapper or Title Office Condemnation Unit
Provide requested plans and other information for State Claims Commission hearings on unsettled parcels.	Surveyor/Mapper and Title Office Condemnation Unit
Update title reports on parcels with pending compensation settlement agreements.	Title Office
Analyze the process and evaluate right of way performance to find ways to improve it.	All Survey/Mapping and Title Office personnel involved with the project

2-1.04 Decision-Making Milestones and Standards

The most important decision-making points for Survey/Mapping personnel during the development of projects are:

1. Determine the amount of title work performed for each parcel on a project. Survey/Mapping personnel typically decide this using the title standards developed by

the Title Office. However, the treatment of a particular parcel may vary from the standards depending on the needs and circumstances of the project.

2. Identify the areas where there are insufficient road records, or when conditions on the ground vary from record descriptions. Survey/Mapping personnel apply the procedures described in Section 2-6.06(a). Where those procedures do not produce a clear determination, an educated determination must be made based on the existing evidence.
3. Resolve title problems and conflicting property owner claims. This activity occurs to the extent required in order to move a project forward. Collaboration with the Chief Surveyor, the Title Office or the Legal Services Office may be necessary to resolve these issues by interpreting records, ground conditions and the law.
4. Settle conflicts between right of way requirements generated by proposed design elements and the needs of property owners or municipalities. Surveyor/Mappers often act as the “middleman” in these situations. Personnel typically resolve these issues through identification of alternative design elements or mitigation measures that address property owner/municipal concerns.
5. Through consultation with the project Designer and Appraiser, determine the type, size and location of acquisitions. The decisions are based on the design for the transportation facility, right of way acquisition criteria, site conditions and other relevant project characteristics. Project Designers and Appraisers also may collaborate to make these decisions.
6. Complete final right of way plans. A determination that right of way plans are final and meet quality standards results in distribution of the plans to Right of Way Operations Team Members and others who use the plans to complete their project work.

2-1.05 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance is the set of activities that are performed by Operational personnel in each function to continuously improve the level of performance in meeting MaineDOT mission and goals. Quality assurance is a shared responsibility of all MaineDOT personnel who are involved in Property Research, Plan Development and Acquisition. This is distinguished from quality control, which is the corresponding management activity that focuses on general right of way program oversight, conformity of operations to policy and quality of coordination between right of way functions and with other Departmental units.

Elements of quality in the Survey/Mapping function include:

1. Conforming with all State and Federal rules and regulations and MaineDOT criteria relating to right of way acquisitions;

2. Effectively coordinating with the Project Team Members responsible for other project development activities;
3. Consistently working with Project Team Members to identify and resolve in a timely manner all issues affecting the completion of right of way plans and project schedules;
4. Accurately gathering information on properties and ownership and providing that information to all who need it;
5. Properly maintaining and interpreting right of way records relevant to projects and to public information inquiries;
6. Making reasonable and timely decisions about the type, size and location of the property interests acquired for projects;
7. Assisting survey/mapping consultants retained by the Department as required to ensure timely and quality products for projects;
8. Participating in process and performance evaluations; and
9. Proactively contributing to the continuous improvement of Survey/Mapping policies, practices and procedures so that Survey/Mapping functions reflect industry “best practices” and quality standards as outlined by the Board of Licensure for Professional Land Surveyors Chapter 90 – Standards of Practice.

Survey/Mapping personnel will perform specific quality assurance tasks as determined in consultation with the Chief Surveyor and the Title Office Manager. Following are examples of quality assurance activities that may be performed:

1. Develop a peer review process of evaluating mapping work products with the aim of constructively identifying opportunities for improvement.
2. Perform formal evaluations of the quality and timeliness of consultant work products.
3. Perform 360-degree evaluations of specific mapping processes. This would include participation of all parties involved in the process.
4. Survey Departmental and external “customers” as to the effectiveness of specific Survey/Mapping policies and practices.

MaineDOT will progressively refine quality practices, set goals, develop performance standards and evaluate progress in meeting goals. Quality assurance is the operational-level participation in this process, as distinct from management-level quality control activities.

Chapter 10 provides detailed guidance on the MaineDOT Right of Way Quality Assurance/Quality Control Program. Section 2-6.06(f) describes the specific quality standards for right of way plans.

2-1.06 Coordination with Other Functions

Survey/Mapping activities interface with a number of other MaineDOT functions. The relationship is both as a provider of information and services and as a recipient of information and services. The main points of coordination between Survey/Mapping personnel and other Property Office personnel, or other parts of MaineDOT, are:

1. Planning. The Bureau of Transportation Systems Planning, as well as planning personnel in the Office of Freight and Business Services, frequently requires ownership and description information for existing MaineDOT properties.
2. Design. The design aspects of a transportation project largely dictate the scope of the property acquisitions. Project Team Surveyor/Mappers need to coordinate closely with Designers and Appraisers to help them understand the right of way implications of design work. This close relationship helps to avoid delays in the completion of right of way plans due to late design changes or to unexpected difficulties reconciling the right of way requirements of the design with the conditions in the field.
3. Title Office. This office provides Surveyor/Mappers with property title information for various steps of the acquisition process and helps Survey/Mapping resolve legal questions concerning property ownership. Records and Research Unit act as a resource for the Office of Legal Services in administrative hearings before the State Claims Commission and at judicial trials by delivering relevant information from highway records and MaineDOT property ownership records. The Title Office also prepares plans and exhibits for these proceedings. Coordination occurs both through Project Teams and through the various Property Office Units.
4. Environmental Office. Final right of way plans serve as the basis for calculating potential environmental impacts from transportation projects. However, coordination between Designers, Surveyor/Mappers and environmental personnel on Project Teams occurs throughout the project development process. This assists the Environmental Office in anticipating the scope of impacts that require State or Federal review and approval. Survey/Mapping personnel also assist the Environmental Office with the identification, survey/mapping and acquisition of parcels for mitigation of environmental impacts. This activity takes place both through the Project Team process and as independent projects for compensatory mitigation. The Environmental Office is made aware of the existence of private water supplies in or near a potential project area through the POR process.
5. Right of Way Valuation. Valuation of property interests for acquisition and disposition requires accurate identification of the type, size and location of the interests. Surveyor/Mappers work with Designers, Appraisers and others involved in valuation activities to prepare the necessary plans.

6. Right of Way Negotiation. Negotiators use right of way plans in their discussions with property owners. Survey/Mapping personnel and Designers work with Negotiators to resolve questions that arise during negotiations about property ownership, the status of improvements on the land and potential property impacts of the transportation project. Coordination with Negotiators takes place in the Project Teams.
7. Property Relocation Services. Relocation planning and the execution of relocation activities require information about property interests to be acquired and the impacts of projects on activities on the adjacent lands. Survey/Mapping personnel work with the Property personnel handling relocation activities to provide plans, ownership information, acquisition options and other information useful to relocation decisions.
8. Utilities and Railroads Services. The Records and Research Unit staff help Utilities Coordinators in the Bureau to identify the rights of existing utility and railroad facilities within a potential project area. Preliminary right of way plans prepared by Survey/Mappers are a tool used to negotiate with railroads and utilities about changes that need to be made to accommodate the proposed transportation project. The Records and Research Unit also provides plans and property ownership information when a new utility or railroad facility is proposed that uses or affects MaineDOT property.

2-1.07 Use of Consultants

On occasion, MaineDOT uses consultants to perform Survey/Mapping functions. Chapter 9 contains information about contracting considerations and processes, including consultant qualification, selection and evaluation. Sections 9-3.03(a) and 9-3.03(b) address the Survey/Mapping activities typically included in these contacts. The Chief or Region Land Surveyor from consultation with the Program Project Manager makes the decision whether to use consultant services on a case-by-case basis. Factors considered include the length of the job, the number of property owners, the nature of the project's location (e.g., urban, rural) and the availability and the cost of consultant services as compared to in-house services. Program staff monitors and review consultant performance of Survey/Mapping functions in the same manner as described in Section 2-6.06(f).

2-2 RIGHT OF WAY AND LAND RECORDS

2-2.01 Project Records and Data

At the beginning of a project, Survey/Mapping personnel gather a variety of data. The information includes:

1. Property ownership information, as described in 2-3.01;
2. The finding and locating of property ownership evidence in the field, as described in 2-3.02; and
3. Property related information, using the POR form discussed in section 2-3.03.

Information from the PORs is entered into the Survey/Mapping project file (electronic and hard copy). Completed PORs become a part of the permanent project file. A Names and Addresses (N&A) List is created from property ownership information entered into the Realty Management System (RMS) which is a data management tool housed within the MaineDOT Property Office that is also accessed by other units within MaineDOT, for the purpose of organizing, storing, and disseminating information related to property owners potentially affected by the property acquisition process. RMS facilitates the acquisition process from the beginning stage of gathering property owner information through, title research, valuation, negotiation, acquisition, and State Claims Commission referral. Standardized forms can be automatically populated by RMS with both project level and ownership information helping to streamline the property acquisition process.

Other project records including acquisition parcel descriptions; preliminary and final right of way plans and related data; deeds, Notices of Layout and Taking (condemnation) and other title documents; work permits granted by property owners; condemnation process notices, proof of payments and related documentation; State Claims Commissions referral records; and records pertaining to the administrative or legal settlement of compensation claims for property acquisitions are located in the Title Office.

2-2.02 Transportation Systems Records and Data

The Property Office Records and Research Unit houses property plans and records relating to transportation facilities throughout the State. Property plans have been scanned into electronic images and are available to departmental employees statewide as well as the general public. MaineDOT uses the records for project development and maintenance and operations purposes. Other entities, including municipalities, metropolitan planning organizations and private developers, request information from the records for their own projects, as well as private surveyors and property owners who are attempting to identify property ownership along State highways.

The Property Office Records and Research Unit maintain records and related indices for the following:

1. Right of Way Plans. Recorded final plans from MaineDOT projects showing limits of construction, limits of MaineDOT right of way and project acquisitions.
2. Deed Files. Includes recorded title documents relating to current and former MaineDOT properties, including highways, railroads, ports, maintenance lots, rest areas and mitigation sites. Files include Notices of Layout and Taking, fee and easement deeds, and other ownership records.
3. State Highway Plans. Includes full size plans for all State highways and layout descriptions where available.
4. State-aid Highway Plans. Includes full size plans and layouts where available.
5. County Commissioners' Road Records. Descriptions of recorded and unrecorded road layouts ordered by county commissioners. Plans are included where available.
6. Town Road Records. Descriptions of recorded and unrecorded road layouts ordered by local municipalities. Plans are included where available.
7. Land Office Records. Historic records of actions by an early State agency that handled the sale of State-owned lands.
8. Section 815 Records. Descriptions of properties subject to 1 **MRSA** Section 815 and their control dates. The Property Office Records and Research Unit manage these records according to the procedures described in Section 2-7.04.

Collectively, these records provide historical and current data on the location and legal status of property interests held or used for transportation purposes. The Property Office Records and Research Unit also maintains records of controlled access acquisition, modification and disposal, as well as agreements and letters of no objection issued to property owners for particular structures and activities on or near MaineDOT property. Many of these records are and will be maintained in the Region Offices.

As MaineDOT completes projects, the Title Office Condemnation Unit updates Plan File, Deed File, State Highway Plans and State-aid Highway Plans records and indices. Updates for other records occur as information becomes available through project work or other means.

2-2.03 Availability of Records to the Public

The Maine Public Records Law, 1 **MRSA** Sections 401 and 402, provides that information in the custody of a State agency that is received or prepared in connection with the transaction of Government business is accessible to the public unless this information specifically is made confidential by law. The Statute applies to information in written, printed, graphic and electronic

forms. Under this law, most MaineDOT records are open to public inspection. This includes the records maintained by the Property Office.

Requests for access to Right of Way records protected by 23 **MRSA** Section 63 should be referred to a Senior Property Officer in the program receiving the request. The Senior Property Officer will refer the request to the Legal Services Office for action. In general, Right of Way plans, Notices of Layout and Taking, and State or State-aid highway system records are not confidential. Requests for other types of records must be judged against the statutory standards and any applicable public interest in maintaining confidentiality.

2-3 DOCUMENTATION OF PROPERTY AND PARCEL INFORMATION

2-3.01 Survey, Tax and Title Information

The Surveyor/Mapper, or assigned personnel, obtains full-size tax maps of the project study area. Copies of all maps and survey plans within the project area are also collected. Sources for these documents include property owners, municipal offices, previous MaineDOT project files, the registry of deeds and private surveyors. Survey/Mapping personnel obtain additional title information by requesting the Title Office to perform a title search for specified parcels in the project area.

For each parcel of land that may be affected by the project, the assigned mapper or program staff person prepares a summary containing the names and addresses of each owner, the map and lot of the parcel and the parcel deed references. This information is used to create the initial Name and Addresses (N&A) List in RMS with data fields for owner name, mailing address, tax map and lot number, and deed book and page reference.

Department personnel use the information in RMS to contact property owners throughout the project development and property acquisition processes. RMS is updated as other project information is gathered, including PORs, title information obtained by the Title Office and field information from the Survey crews in the Regional Program.

2-3.02 Field Investigations

A critical step in the POR process is finding and locating property pins, monuments, fences and other forms of evidence indicating property line locations in the field. This reconnaissance task can occur before, during or after completion of POR's, but should be done as early in the process as practical. The features are flagged with blue surveyor's tape, an identifying mark is painted on the pavement and notes made on a plan/tax map. A plan with the location of the property evidence features noted is provided to Survey crews so that they may accurately locate these features and include them in the topographic survey information used by Surveyor/Mappers.

2-3.03 Property Owner Contacts and Reports

The Survey Supervisor is responsible for insuring that a POR (Form MR-1) is completed for affected parcels when necessary. PORs may be mailed to the property owners in advance of direct contact with the owner on site, or the POR can be presented during the direct contact with the owner. The Survey Supervisor will determine the most appropriate owner contact method, based on the scope of the project and the level of detailed information necessary for plan development. At the time of the contact, the MaineDOT representative informs the property owner that other MaineDOT personnel will be in contact to discuss the proposed project and its potential impacts. MaineDOT provides a copy of the completed POR to property owners upon request. The completed POR constitutes one of the principal records in Survey/Mapping. The form contains:

1. Identifying and contact information for property owners;
2. A history of the property's ownership, improvements and utilities;
3. Current occupancy and use;
4. Past survey work;
5. Any special classifications (historic or public use) affecting the property;
6. Any conditions or uses that might require an environmental assessment of chemical or hazardous materials;
7. Property owners' comments; and
8. Any other information that might be relevant to subsequent right of way or other project development activities.

Completion of the POR includes a visual inspection of the property. MaineDOT's representative encourages the property owner to participate in that inspection. Information gathered during the inspection includes the location and types of boundary line markers and the locations of wells, septic systems, fences, walls, outbuildings and any other improvements on the property. Notations are included that describe any discrepancies between deed descriptions and field locations of property boundaries. The individual completing the POR also makes a sketch of the property, showing approximate size and location, improvements, apparent boundary lines and indications of how the lines were established. An approximate North arrow is included on the sketch. Completed PORs must include the signature of the person (preferably a landowner of the parcel) completing or providing the information to complete the POR. It is not necessary that the MaineDOT employee or consultant assigned the POR task to sign the form.

2-3.04 Existing Conditions Plans

In order to provide more complete baseline plans Regional survey teams may delineate and locate routine wetland boundaries. These are later reviewed by staff from the Environmental Office (EO). Regional survey teams also do their own deed and plan boundary research rather than relying only on tax map information.

2-4 TITLE INVESTIGATION AND CERTIFICATION

2-4.01 Overview

Title examinations are the means by which MaineDOT determines who owns property that will be acquired for projects. The Surveyor/Mapper and the Title Office share responsibility for making certain the work is performed on time and in an appropriate manner.

The Surveyor/Mappers request title examinations from the Title Office and rely on the information produced by title examinations for determining property ownership and to assist with resolving property description and boundary issues. Depending on the level of title search requested, a title reports may include a history of deeds involving the land or premises in question, including sales, mortgages and outstanding liens. The information is used to prepare plans, draft descriptions for documents transferring title, and determine to whom MaineDOT will make payments for property rights acquired. The process for title examination is the same for MaineDOT personnel and its consultants. A flowchart illustrating the main steps in the title examination process appears in Figure 2-1.

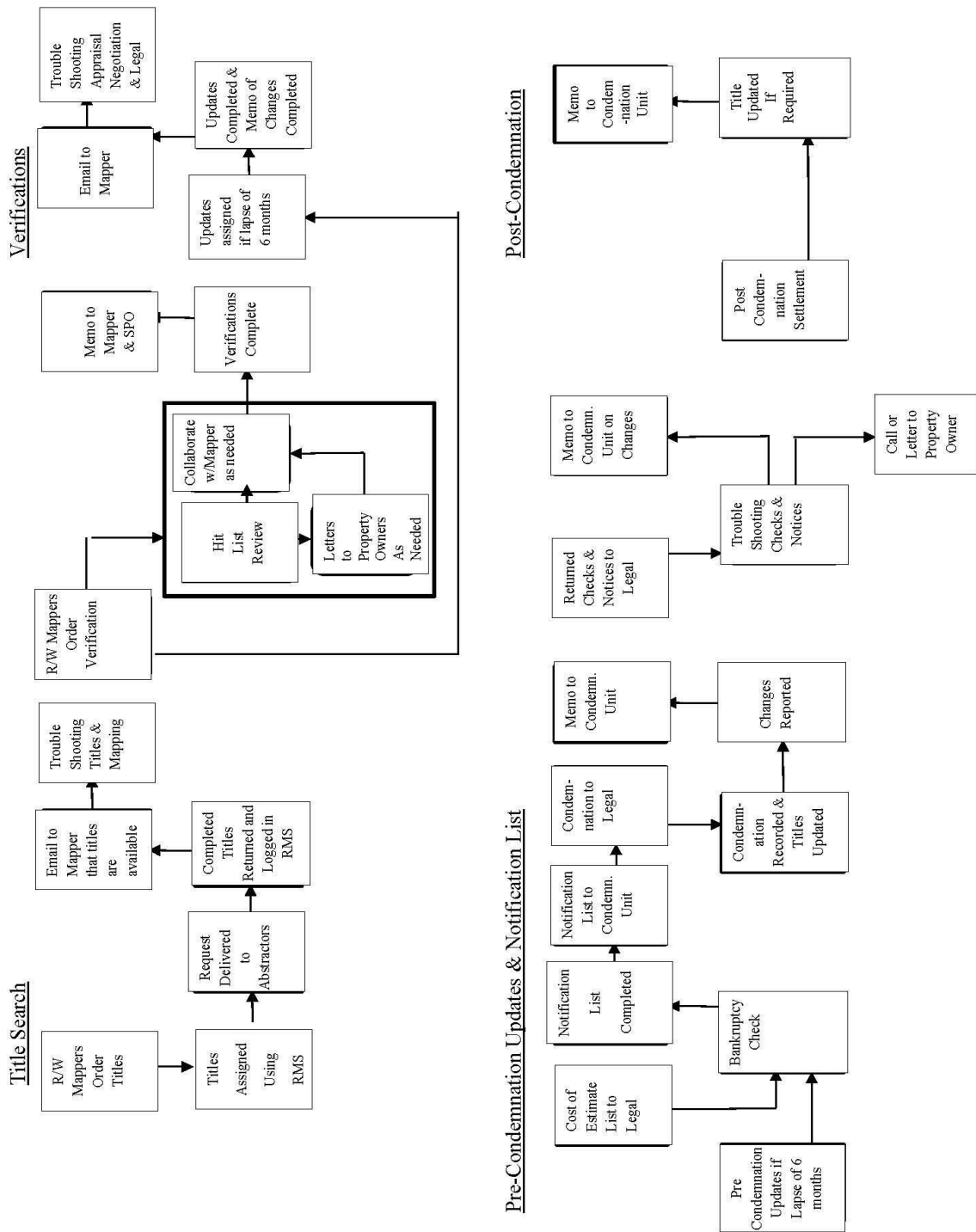


Figure 2-1

2-4.02 Title Examinations

MaineDOT follows the standards established by the Maine State Bar Association for title examinations, including the treatment of clouds and defects in title. Exceptions to those standards are made only with the approval of the Principal Real Estate Attorney in the Legal Services Office. For condemnations, the Title Office and the Legal Services Office worked together to establish modified title examination standards. The decision to adopt modified condemnation standards rests on the fact that condemnation automatically vests title in the State of Maine and removes clouds and defects of title. Nevertheless, the title standards for condemnation are reviewed periodically for their effectiveness. In addition, the standards may be altered by agreement on a case-by-case basis.

One area in which title examination practices have been altered is the required period of title searches. The standards appear in Table 2-2.

TABLE 2-2 — Title Search Requirements for Condemnation Parcels

Type of Taking	Minimum Payment of Acquisition	Length of Required Title Search
Substantial fee acquisition (ex. total acquisitions or large fee takes, potential severance issues)	\$1,000.00	40 years
Minor fee acquisition (ex. small strip along parcel frontage)	\$1,000.00	Acquisition to date (current owner search)
Prescriptive easement in the highway and/or wrought portion areas (area of occupation and use)	\$1,000.00	Deed only search
Permanent easements (ex. drainage, slope, construction & maintenance, etc.)	\$1,000.00	Deed only search
Temporary construction rights	\$500.00	Deed only search
Work permit	No payment	Town/City tax assessor's records

In cases involving a substantial fee acquisition (generally not small strip takes), the Title Office and the Office of Legal Services agree to use a 40-year title search. Exceptions may be made by mutual agreement in some cases if the risk to the State is deemed acceptable.

The Title Office conducts title work that correlate to the type of taking:

1. Current deed retrieval (used for preliminary mapping effort or work permit situation),
2. Deed only search (used when acquiring only permanent easement and/or when acquiring temporary construction rights)
3. Acquisition to date search (used when acquiring small portions of land in fee),
4. Full 40-year title search (used in major fee acquisitions), and
5. Update and certification of title.

The end products include a description of the property affected, the names to be used for condemnation and, in some instances, the names of other parties in interest (ex. mortgage holders) who must be involved in the transaction because of the need to include them on any payment checks or for releases or other documentation.

2-4.02(a) Current Deed Retrieval

Current deed retrievals result in the information used in the preparation of preliminary right of way plans for a project. Using title references supplied by personnel handling the preparation of the project N&A Lists and PORs, the title examiner obtains copies of the current deed description for all properties abutting the proposed project location. Copies of the descriptions are given to the individuals preparing the preliminary right of way plans for use in the initial placement of property lines.

2-4.02(b) Deed Only Searches

This level of title investigation is used when the Surveyor/Mapper anticipates that it will need to acquire permanent easements and/or temporary property rights. A deed search involves the following compilation of information: copy of the current deed, a sketch of the description or rely on a recorded survey plan, schedules of the grantor only (copy the index page) limited to town only entries, copies of any referenced easements and rights of ways and copies of any back deeds that may assist with vague descriptions. If there is a taking that involves a very large permanent easement that could impair the property, upgrading the title work to an acquisition to date and naming and notifying lienholders would be considered. The Chief or Senior Property Officer should be consulted on these types of issues before the title request is made.

2-4.02(c) Acquisition to Date Examinations

An acquisition to date search (commonly referred to as a current owner search) is used when acquiring small portions of land that abut the current right of way or in some instances known as strip takes. Liens and encumbrances will be reported so that if the value of the take is over \$1,000.00, the lienholders will be named on the check and given notice.

This level of title work provides the Surveyor/Mapper with the information necessary to move forward with more detailed plotting of property lines and other property information. This title work

identifies critical information including current owner, any transfers out since last acquisition and outstanding mortgages and liens against the property. Acquisition to date title packages include:

1. A copy of the deed to the current owner;
2. A drawing or sketch based on the property description in the current owner's deed;
3. A summary title report that provides:
 - a. A schedule of all index entries for the current owner from the deed into that owner, up to the date that the title investigation commenced (the same date is used for all titles on a project)
 - b. An abstract of all instruments in the chain of title from the current owner forward, together with copies of any instrument in that chain that includes a change in description or other pertinent new material
 - c. A summary chain of title showing all instruments of record resulting from the schedule of index entries
 - d. A cover sheet showing the owner of record and any parties in interest;
4. A project inventory listing all of the owners of record by parcel number
5. A listing identified by parcel number, of problems that need to be resolved and a report on any measures to cure or additional information gathered by the title abstractor

Surveyor/Mapper sometimes need additional title information in order to complete the accurate plotting of property lines. They request that supplemental title work from the Title Office.

2-4.02(d) 40-Year Title Examinations

Once the final scope of the project is established, the Surveyor/Mapper requests full 40-year title examinations for proposed total acquisitions or any large fee acquisitions or parcel impacts that may involve severance damages. The mapper, senior property officer and any other interested party should be included in making this decision. Completing a 40-year search in these instances will capture any 30 year mortgages or prior liens that do not expire for 20 years so that they can be named as a payee on the award check and given notice.

Abstractors perform these examinations in accordance with the standards of the Maine Bar Association except where the standards are modified by the Title Office and the Office of Legal Services. The results of the 40-year examinations are used in final right of way mapping, property valuation and acquisition activities.

Using the information obtained from all of the various levels of title work explained above, the Title Office prepares a Notification List, which includes the names and addresses of each party with a title interest in a parcel, as well as any party with a financial interest. The Title Office Condemnation Unit uses the information for document preparation, vouchering of checks and delivery of condemnation packages and other notices to landowners.

The title work for any affected parcel is updated once the Senior Property Officer completes valuation and negotiation activities, but no more than 6 months prior to the scheduled acquisition date. The Title Office submits to the Surveyor/Mapper a memo summarizing any ownership or mapping related changes. Survey/Mapping uses this information to make any mapping changes. The Title Office updates RMS with the most recent ownership changes found during the title update.

2-4.02(e) Update and Certification of Title

To ensure that MaineDOT acquires rights from the proper parties and makes payments to the proper parties, the title abstractor verifies the title immediately prior to recording any voluntary acquisition documents. When recording the Notice of Layout and Taking, the title abstractor records the Notice first, and then updates the titles through the date and time of the recording. The Title Office delivers to the Title Office Condemnation Unit a copy of the recorded Notice or deed that MaineDOT has acquired good and sufficient title to the properties. The Chief Property Officer relies on this document when they execute a Right of Way Certificate (Form AD-3) certifying that MaineDOT has the necessary rights to construct the project as designed and that all applicable Federal and State requirements governing these acquisitions are satisfied.

2-4.03 Liens

Generally, MaineDOT relies on condemnation to automatically extinguish any lien holder interest in the property acquired. Whenever the acquisition is accomplished by voluntary deed rather than condemnation, a lien holder's interest in the part acquired is terminated only when the lien holder executes a release of the lien against the property in question. MaineDOT uses a modified standard for handling the clearance of mortgages and other liens on voluntary and involuntary acquisitions:

1. Fee Acquisitions. Where a property owner is awarded less than \$1,000.00 for the fee ownership of the part acquired, MaineDOT does not name lien holders on the payment check. For any fee acquisition valued at more than the minimum payment amount, any recorded party with a financial interest is included as a payee on the acquisition check.
2. Permanent Easement Acquisitions. Lien holders are named as check payees on all transactions valued at more than \$1,000.00.
3. Temporary Rights Acquisitions. Temporary rights, which are valued at no more than the minimum payment amount, do not require the naming of lien holders as payees.

2-4.04 FERC-Licensed Properties

Projects located in the area of a dam or hydro-facility require special title examination measures to determine whether there is Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) involvement affecting any parcel. Survey/Mapping personnel, as well as all other project personnel, notify the Title Office if any evidence of a dam or hydro-facility is found within the project area.

Because the State of Maine cannot condemn against a parcel over which a FERC license runs or any other property that has a property interest by any federal agency MaineDOT usually acquires a highway easement from the hydro-facility licensee, who typically also is the property owner. Fee acquisition of these parcels is possible only through a complex and time-consuming federal process. If that type of acquisition is required, the Title Office works with the hydro-facility licensee to obtain the mandatory pre-approvals from FERC.

2-4.05 Scheduling Title Work

The scheduling milestones for project title work are the ordering of titles, request for verification and pre-acquisition updates. As soon as the Surveyor/Mapper has sufficient information on a project, the Surveyor/Mapper coordinates with the Title Office to establish estimated dates for these milestones. The parties also review the tentative scope of project title work in terms of the number of parcels, the length of title search needed for the parcels and any special problems known to the Surveyor/Mapper. This permits the Title Office to schedule title examiners for the work and helps to ensure that the Project Team will receive the completed work when it is needed.

2-4.06 Other Title-Related Functions

2-4.06(a) Recording

The Title Office Abstractors handles the recording of condemnations, deeds and other title documents in the appropriate county registry of deeds. After recording, it reports the recording information and any changes in ownership to the Condemnation Unit so that property owner checks and condemnation packages can be mailed out immediately. If the title examiners do find changes in ownership, the Condemnation Unit holds the checks for the affected parcels. A memorandum is prepared that identifies the modifications needed to the checks and plans. The Property Office Research and Records Unit adds the recording information to the final right of way plans.

2-4.06(b) Resolution of Title Problems and Legal Issues

Title defects often are discovered during parcel title examinations for MaineDOT projects. The Title Office takes the lead in working with owners to resolve the defects before MaineDOT's acquisition. Survey/Mapping personnel provide support for this activity. Typical issues include:

1. Title or mapping inconsistencies,

2. Boundaries,
3. Riparian rights
4. Road and right of way locations
5. Unknown owners,
6. Additional owners,
7. Estates, and
8. Missing interests.

The Title Office gives notice of the defect to the owner by a letter, which often includes a suggested solution. The Surveyor/Mapper is notified of any resulting changes to the parcel if the property owner takes steps to cure the issue.

In accordance with Maine Law Title 23 Section 154 MRSA, the Department shall serve a check in the amount of the determined net damage to the owner or owners of record. In the case of multiple ownership, the check may be served on any one of the owners. The Department will name as payees entities that have mortgages, liens or other encumbrances against the property. The Title Office works with property owners to solve problems when acquisition checks are returned to MaineDOT because the owners are unable to cash the checks. This can happen for a variety of reasons. MaineDOT personnel must document conversations in these cases and include comments in RMS and legal documentation forwarded to the Title Office.

2-5 DOCUMENTATION FOR THE ACQUISITION AND DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY

2-5.01 Types and Legal Description of Interests Acquired

MaineDOT acquires many different types of property rights. The scope and type of right acquired depends on the project's requirements and the characteristics of the land in question. The types of property rights MaineDOT most frequently acquires are described below:

1. Fee Title. (Fee Simple) MaineDOT acquires all right, title and interest in and to the described property. This type of interest usually is acquired for major components of transportation facilities, like roadbeds. This is the preferred type of acquisition.
2. Permanent Easement. This easement provides the right to enter and perform the activities described in the easement. The acquisition document includes a description of the location of the easement, the purposes for which the easement is acquired and any special terms governing the use or term of the easement. The property owner retains all other rights to the property. Permanent easements are frequently used for drainage and slope areas. Most often they are used where MaineDOT does not expect that there will be a need to enter the property for maintenance or repair on a frequent basis, so that full fee ownership is unnecessary.
3. Temporary Rights. These are similar to a permanent easement, except that the rights last only for a specified period of time. A typical example is a temporary construction right to grade a driveway.
4. Wrought Portion or Prescriptive Easement. This easement is acquired by occupation and use of the property that is subject to the prescriptive easement. Typically found where a roadway has been in use for more than 20 years, but there is no record of either a governmental order of layout for the road or a voluntary grant of rights to the public. Section 2-6.06(a) describes the procedures for wrought portion highways.
5. Access Control. Similar to the acquisition of development rights, this right creates a prohibition that prevents all or specified types of access directly to the highway from abutting properties. This includes limited use access agreements that permit only agricultural or residential access to the highways. Acquisition of access control is required in most areas of the Interstate Highway System and in certain areas of intersecting roadways. Acquisition of access control rights elsewhere is done as appropriate to the needs and conditions of the highway as determined under MaineDOT's Access Management Program (See Sections 7-7.01 and 7-7.02).
6. Work Permits or Rights of Entry. Short-term agreements giving MaineDOT permission to go onto land to begin preliminary project work. Generally used where valuation and acquisition activities are not yet complete. These rights do not allow for future maintenance activities and are not to be used in place of easements or fee simple acquisitions for features extending outside the existing right of way. Pre-approval from the Property Office Director is required if these are to be used.

The property rights described above are contained in forms (see Appendix C) that are part of the MaineDOT electronic database.

2-5.02 Acquisition and Disposal Methods and Practices

MaineDOT may acquire land by voluntary deed or by involuntary transfer through condemnation proceedings under 23 **MRSA** Section 154. In both instances, the Surveyor/Mapper in conjunction with the Title Office Condemnation Unit prepares the acquisition documentation. The Title Office Manager reviews and approves all acquisition documents.

2-5.02(a) Voluntary Acquisitions

MaineDOT uses voluntary deeds for non-project acquisitions, including mitigation sites or single parcel transactions, and for project acquisitions that require different timing than the scheduled project condemnation. Individual documents of acquisition may include deeds, easements, leases, work permits and other legal documents. Voluntary deeds may use a quitclaim or warranty format that includes a description of the property and a reference to the relevant right of way plan or individual parcel survey for the property. The Title Office records the voluntary deed in the registry of deeds for the county in which the land is located. The Condemnation Unit sends a notice of the transfer, together with a copy of the deed and of the preliminary right of way plans, to the county commissioners, local assessor, and town or city clerk. When the deed is returned from the registry, it is added to the Property Office Records and Research Unit's Deed File. The recording reference is added to the right of way plan for the area.

Voluntary deed transactions also may require the preparation and recording of releases for mortgages and other liens affecting the property acquired, as discussed in Section 2-4.03. The Title Office handles the drafting of the release or the review and approval of form release documents provided by the lien holder. Any required releases are recorded with the voluntary deed from the property owner.

2-5.02(b) Condemnations

The condemnation process, which is the exercise of eminent domain authority, involves statutorily mandated procedures contained in 23 **MRSA** Sections 154 through 159. Condemnation is the preferred method of acquisition for transportation projects because of the quality of title it provides to MaineDOT. Condemnations take place a minimum of 28 days after the Project Team Member completes initial negotiations with property owners, unless all owners settle.

Normally, a project condemnation is done by means of a single Notice of Layout and Taking that includes all property rights for the project, regardless of whether the compensation amount is settled or unsettled with the property owner. The steps taken by the Condemnation Unit for a condemnation include the following:

1. In conjunction with the Surveyor/Mapper the Condemnation Unit prepares the Notice of Layout and Taking using the final right of way plans for the project and the

Notification list provided by the Title Office. The Notice includes a description of the interests acquired from each property owner, the parcel number for the interest, the names of the apparent owners, and the location and station on the preliminary right of way plans for the right acquired.

2. The Condemnation Unit sends a project voucher to the Bureau of Finance and Administration requesting it to prepare and issue checks for payment of the compensation for the acquisitions to the parties indicated in the Notification List.

The Condemnation Unit assembles the condemnation package for each parcel. The package includes a copy of the right of way plan section that includes the parcel, the payment check, the Notice of Layout and Taking, a Statement of Determination of Damages and a cover letter that describes the enclosures, the compensation to be paid and any rights of appeal that apply. In some cases, changes in the title that are noted during the update done at the time of condemnation may require re-vouchering of the compensation check.

3. Once the Notice of Layout and Taking is recorded, the Condemnation Unit mails the condemnation packages by certified mail or delivers them by personal service. In the case of multiple owners, MaineDOT may deliver the check to any one of the owners with copies of the check and condemnation packages to all the owners.
4. The Condemnation Unit publishes the Notice of Layout and Taking(or an abbreviated version thereof) in a newspaper of general circulation in the county where the property is located.
5. The Condemnation Unit sends municipal officials, the local assessor and the county commissioners a copy of the Notice of Layout and Taking and a copy of the preliminary right of way plan.
6. Within one year of the completion of the project, the Property Office Research and Records Unit sends the final right of way plans to the registry of deeds for recording as required by 23 **MRSA** Section 154.

2-5.02(c) Disposals

Disposal procedures depend on the nature of the property in question and the party to whom MaineDOT intends to convey the property. Disposal of real property is addressed comprehensively in Chapter 7.

Disposition of excess or surplus land most commonly is done pursuant to 23 **MRSA** Section 61:

1. Vacation. Transfers land or any part of land acquired for a transportation project back to the person in whom title was vested at the time of acquisition, and that owner's heirs and assignees. The Records and Research Unit updates the Right of Way map and prepares the legal description for the Deed of Vacation using a quitclaim deed format.

The description is incorporated into the deed prepared by the Title Office for signature by the Commissioner of Transportation. The Property Office Research and Records Unit notes the area vacated, together with the recording references for the Deed of Vacation, on the most current right of way plans for the area.

2. Sale. Transfers land or other property interests that are no longer necessary for transportation purposes to a party other than the original owner or that owner's heirs and assignees. The Records and Research Unit updates the Right of Way map and prepares a legal description for the quitclaim deed. The description is incorporated into the deed prepared by the Title Office for execution by Maine's Governor. The Property Office Research and Records Unit notes the area sold, together with the recording references for the Governor's Deed, on the most current right of way plans for the area. Note: Any sale of property acquired with Title 23 federal funds needs FHWA approval if that sale will be made at less than Fair Market Value or was acquired for an Interstate project.
3. Note that 1 MRSA Section 815 provides the condemned property owner the right of first refusal in some unique circumstances for parcels purchased after October 1, 2001. This law **does not** apply if:
 - a. The property was purchased by deed or friendly condemnation or;
 - b. Was taken in whole or in part using federal funds or;
 - c. The authority to acquire the property by eminent domain was derived from federal law or;
 - d. The lot does not meet state or municipal lot size or frontage requirements or;
 - e. The property was taken to expand existing corridors used for transportation purposes.

The right of first refusal automatically terminates once the property is used for the project or purpose for which that property was taken.

If it appears that an acquisition might fall under 1 MRSA Section 815, that acquisition should be flagged in the event the public purpose for the acquisition needs to be reaffirmed.

4. Lease. Permits the use of MaineDOT property by others pending the use of the property for transportation purposes. The Title Office prepares the lease and the Property Office Research and Records Unit provides the property description and a plan segment, if needed.

2-5.02(d) Discontinuances

MaineDOT may terminate the State or State-aid highway status of a roadway by means of discontinuance pursuant to its powers under 23 **MRSA** Section 651. The Records and Research Unit prepares the discontinuance order, including a description of the area affected. The order is signed by the Commissioner of Transportation and recorded. Recording references and location

information are noted on the right of way plans for the highway. The town or county originally responsible for the roadway becomes liable for its maintenance thereafter.

Upon request, the Title Office, with assistance from Property Office Research and Records Unit, also prepares discontinuance orders for county commissioners and municipal officers when those officials decide to discontinue a county or town way that lies outside the limits of a new State highway constructed by MaineDOT. These orders, pursuant to 23 **MRSA** 2060(1), must reference the recorded MaineDOT right of way plan for the new State highway. Upon discontinuance, the interests of the county or municipality pass to the abutting property owners in accordance with the provisions of 23 **MRSA** Section 2060(2).

2-5.02(e) Establishment, Modification and Release of Access Control

Sections 7-7.01 and 7-7.02 outline MaineDOT's objectives for access management and control. MaineDOT controls access to the highway system by 2 principal means. The first is the permit process for entrances. The regulatory system arises out of MaineDOT's obligation to manage the number, placement and use of entrances, driveways and approaches onto the highways pursuant to 23 **MRSA** Section 704. MaineDOT's role is to protect and promote the safety of the traveling public and to maintain the highway drainage and other aspects of the highways. In the case of arterial highways, the control of entrances also is intended to permit highway users to maintain travel speeds at the posted limits. By statute, MaineDOT must deny any permit request in a location for which MaineDOT owns the access control rights. The only circumstances for which access control may be broken are for state or state aid highways and private breaks that do not adversely impact the safety or mobility of the corridor.

The second method of establishing control is the acquisition of all or a part of a parcel's access rights by condemnation or voluntary deed. This may occur as a part of a project or as an independent acquisition. Acquisition is used most often with controlled access highways, as provided in 23 **MRSA** Sections 301 through 303, and limited access highways. MaineDOT makes these acquisitions to manage the safety and capacity of its highway systems.

The Records and Research Unit maintains records of all rights of access control on MaineDOT highways. All project plans include the location and title references for access control rights acquired by MaineDOT within the project area. Developers seeking project approval under 23 **MRSA** Section 704-A, as well as those seeking new or modified entrances under 23 **MRSA** Section 704, contact the Records and Research Unit for information on any MaineDOT-held access control that may affect their applications.

When a non-project access control transaction takes place, a Commission Record item is prepared by the Property Office for approval by the Commissioner of Transportation. After Commissioner approval, the Property Manager sends it to the Condemnation Unit. The Property Manager adds the new information to the access control files and also gives the information to the Condemnation Unit who requests that the Research and Records Unit update the relevant right of way plans. Access control acquired as part of a project is included in the right of way

plans prepared for the project. The Surveyor/Mapper notifies the Condemnation Unit of the new controls once the locations and scope of the controls are final.

2-6 RIGHT OF WAY PLANS

2-6.01 Overview

Right of way plans depict the lands and rights in land necessary to accommodate MaineDOT transportation projects. Because right of way plans are used for multiple purposes, including project cost estimates, acquisition and owner compensation, the accuracy and completeness of the plans are critical to project success. Right of way plan preparation, or mapping, takes place in preliminary and final stages.

Project Teams use preliminary right of way plans for public information meetings, relocation planning and other early activities. The plans show items including existing right of way, property features, apparent property boundaries and utility locations. Final right of way plans show all project elements, including the limits of new construction and of new right of way. They are used for valuation, negotiation, acquisition activities including condemnation, utility relocation, relocation of residential owners and tenants, business relocations and environmental reviews and permitting.

As illustrated in Table 2-1, Right of Way Surveyor/Mappers engage in problem solving and team coordination throughout the project development process. The steps involved in the right of way mapping process are described in Sections 2-6.03 through 2-6.05 and shown in the Right of Way Mapping Project Check List

2-6.02 Plan Format and Computerization

All right of way plans must conform to State and Federal standards, specifications, policies and procedures. The symbols used in MaineDOT right of way plans appear in Figure 2-2.

MaineDOT uses Microstation and Open Road Designer(ORD) computer-aided drafting and design (CADD) software, a product of Bentley Systems, Inc., to create its right of way plans. Current conventions for Working Units (survey feet), Global Origin, Level Structure, File Names, File Content, Line Styles, Line Weights, Fonts, Cells, Color Table and other items are available on the Internet at <http://maine.gov/mdot/caddsupport/> Consultant plans must comply with the specifications described on the MaineDOT Microstation Information Pages online at <http://maine.gov/mdot/caddsupport/>.

FIGURE 2-2 — Right of Way Plan Symbols

SYMBOLS	
◦ IP	(IRON PIPE OR PIN)
□ S.T.	(SEPTIC TANK)
○	RAILROAD SPIKE
△	CONTROL MONUMENTS
— W —	WATER LINE
— G —	GAS LINE
— E —	ELECTRIC LINE
— T —	TELEPHONE LINE
—) —	SEWER LINE
—	PROPERTY LINE
—	LIMITS OF WROUGHT PORTION
—	EXISTING RIGHT OF WAY
—	NEW RIGHT OF WAY
—	NEW RIGHT OF WAY WITHIN EXISTING RIGHT OF WAY
—	CONTROL OF ACCESS

Chapter 2 of the *MaineDOT Microstation Manual* contains detailed information about creating right of way plans using Microstation. The information is available in electronic form at <http://maine.gov/mdot/caddsupport>. The *MaineDOT Microstation Manual* includes command references, how-to instructions on general functions, directions for creating a base line, process descriptions for sheeting and batch plotting and information on using the settings manager, right of way level standards and general operations. Bridge-level, highway-level and topography-level structures are included in the appendices.

2-6.03 Base Map – Existing Topography Survey

The survey editor sends the Project Team Surveyor/Mapper an electronic file for the preliminary survey plan, which the Surveyor/Mapper uses to develop the right of way base maps for a project. MaineDOT uses right of way base maps for public meetings or public hearings, but does not rely on right of way base maps for acquisition descriptions. The right of way base maps include:

- 1) Topography including existing traveled way, cross culverts, buildings, utilities, utility poles, property markers, highway monuments, contours/ground strings, improvements to abutting property owners, and other miscellaneous items from surveys, as-builts and POR data;

2-6.04 Preliminary Survey / Mapping Process – a/k/a Existing Conditions Plan (ECP)

The preliminary mapping process builds on the right of way base map, adding preliminary ownership information, requirements for the new right of way, and other details relating to the project and the affected properties. Surveyor/Mappers use the current deed and PORs for the project to plot property ownerships on the right of way plans. Surveyor/Mappers plot out the parcel descriptions provided by tax map and check them against the property lines as reported by the field inspections. Surveyor/Mappers must make judgments about conflicts that appear between statements of bearings, missing courses and other obvious errors. Deeds and other documents frequently give distances in rods, which usually are approximations of the actual distance. A similar situation exists with distances shown on old town plotting plans and other plans. Physical evidence of boundaries prevails over deed distances, but Surveyor/Mappers often must eliminate or compensate for those conflicting items and use their best professional judgment. In doing so, Surveyor/Mappers take into consideration the intent of the deed as applied to physical evidence. If there are serious discrepancies that the Surveyor/Mapper cannot resolve logically, then further field investigation, and possibly additional title examination, is required.

Existing Conditions plans must contain the following data:

1. Property lines plotted from deed, property owner information and existing plans, as correlated to the property markers located in the field. Focus is on the location of the parcel frontage and sideline boundaries. The back line of lots is shown where practical based on the size of the lot and the plan size. Right of way plans are not property survey plans of all properties impacted by the project. Despite the wider margin of potential error permitted for right of way plans as compared to surveys, the need for

accuracy dictates that it is not acceptable practice to reproduce property lines solely and directly from tax maps.

2. Existing easements and other property rights, including limited, conditional and full access controls held by MaineDOT. These rights are located and identified on the plans.
3. Depiction of each parcel, with the setup information on the name of the property owner, the parcel number assigned by MaineDOT and the total parcel area. Setups contain the acquisition item number, owner name(s), each right acquired from the parcel and total area of acquisition for each right.
4. Plotted locations of other parcel/property features, including wells, septic systems, water lines and underground utilities.
5. References to information sources used to prepare the plan, including surveys, MaineDOT plans (by file number) and town or county layouts.
6. If prepared by a consultant, the name of the preparing firm on each plan sheet together with the endorsement: *“Existing right of way and apparent property lines determined and plotted by: _____ (fill in name) _____.”*

The Surveyor/Mapper distributes hard copies of the preliminary right of way and design plans to the Project Team Right of Way Operations, Utilities and Environmental Members; the Project Manager; and the Title Office. The Surveyor/Mapper also requests from the Title Office any additional title work needed for existing right of way or easements.

Along with the Existing Condition plan, a plan may be prepared using aerial photography. If the plan was prepared in Microstation, aerial images can be digital and downloaded directly into Microstation, or scanned images from hard copy aerial photographs. A mosaic is then created from the photographic data. The resulting photographic level becomes a part of the project plan files and is manipulated as needed.

Where consultants prepare preliminary right of way plans for a project, the consultant coordinates with the Surveyor/Mappers during production. The consultant delivers the completed plans and related materials to the Surveyor/Mappers assigned to the Regions for final review and acceptance by the Title Office Condemnation Unit.

2-6.04(a) Preliminary Mapping Process

The first step in establishing the existing right of way in a project area is to check the layout records in the Property Office Records and Research Unit. Those records include previous MaineDOT projects, layouts ordered by county commissioners and layouts issued by town officials. Layout orders contain location descriptions for the roadway and typically include the width of the layout (usually 3-rod or 4-rod).

Where the best available records are town or county layouts, the field conditions often will indicate that the occupied right of way varies from the layout description. Where there is a significant deviation, and in cases where no layout record or only an incomplete layout record can be found, the public rights in the existing right of way rest on a prescriptive easement. These areas are known as the wrought portion of the right of way. MaineDOT must establish the wrought portion limits on a project in order to determine the limits beyond which property owners are entitled to compensation.

MaineDOT may use any of 3 procedures to handle wrought portion right of way on a project. Under any procedure one must research the right of way to determine that there is no record layout or that the record layout has no stated width.

The first procedure is to field check the area in question to determine the approximate limits of the wrought portion area. Locate landmarks and historic features including fences, fence posts, tree rows, stone walls, corner stones and other monuments. Other important indicators are sidewalks, shoulders, ditch lines, the tops of cuts and the toe of fills.

The second procedure is to determine the average existing pavement width by measuring in multiple locations. Where minor width variations exist, measurements every 2,500 ft. are sufficient. Where there are major variations or obvious changes (including wider shoulders, shifts from shoulder to no shoulder, etc.), measure the width of each identifiable segment separately. Where segments are less than 1,000 ft. in length, at least 2 measurements must be taken that are representative of the segment. Establish a pay line at a distance equal to the average of the pavement width plus the pay line offset, as illustrated in Figure 2-3. The pay line offset is a minimum of 5 ft. outside the average width of pavement on each side, concentric or parallel to the centerline. The pay line is centered on the center of pavement and should be of uniform width through the length of the segment or project. This creates an average offset to apply throughout the project, unless very distinct differences between portions of the project merit a case-by-case review of the proposed offset. The pay line offset area is presumed to be a maintained part of the roadway and within the wrought portion limits as defined by Section 653.

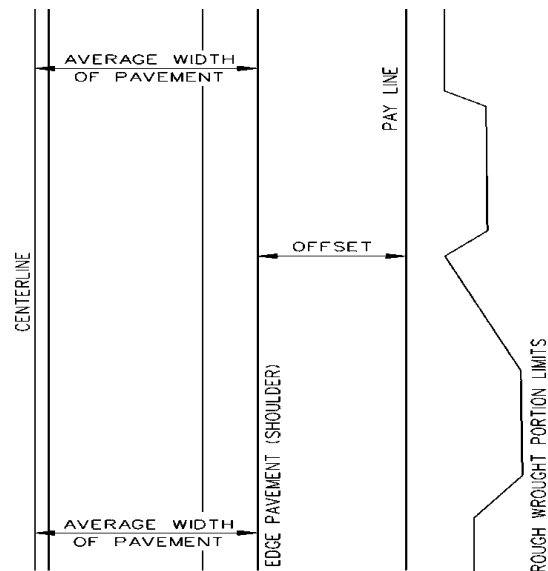


FIGURE 2-3 — Establishing a Pay Line Offset for Wrought Portion Highways

The last procedure available to MaineDOT is to reestablish the boundary of the roadway through the statutory steps outlined in 23 **MRSA** Section 653. MaineDOT typically uses statutory reestablishment when the boundary lines, limits or location of a State or State-aid highway are lost, uncertain or doubtful but the wrought portion limit lines, as established, are expected to be sufficient for the majority of the construction and maintenance of the roadway and appurtenances. The statutory process includes:

1. A justification memo to the project file that outlines the results of the layout research and field review.
2. A plan showing the existing topographic features and limits of the proposed reestablishment. The plan includes detail and scale consistent with standard right of way plans. The Property Office Records and Research Unit issues a file number for the plan. The Surveyor/Mapper distributes copies of the plan, together with a transmittal letter to town offices for all affected towns, the registry of deeds (for recording), the applicable county commissioners' office(s) and the MaineDOT Maintenance and Operations Region Office.

3. Signs and notices for the public. A sign at least 18" X 24" in size is prepared in triplicate. Two of the signs are placed along the highway within the limits of the reestablishment and the third is delivered to the town for posting at the town office. The posting period is a minimum of 60 days. The project file must include a memo documenting the date and locations of posting. The Surveyor/Mapper or other Project Team Members periodically check to insure the signs remain posted for the required time.
4. An advertisement in the local or county newspaper with circulation in the project area. The content of the ad resembles the posted signs. The ad must run at least 1 day, including the day that the reestablishment plan is recorded. The Surveyor/Mapper places a copy of the ad in the project files.
5. At the end of the 60-day period, the Surveyor/Mapper contacts the Legal Services Office to determine whether anyone filed an action contesting the reestablishment.

2-6.05 Final Right of Way Mapping

Once the Project Team Design Member supplies the Surveyor/Mapper with the CADD files for the preliminary design plans, the Surveyor/Mapper, Project Designer and Appraiser collaborate to determine the new right of way required for the project. The new right of way size and configuration are directly related to the following considerations:

1. Design Characteristics of the Transportation Facility. This includes pavement and shoulder width, median type, drainage, clear zone requirements and other special features. Standards for right of way widths are discussed in Section 2-6.06(b).
2. Type of Property Traversed By the Facility. Examples of different types are improved land with buildings, raw woodland and cropland. Where safety considerations permit, MaineDOT generally reduces right of way widths in front of improvements, including houses and other major structures, to minimize project impacts and right of way acquisition costs.
3. Utilities. Right of Way requirements relating to the Utility Accommodation Rules (October 14, 2014) and Trimming Guidance (revised 6/20/18).
4. Special Project Needs. This includes mitigation projects, ferry terminals, cargo terminals, airports, railroads and other non-highway facilities. In these cases, MaineDOT acquires sufficient land and other property rights to properly construct and maintain the facility and insure protection of the public investment in it.
5. Maintenance. This includes maintenance needs for future maintenance activities related to maintaining the roadway or structure.

Working with the right of way and design levels of the project CADD files, the Surveyor/Mapper, Designer or CADD technician and Appraiser overlays the design features on the right of way plans and develops the tentative new right of way limits for the project. The Surveyor/Mapper or Designer also checks to insure the apparent property lines, property owner names and other features shown on the plan layers are consistent with each other and with the information in the PORs for the project. Inconsistencies are investigated and reconciled.

The final mapping process begins when design plans meet the Design Plans Impacts Complete Milestone standard. Design plans can be used for final right of way plans when they contain the information shown in Table 2-3. In addition to the information from the design plans, the consideration is also given to information generated at the public hearing on the project. A review of the hearing transcript can be performed to identify any issues or commitments that may affect right of way requirements.

TABLE 2-3 — Design Plans Impacts Complete

Design plans are at the impacts complete level when the plans include the following items:

- ☐ Cross-sections that show the proposed limits of slopes and new construction.
- ☐ Locations and limits of driveways and entrances to be constructed.
- ☐ Percent of slope of drive and entrances, both existing and future.
- ☐ Type of surface treatment on drives and entrances.
- ☐ Locations of curbing, sidewalks and islands, including their geometrics.
- ☐ Locations and design of approach roads to be constructed.
- ☐ Locations, lengths and skew of drainage structures to be installed, including culverts, down spouts, berm ditches, storm sewer systems, channel diversions and all outlet ditches.
- ☐ Interpolated water flow beyond excavated ditches along old ground to proposed right of way.
- ☐ All clearing limits and individual trees and shrubs to be removed, regardless of size or pay (compensation) status.
- ☐ Location of any structures to be installed outside of the proposed new right of way (retaining walls, etc.).
- ☐ List of all buildings, structures and other improvements to be removed as part of the project.
- ☐ Bearings on base line.
- ☐ Geometrics, including line change date (ties to survey line and side roads).
- ☐ Beginning and end of project stations.
- ☐ Locations of all signal poles, special street lighting, etc.
- ☐ Poles, conduits, junction boxes, desired power sources for signal poles, special street lighting, etc.
- ☐ Existing utilities on plans and cross sections with proposed new locations.
- ☐ Proposed guard rail.
- ☐ Overhead signs.
- ☐ Evidence of Designer review.

2-6.05(a) Final Right of Way Mapping Process

Final right of way plans add the following information to the work done in the preliminary plan stage:

1. Design Construction limits and items;
2. Dimension the Right of Way Baseline and Curve Data Information
3. Road Name Labels
4. Property Lines Labeled/Checked/plotted from title examination
5. Update Parcel Set-ups
6. New Right of Way Lines
7. New Right of Way tie Stations and Offsets
8. Condemnation Distance Dimensions
9. Calculated areas of acquisition or take for each type of acquisition (fee, easement, etc.);
10. Inside parcel distance calculations
11. New Permanent Easements
12. New Permanent Easements Tie Stations and Offsets
13. Notes for special items like reserved areas and truck lanes;
14. Temporary Rights
15. Measure and label all areas being acquired
16. Plan title block information, including the MaineDOT file number
17. Remove the "PRELIMINARY PLAN" text after revisions from the Title Verification Memo

The Surveyor/Mapper does a final check on all calculations and other plan data. Then the Surveyor/Mapper reviews the final plans with the Title Office Condemnation Unit to insure quality and conformity with MaineDOT standards, as discussed in Section 2-6.05(e). The plan is then sent to the Title Office so that the plan can be reviewed by legal along with the review of the title work prepared for the project. This is what is termed as the "Verification Process". Once this review is complete, the Surveyor/Mapper distributes hard copies of the final right of way and design plans to the R/W Supervisor and the Title Office. The Surveyor/Mapper also sends to the R/W Supervisor additional project materials, including title cover sheets, PORs and an updated N&A List.

Prior to condemnation, the Surveyor/Mapper updates the plans to reflect any ownership changes found through the title verification process or through title work updates. The Surveyor/Mapper follows a similar process once the condemnation is completed, and also adds the condemnation recording references to the plan. After construction, the Property Office Research and Records

Unit revises the final plan to show survey and right of way controls and monumentation, sufficient to reestablish the centerline in the future. Changes also are made to show right of way modifications that occurred during construction.

Once changes are finished, the Property Office Research and Records Unit certifies the final plans as complete and sends electronic and hard copies to the Title Office Condemnation Unit for recording in the appropriate registry of deeds, as required by 23 **MRSA** Section 154, and for filing in the Right of Way Plan File.

2-6.05(b) Minimum Standard Widths for New Highway Right of Way

Section 2-6.05 describes the considerations that apply to setting the new right of way limits for a transportation project. In the case of highways, Right of Way Mapping also uses minimum standard widths based on roadway classifications in order to create as consistent a width as practical for the entire length of a project. The standards, shown in Table 2-4, apply to most projects involving roadside improvements beyond the shoulders and to projects with ditching, culvert replacement or drainage system alterations that fall beyond existing right of way limits.

The Designer, Utility Coordinator, and Appraiser or Senior Property Officer review the potential impacts on abutting properties resulting from the application of these standard widths. Waiver of these standards may be considered provided the project can be constructed, operated and maintained within a less than standard acquisition. Some considerations in waiving the standards are:

1. The existing right of way on the project is 4 rods and of sufficient width to incorporate design clear zones and utility infrastructure as relocated.
2. No more than minor acquisitions or easements are required for the project work.
3. Properties adjacent to the project are on the Historical Register or within a Historical District and will be negatively impacted by a taking.
4. Properties along the corridor are classified as either 4(f) or 6(f).
5. Acquisition of the standard width would be so close to dwellings or other principal structures on a project so as to cause significant severance damage due to proximity.
6. Acquisition would require the replacement of a sub-surface sewage disposal system.

Any exceptions to the standards will be discussed with the Project and Program Manager by the Designer and Senior Property Officer. Consultation with the Property Office will take place as necessary.

TABLE 2-4 — Minimum Widths for Right of Way Acquisition

Road Classification & Projected AADT	Paved Width	Traveled Way Width	Side Slope	Design Speed	Proposed Minimum R/W Width (one side)	Total R/W Width Minimum
Minor Collectors						
Under 1000	12'/13' (3.0 m/3.9 m)	10' (3.0 m)	1:3	40 mph (60 km/h)	33' (10 m)	66' (20 m)
1000 to 4000	14' (4.2 m)	10'/11' (3.0 m/3.3 m)	1:3	40 mph (60 km/h)	33' (10 m)	66' (20 m)
Over 4000	15'/18' (4.5 m/5.4 m)	11'/12' (3.3 m/3.6 m)	1:3	45 mph (70 km/h)	40' (12 m)	80' (24 m)
Major Collectors						
Under 1000	12'/13' (3.0 m/3.9 m)	10' (3.0 m)	1:3	45 mph (70 km/h)	33' (10 m)	66' (20 m)
1000 to 4000	14' (4.2 m)	10'/11' (3.0 m/3.3 m)	1:3	45 mph (70 km/h)	33' (10 m)	66' (20 m)
4000 to 6000	14' (4.2 m)	10'/11' (3.0 m/3.3 m)	1:3	45 mph (70 km/h)	33' (10 m)	66' (20 m)
Over 6000	15' (4.5 m)	11' (3.3 m)	1:3	45 mph (70 km/h)	40' (12 m)	80' (24 m)
	18' (5.4 m)	12' (3.6 m)		45 mph (70 km/h)		
Minor Arterials						
Under 1000	14' (4.2 m)	10'/11' (3.0 m/3.3 m)	1:3	45 mph (70 km/h)	33' (10 m)	66' (20 m)
1000 to 6000	14'/15'/18' (4.2 m/4.5 m/5.4 m)	10'/11' (3.0 m/3.3 m)	1:3	45 mph (70 km/h)	33' (10 m)	66' (20 m)
6000 to 8000	18' (5.4 m)	11'/12' (3.3 m/3.6 m)	1:4	55 mph (90 km/h)	40' (12 m)	80' (24 m)
Over 8000	20' (6.0 m)	12' (3.6 m)	1:4	55 mph (90 km/h)	50' (15 m)	100' (30 m)
NHS (Non-interstate)						
35 to 50 mph (50 km/h – 80 km/h)				35 mph – 50 mph (50 km/h – 80 km/h)	40' (12 m)	80' (24 m)
≥ 50 mph 4 lane	34' (10.2 m)	12' + 12' (3.6 m + 3.6 m)	1:4	50+ mph (80+ km/h) 55+ mph (90+ km/h)	50' (15 m) 60' (18 m)	100' (30 m) 120' (36 m)
Urban						
With Curb					10' to 15' (3 m to 4.5 m) Behind Curb	
No Curb				≤35 mph (≤50 km/h)	24.75' (7.5 m)	49.5' (15 m)
No Curb				>35 (>50 km/h)	33' (10 m)	66' (20 m)

Notes:

1. Minimum utility offset to face of pole.
2. Minimum utility offset with pole and mast arm, does not provide aerial clear zone rights beyond R/W limits.
3. Minimum utility offset based on 3-ft. deep ditch with pole 2 ft. behind ditch line, includes pole and mast arm.
4. Truck lanes or additional lane/pavement width will increase minimum offsets by the added width.

2-6.05(c) Alignment Data

Alignment data is required on right of way plans to permit the proper location of determined boundaries and the layout of the designed roadway. The Project Team Design Member provides the coordinated geometric alignment data to the Surveyor/Mapper or CADD Technician. The Surveyor/Mapper or CADD Technician places the stations and coordinates of the construction centerline and the following side road alignment points on the right of way plans:

1. PT - Point of Tangency. The point at which a curve ends.
2. PC - Point of Curvature. The point at which a curve begins.
3. PRC – Point of Reverse Curvature. Point at which curves in the opposite general direction meet.
4. PCC - Point of Compound Curvature. The point at which curves of varying radii and in the same general direction meet.

The Survey Team provides the control traverse (CT) points for the plans.

2-6.05(d) Centerline Tie-ins

Centerline information is an important tool for the creation of the descriptions used in property acquisition documents. MaineDOT coordinates and controls the highway centerline using survey points. The Survey Unit places at least 2 survey control points on every project. The control points typically are iron rebar driven into the ground or disks mounted in ledge. The goal is to have all projects coordinated in the Maine State 3 Zone System.

Whenever practical, new project plans should include tie-ins to the centerlines from previous projects. If the “old” centerline is not tied into by the new project plans, then it is difficult to determine the limits of the existing right of way with the desired degree of certainty. In these cases, new acquisitions are forced to rely on a separate centerline. This fosters confusion when right of way limits and private property boundary interpretations are made in the future.

To help insure that existing baselines are tied into whenever feasible, the Project Team follows these steps:

1. At the initial team meeting, the Surveyor/Mapper provides the plans of any previous projects in the new project area.
2. If the existing plans show centerline coordinates in the State Plane Coordinate System, the Project Team Survey Member will compute the centerline coordinates for the project.

3. If the existing plans have an alignment in the State Plane Coordinate System but no control is located in the new project area, the Project Team evaluates the costs, benefits and feasibility of reestablishing the centerline.
4. If the existing plans show a centerline with assumed coordinates, a tie will be made with any existing monumentation of the project. The Project Team Design Member will do a “best fit” to determine the location of the existing centerline.

If there are no centerline alignments from any previous project, the Survey Team will locate any existing monumentation. The Project Team Design Member will establish an entirely new baseline for the project.

2-6.05(e) Right of Way Plan Quality Review Process

Chapter 10 and Section 2-1.05 cover general quality assurance/quality control policies and practices for Right of Way personnel. The Title Office Condemnation Unit and the Surveyor/Mapper each play a role in quality assurance/quality control for right of way plans.

The Title Office Condemnation Unit, the regional PLS and Chief Surveyor provides support services and quality reviews for all right of way mapping activities. Its staff helps Surveyor/Mappers resolve mapping issues and ensures that plans meet MaineDOT Right of Way standards. The Property Office, with input from its various units sets mapping standards and procedures and also establishes and maintains the protocols for the use of CADD systems to prepare right of way plans. This group also performs formal reviews of right of way plans at the end of the preliminary plan stage and at the end of the final plan stage.

The Project Manager is responsible for coordinating with Project Team Members throughout the project and for insuring that right of way plans reflect design changes whenever these changes occur. The Surveyor/Mapper provides notification of updated plans to those who need right of way plans to perform their tasks, including the Senior Property Officer, Utilities Team Member, and the Title Office. This coordination and update process enables the Project Team to rely on the right of way plans for current, accurate information about the project.

2-6.06 Notice of Interest in Acquiring Real Property

As required by 49 CFR Section 24.102(b), the Department must notify owners in writing of its interest in acquiring real property and the basic protections provided to the owner by law. This notification is required “as soon as feasible”. Based on MaineDOT’s process it has been determined that no later than the completion of Final Right-of-Way Plans is the appropriate stage for this notification to occur. Once Final Right-of-Way plans have been completed and the true extents of property impacts are known, the Senior Property Officer will notify property owners by letter (Form VL-24) along with a copy of the *MaineDOT Projects and Your Property* (https://www.maine.gov/dot/sites/maine.gov.dot/files/docs/publications/docs/guides/mainedot-projects-and-your-property_2019.pdf) which generally describes the acquisition process.

2-7 OTHER MAPPING AND RESEARCH FUNCTIONS

2-7.01 Encroachments

The provisions of 23 MRS Section 1401-A regulate installations on or near the public right of way. Section 1401-A defines the prohibited actions, but also permits the MaineDOT Commissioner to waive the provisions of the statute in certain circumstances. Property owners may apply to the Commissioner for a grant of limited waiver allowing an installation along a state or state-aid highway within a municipality if a) the Commissioner receives a written statement from the municipal officers requesting or supporting such limited waiver; b) the posted speed limit where the installation will occur is no more than 35 miles per hour; and c) the Commissioner determines that highway safety will not be adversely affected by the installation. Upon receipt of a request for a limited waiver, the Commissioner refers the request to the Department's Right of Way Waiver Committee for a determination of whether the limited waiver should be granted.

The installation of private utility installations within the right of way is addressed in MaineDOT's Utility Accommodation Policy under the Private Facilities section 4-6.

Many encroachment issues are referred to local municipalities pursuant to their maintenance obligations under 23 **MRSA** Section 754 or their sign removal obligations under 23 **MRSA** 1914(9). The Right of Way Control Office of the Bureau of Maintenance and Operations handles all MaineDOT enforcement cases, including the enforcement of Section 1401 for State and State-aid highways.

In cases where an existing encroachment may satisfy the occupation standards of 23 **MRSA** Section 2952, or qualify for other exemption from removal, the matter goes to the Title Office Condemnation Unit for review with the Regional Engineer. Working with the Property Office Records and Research Unit, Mapping determines the location and history of the encroachment and evaluates the present and potential future impacts of the encroachment. If the Title Office Condemnation Unit determines that MaineDOT will not require removal of the encroachment, it works with the property owner to develop terms and conditions that will govern the encroachment. The Title Office Condemnation Unit and the Legal Services Office then issues a Letter of No Objection containing the terms and conditions. These letters include a reservation of the right by MaineDOT to require the future removal of the encroachment upon notice to the property owner.

2-7.02 Review of Developer Projects

Private and public developers often propose projects that require changes in existing traffic patterns on adjacent or nearby highways under MaineDOT jurisdiction. These projects include, but are not limited to, projects that require a traffic movement permit under 23 **MRSA** Section 704-A.

The Region Engineer handles all developer project reviews and contacts. The developer submits design plans and a traffic study to MaineDOT, showing the projected traffic flow and/or turning movements. Developer plans must include the existing right of way lines for each affected roadway, the roadway baselines as established in previous MaineDOT projects and the

MaineDOT map file number of relevant MaineDOT right of way plans. MaineDOT reviews the plans to determine whether the project meets applicable requirements and can be accommodated by the highway system. The Title Office Condemnation Unit in consultation with the Chief Surveyor determines whether additional right of way is required for the project. If a project is approved, MaineDOT may impose operations or design requirements on the project as a condition to the approval.

The role of the Title Office Condemnation Unit in developer project reviews includes the following:

1. Provide the developer with copies of any existing right of way plans for the project area.
2. Determine the accuracy of the plotted existing right of way.
3. Identify all additional right of way required for construction, maintenance and operation of the proposed new highway design.
4. Notify the Region Engineer of the results of the mapping review.
5. Provide the developer with sample acquisition documents for the rights required for the project.
6. Review any revised or supplemental developer plans for compliance with required changes.
7. Review proposed acquisition documents prepared by the developer prior to execution.
8. Assign a developer plan file number to the final plan recorded by the developer.
9. File reproducible copies of all project plans and acquisition documents, as provided by the developer.

In some cases, the Title Office Condemnation Unit and the region Engineer may determine that the developer does not need to prepare a full right of way plan. In these instances, which typically involve only easements, the Title Office Condemnation Unit adds the location and recording information for the developer project easements to the most recent existing MaineDOT right of way plan for the project area.

Developers are responsible for acquiring any needed right of way. Permanent rights necessary to accommodate the new facility must be transferred to MaineDOT by Deed. The developer is not required to transfer to MaineDOT any of the temporary rights needed for construction, including grading rights. The developer also is responsible for delivering reproducible, recordable, signed copies of plans and acquisition documents to MaineDOT once the approval and acquisition processes are complete.

2-7.03 Non-Project Agreements with Property Owners

MaineDOT often enters into agreements with individual property owners that permit the owners to perform activities on their property that may affect the Department's facilities or right of way. Examples include drainage alterations, topographic modifications and landscaping. These agreements are used whenever MaineDOT agrees to permit any permanent improvement or activity to occur that affects land or facilities within the limits of the right of way.

Because these agreements often affect multiple aspects of MaineDOT's activities, the negotiation process typically involves representatives from several MaineDOT units, including the Bureau of Maintenance and Operations, the Title Office and the Office of Legal Services. Once the parties agree on the terms and conditions for the agreement, the Office of Legal Services prepares the agreement, handles its execution, records it, provides a copy to the Bureau of Maintenance and Operations and enters notations referencing the agreement on the current right of way plan for the affected area. A Property Owner Agreement specifies:

1. Description of the parties to the agreement;
2. Reasons the agreement is needed;
3. Detailed specification of the construction or other work to be performed by the owner;
4. Description of the rights, normally a license, MaineDOT gives the owner to enter MaineDOT property and perform work;
5. Description of any rights the owner conveys to MaineDOT to permit it to inspect and maintain the owner's improvements as MaineDOT deems necessary; and
6. Specification of the property owner's obligations for maintenance, compliance with laws and indemnification of the State of Maine.

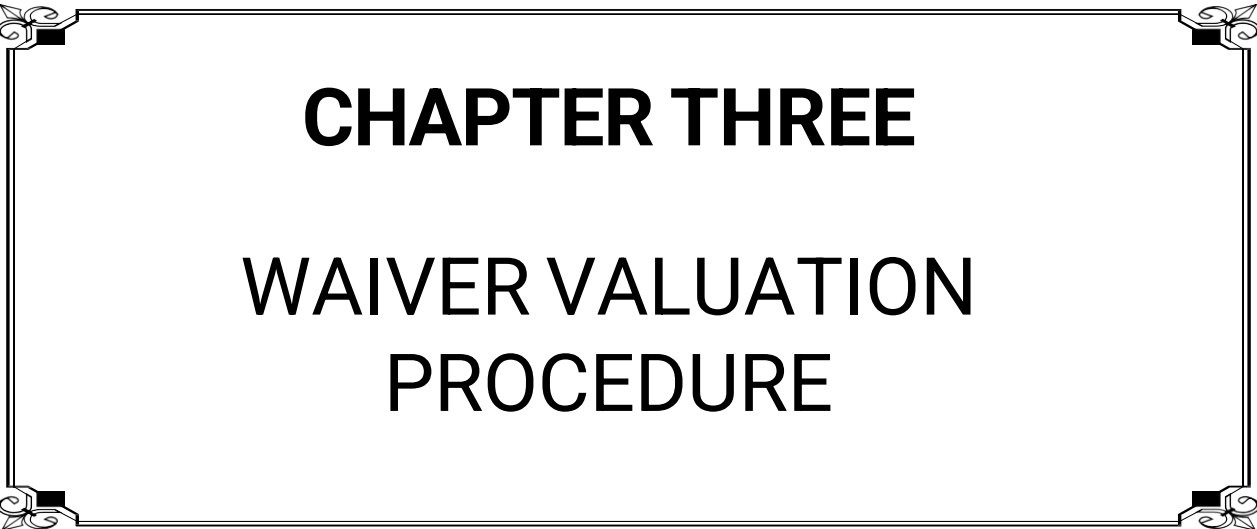
Typically, the Maintenance and Operations Region Manager or Region Engineer acts as the MaineDOT signatory for these agreements.

2-7.04 Agreements with Municipalities

When MaineDOT no longer requires property for its own transportation facilities, it may decide to allow the use of the land to a municipality for continued use for transportation purposes, (e.g., parking, trails, service roads.). These are known as relinquishments. In these cases, the Title Office prepares an agreement. The Property Office Records and Research Unit adds the agreement to the original acquisition document in its Deed File and notes it on MaineDOT's right of way plans. See Chapter 7.7.06 for a detailed discussion of relinquishments.

2-7.05 Baseline Descriptions for Highway Designations

Whenever MaineDOT completes a highway project involving a change in the location of the highway as described in 23 **MRSA** Section 62, or when the classification of a highway under 23 **MRSA** Section 53 is changed, MaineDOT must document the changes and the Commissioner of Transportation must approve the new designations. The Title Office Condemnation Unit prepares the Commissioner's Item, including the new description, for submission to the Commissioner's Office. Once the Commissioner approves the change, the new designation is added to the records for the highway in question.



CHAPTER THREE

WAIVER VALUATION PROCEDURE

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

CHAPTER THREE

WAIVER VALUATION PROCEDURE

3-1 PURPOSE AND USE

3-1.01 Objectives of the Waiver Valuation Procedure

The Waiver Valuation process is defined as “the valuation process used and the product produced when the Department determines that an appraisal is not required.” It is a combined valuation and acquisition process designed to efficiently purchase relatively low-value uncomplicated parcels where there is no severance damage except minor cost to cure items and adequate comparable sales are available. Maine Law provides the Department the authority to prescribe procedures to waive the appraisal in cases where the fair market value of the acquisition is less than \$15,000. Federal Regulations, effective 6/3/2024 provide for waivers of appraisals where the valuation challenge is uncomplicated and the value is anticipated to be less than \$15,000. Provisions allow for an increase to \$35,000 with Federal approval, provided the property owner is offered the option for an appraisal. The process ensures full consideration of property owner rights while promoting timely delivery of right of way for project construction. Most of the acquisitions in the MaineDOT right of way process come under the criteria for Waiver Valuation, and the process thus has an important role in streamlining right of way acquisition.

Waiver Valuation is an optional procedure supplementing the previous functions of the Value Finding Format and Short Form Appraisal for acquisitions that are **simple and non-complex and adequate market data exists to support valuation estimates**. It also incorporates the minimum payment amount provided under separate procedures.

The Waiver Valuation Procedure allows the same person to value the property and to negotiate settlement for parcels only if the offer is less than \$15,000. 49 CFR 24.102(n)(3). The “single agent” concept allows for the delegation of a higher level of authority and responsibility to project-level right of way staff. As a result, property owners are in direct contact with the person who valued the acquisition of their property, who is in the best position to respond to questions and concerns.

The Waiver Valuation Procedure is authorized by 23 **MRSA** Section 153-B(2)2 as a negotiated acquisition alternative. It is also authorized in the Federal regulations under the waiver provisions of 49 **CFR** Section 24.102(c)(2).

The Waiver Valuation Procedure offers the following benefits:

1. Administratively simple to implement;
2. Cost savings to the state in fewer appraisals;
3. More effective use of professional right of way staff;
4. Property owners better understand the simplified valuation process;

5. Right of way delivery time is reduced; and
6. One agent may perform valuation and acquisition (single agent concept).

The Waiver Valuation Procedure is not a means to reduce the amount of compensation that is paid for an acquired property. The intent is to compensate property owners the same amount they would receive under the appraisal acquisition process. The Waiver Valuation procedure allows MaineDOT to achieve this objective more efficiently.

The procedure is primarily intended for projects on which the impacts to abutting properties are minimal and the proposed acquisition and construction generate no changes in the use or utility of affected properties.

3-1.02 Application

The Waiver Valuation Procedure will be used only under the conditions set forth below:

1. It is an uncomplicated acquisition where damages can be calculated using a unit value supported by adequate comparable sales.
2. There are no damages to the remainder except minor cost-to-cure items.
3. Damages are expected to be \$15,000 or less.
4. Sufficient comparable sales data are readily available.

The Waiver Valuation Procedure will not involve complex valuation problems or situations where there may be severance damages to the remaining property. It is also not appropriate for use when the highest and best use of the land is subject to question or change, when any severance damage cannot be mitigated by a minor cost to cure, where land values are not easily determined, and when the valuation problem is too complex for the format.

Example: Waiver Valuation Procedure Is Applicable

Acquisition is 200 ft from the front of a residential property. House setback is 75 ft. from the existing road; therefore, there is no severance damage. Owner must replace a 20 ft. hedge that is in the acquisition area.

Example: Waiver Valuation is not applicable

House setback in example above is 25 ft. instead of 75 ft. This raises the possibility of severance damage. The Waiver Valuation Procedure should not be used. A format that will allow for a narrative discussion of the severance issue is required.

3-1.03 Qualifications required for individuals performing Waiver Valuations.

The intent of the Federal Regulation is that non-appraisers be enabled to make waiver valuations where the acquisitions are low value and non-complex, freeing appraisers to do more sophisticated work. The determination that the proposed acquisition is low value and uncomplicated and the decision to use the Waiver Valuation process should be made and documented by the R/W Supervisor.

An employee who completes waiver valuations should at minimum have:

- Successfully completed the FHWA sponsored internet course: Real Estate Acquisition under the Uniform Act, An Overview.
- Completed at least 30 hours of classroom training in Basic Appraisal Principles.
- Have demonstrated ability to interpret right of way plans, design plans and cross sections and clearly explain the plans to property owners and members of the public.
- Have demonstrated an understanding of the concept of severance damage and its causes.
- Have demonstrated an understanding of the concept of contributory value and the ability to accurately value property improvements.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the difference between real estate, fixtures and personal property.
- Demonstrate adequate experience to identify and solve the valuation assignment.
- On a case by case basis, for Local Project Administration (LPA), the R/W Supervisor will determine the qualifications of municipal staff to do waiver valuations.

3-1.04 Process Overview

Waiver valuations are not appraisals as defined by the Uniform Act or Federal Regulations therefore, appraisal performance requirements or standards regardless of their source are not required for waiver valuations. Since waivers are not appraisals, neither is there a requirement for appraisal review. However, a reasonable basis for the waiver valuation must be established and the amount of Just Compensation must still be established by the Director of the Property Office.

The individual preparing the waiver documentation will field inspect all the properties on a project and review project proposals, consider comparable market sales data available in office files and through multiple listing services; and consider improvements impacted by the taking.

The Waiver Valuation process has 3 levels, each requiring varying degrees of documentation. Each level is explained as follows:

3-1.04(a) Donation.

Occasionally, property owners will elect to donate land to the State and release the Department from its obligation to pay just compensation. In this case, neither an appraisal nor a waiver is necessary, provided the owner acknowledges in writing they understand their rights to an

appraisal and just compensation and they release the acquiring agency from its obligation to provide an appraisal by signing Form. VL-23.

3-1.04(b) Minimum Payments

The Waiver Valuation Procedure incorporates minimum compensation amounts that are applied in appraisal-based negotiations. Minimum payments are used when the waiver value computed is less than the applicable minimum of \$1,000 or \$500. Owners will be offered a minimum amount of \$1,000 for fee simple and for permanent easement acquisitions. A minimum amount of \$500 will be paid for temporary rights.

The preparer will complete form VL-22, listing the parcels and items eligible for a minimum payment, the nature and size of the taking and the amount of the payment and referencing sales data considered. The memo will be initialed by the preparer and forwarded to the R/W Supervisor for approval and the Director of the Property Office for a determination of Just Compensation prior to authorization to negotiate.

3-1.04(c) Waiver valuations where the proposed acquisition is estimated at \$15,000 or less.

In cases where the values are estimated to be \$15,000 or less, the expedited waiver process is allowable. This process is outlined as follows:

1. The local real estate market should be surveyed for comparable sales data. This search can include in-house files, Multiple Listing Services, Brokerage houses, town records or other sources.
2. Basic sales information, to include size, highest and best use, selling price, date of sale, and indicated unit value will be arrayed in a spreadsheet format, sorted on sale size.
3. The array will be reviewed to determine indicated values of various size lots. These indicated values will be used to bracket values applied to subject parcels. For example, if the indicated values of typical house lots in the array range from \$1.00 to \$2.00 per square foot, payments for taking from house lots will be concluded within that range.
4. Each parcel will be inspected, photographed and any improvements within the taking area will be noted.
5. The waiver preparer will complete a spreadsheet itemizing the land and rights in land taken, allocating for each interest, plus an allocation for the improvements. The spreadsheet template will total the damages and round up in \$100.00 increments.

3-1.04(d) Identification of Parcels

At an early stage in the project, usually at PDR, (Preliminary Design Report), the R/W Supervisor and Team Members will identify completed properties on the project that fit the criteria for the Waiver Valuation. They will review the list of candidate parcels and consult with the **Project Manager** to establish milestone dates for the process through right of way certification. The R/W Supervisor and Project Manager need to be mindful of scheduling requirements and note that unsettled waivers will require appraisals prior to condemnation, which may have an impact on delivery milestones.

3-1.04(e) Preparation of Waiver Valuation

The R/W Supervisor will assign the preparation of Waiver Valuation (Form VL-4A or administrative acquisition worksheet VL-4B) to a qualified team member, or another qualified individual. The Worksheet is prepared from information in the preliminary sales study and project data file information. When completed, the R/W Supervisor will ensure the form contains all the necessary data and calculations and approve the waiver based offers forwarding the approvals to the Property Office Director for a Just Compensation determination.

3-1.04(f) Negotiations

The R/W Supervisor, after confirming **NEPA** complete, will assign responsibility for negotiating the parcel to the person who completed the Waiver Valuation, or to another qualified person. The Negotiator prepares for negotiations in the same manner and extent as would be appropriate if the acquisition were based on an appraisal. The Negotiator meets with the owner and presents the Waiver Valuation Offer Settlement Package in the same manner as with other acquisitions. The property owner is informed of how the compensation was established and that an Appraisal Report was not prepared. The Negotiator informs the property owner that if the Department and the owner do not reach an agreement about the value of property acquired, or if the owner requests, the Department will perform an appraisal.

An owner accepting the offer signs the Waiver Valuation Offer Letter and Settlement Agreement. The balance of the owner contact and acquisition is like any other acquisition of right of way.

If the offer is refused with no possibility of further negotiation, the R/W Supervisor will direct that an appraisal be prepared, reviewed, negotiated and the parcel condemned similar to typical appraisal acquisitions.

3-1.05 Responsibility

An appropriate level of knowledge and responsibility is required for effective use of the Waiver Valuation Procedure. The value estimate is not subject to a formal review before an offer is made to owners, but still requires a Just Compensation determination. The Negotiator has broad latitude in responding to owner requests and concerns. The Negotiator must fully and accurately describe the process so the owner's decision to accept the offer is freely made based on full information and disclosure. The assignment of Waiver Valuation will be made to staff that have sufficient knowledge and experience in the right of way acquisition process.

3-1.06 Quality Assurance

Assuring the quality of right of way acquisition is a shared responsibility of every person who is involved in the process. Personnel assigned responsibility for Waiver Valuation will actively

examine the process as outlined in Chapter 10 to assure that it is fulfilling its goals as expressed in this Chapter and to identify opportunities for improvement.

The person assigned waiver valuation acquisition responsibility in consultation with the Senior Property Officer, will determine the quality assurance actions that will be performed. The following items are examples of specific quality assurance activities that may be undertaken:

1. Conduct follow-up phone interviews with owners after construction is complete.
2. Identify training opportunities that would expand knowledge and skill in right of way acquisition.
3. Suggest refinement in acquisition practices that will make the process more efficient and effective.
4. Participate in informal workshops to exchange experiences and practices with other professionals involved in waiver valuation acquisitions.
5. Perform spot checks of closed files to identify successful and unsuccessful practices.
6. Conduct a letter survey of owners after acquisition.

3-2 WAIVER VALUATION (Form VL-4A or VL-4B)

The R/W Supervisor will assign preparation of the Waiver Valuation Worksheet to a person who meets the qualifications outlined in Section 3-1.03. This may be the Right of Way Operations Team Member on the project, or another person, depending on how the project is organized and staffed. The person who is assigned responsibility will be guided by the instructions following in this section.

3-2.01 Data Assembly

The qualified person assigned responsibility will obtain the necessary data in preparation for completing the Waiver Valuation Worksheet. The data assembly for the valuation will draw from, as well as contribute to, the cumulative Project Data Package that supports all valuation activities on the project as discussed in Section 4-4. Data assembly will include the following:

1. Obtain and include a current dated set of preliminary project plans in the Project Data Package. These plans are a permanent record documenting the proposed design and construction features that will be considered in preparing the Waiver Valuation Worksheet.
2. Review the project and become familiar with the engineering features of the design.
3. Conduct a site visit and inspect each parcel to determine the effects of the acquisition and the construction as proposed. Take record images (either photos or video) of the acquisition areas, easement areas and improvements to be acquired.
4. It is not necessary to contact the owner at this time to give them the opportunity to accompany during the inspection of the property. However, if time permits contact with the owner to explain the reasons for the inspection and the following process is beneficial to owner acceptance.
5. Assemble sufficient comparable land sales for the various types of parcels within the project. Referencing sales data in other projects is permissible. Inspection of all sales at this time is not necessary but is advisable. The sales do not need to be confirmed if they are used exclusively on parcels where the R/W Supervisor has determined to use the Waiver Worksheet.
6. Consider relevant portions of flood hazard maps.

3-2.02 Preparation of the Worksheet

The R/W Supervisor, or other assigned staff, will prepare the Waiver Worksheet using the information that has been accumulated in the Project Data Package. The following steps will be followed:

1. Estimated damages on waiver eligible parcels will be calculated using a Microsoft Excel template that contains preformatted rows and columns. Each parcel on the spreadsheet has a three-row format. Inputs in the first row contain data itemizing the size of the interests and the nature of the improvements taken, Inputs in the second row contain the owner's name, and concluded values. The spreadsheet calculates and summarizes damages based on the inputs for areas taken and unit values. The third row contains the damage conclusion.
2. Complete appropriate line items using information from the Project Data Package. General reference to the list of sales used to estimate unit values is sufficient at this point in the process.
3. Provide or reference documentation for cost-to-cure items.
4. If it is discovered after assignment that severance damages or complex valuation issues exist, or if compensation will likely exceed \$15,000, the parcel will be appraised.
5. The scope of comparable data research and value analysis should be sufficient to estimate a unit value that reflects the current market. Data research may extend beyond the town in which the project is located if necessary to gather sufficient sales.
6. Sign and date the record copy of the Worksheet, after making a final review to ensure that all necessary data have been included and the calculations support the value conclusion.

3-2.03 Approval of the Waiver Valuation

The R/W Supervisor will approve by initialing the record copy of the completed Waiver Valuation, ensuring that the form contains all necessary data and calculations. The determination of Just Compensation will serve as authorization to the Property Office Team Member to initiate negotiations with the property owner, guided by provisions in Section 3-3.

The Waiver Valuation is not subject to MaineDOT's appraisal review process. The assigned preparer is responsible to ensure that the estimate represents Fair Market Value and that the factual data and calculations are correct.

3-2.04 Just Compensation Updates or Revisions

Updates or revisions to the determination of Just Compensation would occur in situations similar to those that are experienced in the acquisition of full appraisal parcels, examples could include the following:

1. The property owner may provide information that may require a reanalysis based on the property characteristics or condition.

2. As project design proceeds, there may be changes that would alter the impact on the remaining property.
3. The project may be delayed, thereby causing the data used to be outdated and a more current estimate to be warranted.

In any of these situations, the individual responsible for the initial valuation will complete and sign a new Waiver Valuation. Any new or revised dated plan sheets will be incorporated into the Project Data Package, and any new photos will be filed with the Waiver Valuation.

If the updated Waiver Valuation reflects a change in value, it should be transmitted to the R/W Supervisor for approval and the Director of the Property Office for an update of the Just Compensation determination.

3-3 ACQUISITION PROCESS

3-3.01 Contact with Property Owner — Guidelines

The R/W Supervisor will authorize an offer based on the Waiver Worksheet.

The negotiations process is as described in Chapter 5. The Negotiator should contact the owner and arrange a meeting to discuss the acquisition and present the compensation offer. The meeting should be preferably at the acquisition site or another location if it is mutually arranged.

The quality of preparation for the meeting is critical to its success. The Negotiator should review all documents and the project plans even if the Negotiator has prepared the Waiver Valuation Worksheet.

The Negotiator will provide a copy of the MaineDOT booklet, ***MaineDOT Projects and your Property***, at the initial meeting.

3-3.02 Offer and Negotiations

On projects that involve Federal participation and concurrence, the Senior Property Officer and the Negotiator must confirm that the necessary **NEPA** process is complete. Prior to making the initial offer, the record should show that a Categorical Exclusion (CE), Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) or Record of Decision (ROD) document has been submitted and approved. For more information, see 23 CFR part 771.

The Negotiator will prepare a Waiver Valuation Offer Letter and Assent Form (Form AQ-8) as part of pre-negotiations preparation. A copy of this form is included at the end of this Section.

At the first contact, the Negotiator will explain the acquisition along with the proposed construction and its effect on the property, and the property rights that MaineDOT is acquiring. The owner will be advised orally and in writing how the compensation was established and that an actual appraisal was not made. The owner will be further informed that if the Department and owner do not reach a mutually agreeable settlement for the value based on the acquisition amount presented, or at the owner's request, an appraisal will be made to determine the fair market value of the property or interest in property to be acquired.

The Negotiator will discuss any improvements that will be affected by the acquisition. The Offer Letter and Settlement Agreement will be provided and explained in sufficient detail to ensure that the owner is fully aware of the acquisition and the impact on the remaining property. The owner should be encouraged to accept the offer and sign the Settlement Agreement.

If the owner does not initially accept the offer, other avenues to agreement will be explored. If the owner makes a counteroffer, the Negotiator should neither accept nor reject it, but ask the owner for any factual information supporting the counteroffer. Further discussion with the owner may disclose a basis for an administrative settlement. If the Negotiator has been pre-authorized, an offer to settle administratively may then be made. If accepted, the Negotiator will provide a Justification for Administrative Settlement (Form AQ-3) for the file explaining that the increased

amount was necessary to expedite settlement and was otherwise reasonable and in the public interest.

The intent is to encourage and expedite the acquisition of real property by agreement with owners realizing the inexact nature of the valuation process. Also, the Negotiator is endeavoring to minimize administrative costs of property acquisition and avoid potential litigation.

3-3.03 Settlement Agreement

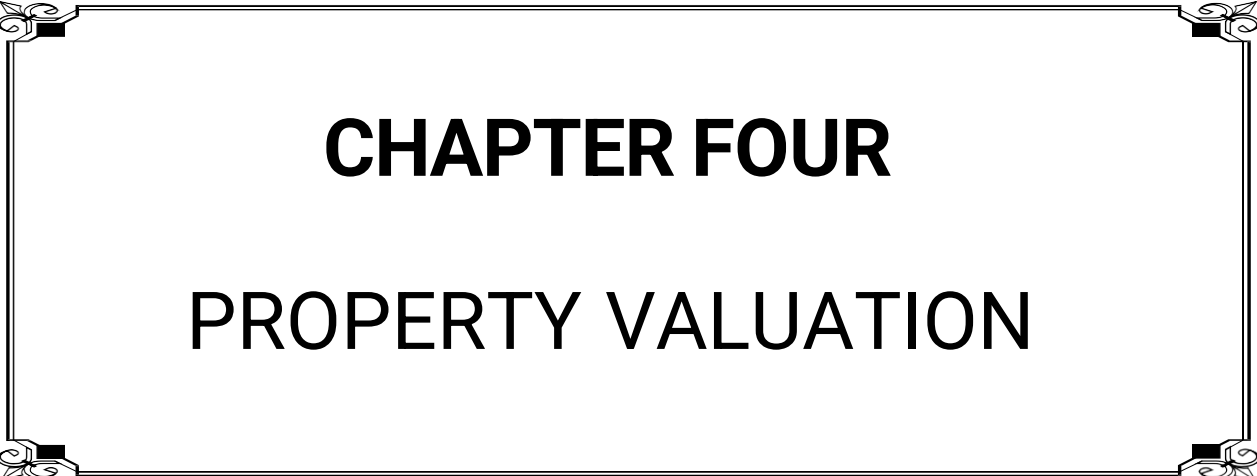
The Settlement Agreement prepared by the Negotiator contains the same basic information that is contained in the Waiver Valuation Worksheet. The Negotiator should review the Agreement with the owner point by point to ensure complete understanding.

3-3.04 Refused Offer

If the Negotiator is unable to reach a reasonable settlement with the property owner based on the waiver valuation, or if the property owner requests an appraisal, the Negotiator will immediately return the parcel to the Senior Property Officer with a contact report setting forth the reasons a settlement cannot be reached and the Negotiator's recommendations for appropriate actions.

The Senior Property Officer may, if judged appropriate, authorize a maximum offer to settle administratively to be presented by the Negotiator in the normal manner. A higher offer may reflect potential appraisal and review costs, litigation cost avoidance, as well as the inexact nature of property valuation. The Senior Property Officer will prepare a written justification providing information supporting the increased offer. If a settlement is not possible, the Senior Property Officer will then order an appraisal of the acquisition.

If an appraisal is necessary, all sales used in the Appraisal Report will be confirmed, including those sales that had been used in the Waiver Valuation Procedure. It is important that the Negotiator's contact sheets clearly indicate owner's questions and concerns, and the reason why settlement could not be reached.



CHAPTER FOUR

PROPERTY VALUATION

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

CHAPTER FOUR

PROPERTY VALUATION

4-1 SCOPE, ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

4-1.01 Purpose and Need for the Valuation Function

The Maine Constitution, Article 1 Section 21, states: “Private property shall not be taken for public uses without just compensation; nor unless the public exigencies require it.” Additionally, the Fifth Amendment to the United States Constitution reads, in part, “No person shall...be deprived of...property without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.” The valuation process is the means by which MaineDOT assures compliance with the constitutional right to just compensation.

Valuation requirements are further codified in the ***Maine Revised Statutes***, including, “When property is to be purchased or taken over and held for the State, the department shall first cause the property or interest in the property to be acquired, to be appraised by one or more appraisers.” The same statute goes on to modify this requirement by stating, “The department may prescribe a procedure to waive the appraisal in cases involving the sale or donation of property. The department may prescribe procedures to waive the appraisal in cases in which the fair market value of the taking is estimated at \$15,000 or less and valuation can be established by another method. In any case in which the department and the owner do not reach an agreement about the value of property or the interest in property to be acquired, or if the owner requests, the department shall perform an appraisal” (23 ***MRSA*** 153-B, 2).

Where federal funds are used in any phase of a project, valuation and appraisal review activities must be in accordance with 49 ***CFR*** Part 24.

Both the U.S and Maine Constitutions require that when private property is taken for public use, property owners are entitled to receive Just Compensation. Because of the sovereign government’s power of eminent domain, the payment of just compensation is required whether the property is condemned or acquired by deed.

Guidance provided in 23 CFR 710.203(b)(1-9) outlines what are direct eligible costs.

1. Real property acquisition
2. Relocation assistance
3. Damages
4. Property management
5. Payroll-related expenses
6. Property not incorporated into a project under title 23, USC
7. Uneconomic remnants
8. Access rights
9. Utility and railroad property

The measurement of Just Compensation is typically held to be the fair market value of the real estate acquired. In the case of a partial taking Just Compensation is the difference in the fair market value of the impacted property immediately before and immediately after the taking, taking into account the contributory value of the part taken as improved, any severance damage, or loss in value to the remainder, and/or any special benefits, or increases in value to the remainder. In the case of a total taking, Just Compensation is typically held to be the fair market value of the entire property. In theory, the value of the real estate remaining after taking plus just compensation is equivalent to the value of the real estate before the taking.

The Director of the Property Office is charged with the responsibility of determining Just Compensation. That determination is typically based on the value derived by MaineDOT's waiver valuation process or MaineDOT's approved appraisal. The process which governs the development of the approved appraisal is the subject of this chapter. Because there is no parity between bargaining positions between the State and the Property Owner, the State is obligated by law to offer no less than the approved appraisal as its determination of Just Compensation.

4-1.02 Special Benefits

Special benefits occur when the property remaining after a partial acquisition is enhanced by reason of the public improvement in a way that is not shared, in general by other property affected by the project. An example would be an acquisition from a single ownership for an Interstate highway interchange. The project location is totally within one farm ownership. Three of four remainders are at interchange ramp quadrants and are converted from a highest and best use as farmland to motel and restaurant locations. The enhancement value would be set off against damages occurring to a fourth remainder. However, the property owner would be paid the full value of the land acquired for the interchange. Maine, law (**MRSA 23.1542F**), requires that special benefits be set off against severance damages but not against the value of the property acquired.

4-1.03 Role of the Property Valuation Function

MaineDOT carries out its obligation to pay Just Compensation by establishing the fair market value of every property to be acquired for transportation projects. The fair market value constitutes MaineDOT's estimate of Just Compensation and is the basis of all offers and payments to owners pursuant to the exercise of its eminent domain authority. The valuation process that MaineDOT uses to establish fair market value fulfills both Constitutional and Statutory obligations. In its quality and thoroughness, MaineDOT's valuation process also demonstrates fair and equitable treatment for Maine citizens who are required to relinquish property for transportation projects that benefit the general public.

MaineDOT's valuation process consists of several formats and levels of documentation that correspond to the type of property being acquired and the complexity of the acquisition. The multi-format structure, along with the process of Appraisal review, ensures that the fair market value offer to each property owner is fully supported by market information and analysis that is relevant to the property and the effect of the acquisition. The process also ensures that property acquisition is expeditious and that the cost of administering the program is reasonable.

The following valuation formats are used to establish value:

10. Waiver Valuation Procedure,
11. Value Finding Format,
12. Short Format Appraisal, and
13. Detailed Narrative Report.

The Waiver Valuation Procedure is the subject of Chapter 3 of this *Manual*. The Detailed Narrative Appraisal, the Short Format Appraisal and the Value Finding Format are discussed in Section 4-2.

Appraisal review is a critical component in the process of establishing fair market value. Every property appraisal is reviewed for factual accuracy, adequacy of documentation, and support for judgment by a qualified Review Appraiser. The Review Appraiser has responsibility for determining fair market value from all value information submitted, approving the appraisal, and making a recommendation to the Director of the Property Office to serve as a basis for the Just Compensation determination. The Review Appraiser function is discussed in Section 4-5.

4-1.04 Types of Property Valuation Services

As discussed above, the primary role of valuation in MaineDOT is to establish the fair market value of property that will be acquired for transportation projects in Maine. MaineDOT's property valuation function has the following additional important value-related roles and purposes:

1. Develop project right of way cost estimates.
2. Perform appraisal review services.
3. Advise on proposed administrative settlements.
4. Provide expert testimony before the State Claims Commission.
5. Assign, oversee and evaluate Consultant Appraisal services.
6. Value uneconomic remnants.
7. Advise on fair rents for MaineDOT property under management.
8. Determine market rents and certain relocation benefits.
9. Advise on valuation for the disposal of surplus property.

4-1.05 Appraisal Defined

The term "appraisal" is defined in Section 24.2 of the ***Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (The Uniform Act)*** as:

A written statement independently and impartially prepared by a qualified appraiser setting forth an opinion of defined value of an adequately described property as of a specific date, supported by the presentation and analysis of relevant market information.

4-1.06 Fair Market Value Defined

For the purpose of valuing the property, including land and any building, structure and improvement thereon, acquired under the power of Eminent Domain by The Maine Department of Transportation, *Fair Market Value* is the amount of money (cash or its equivalent) which, as of the date of valuation:

1. An informed and knowledgeable purchaser willing, but not obligated, to buy the property would pay to an informed and knowledgeable owner willing, but not obligated, to sell it.
2. Taking into consideration all uses for which the property is suited and might in reason be applied; including, but not limited to the present use or highest and best available use taking into consideration the existing zoning or other restrictions upon use and the reasonable probability of a change in those restrictions.
3. Allowing a reasonable period of time to effectuate such sale.
4. Disregarding any decrease or increase in fair market value of such real property prior to the date of valuation caused by the public improvement for which such property is acquired, or by the likelihood that the property would be acquired for such improvement, other than that due to physical deterioration within the reasonable control of the owner.
5. Disregarding the fact that the owner might not want to part with the land because of its special adaptability to the owner's use.
6. Disregarding the fact that the taker needs the land because of its peculiar fitness for its purpose.
7. Disregarding any "gain to the taker" i.e., not giving consideration to the special use of the condemner as against others who may not possess the right of Eminent Domain.
8. Including the value of any buildings, structures, or improvements located upon the land, which are required to be removed or which it is determined will be adversely affected by the use to which such real property will be put, regardless of whether such building, structure or improvement is classified as real or personal property under local law. Such buildings, structures and improvements are valued based upon their contribution to the fair market value of the real property to be acquired or their value for removal from the real property (salvage value), whichever is greater. This includes tenant owned buildings, structures, or improvements, even if the tenant has a right or obligation to remove the building, structures, or improvements at the expiration of the lease term and even if classified as personal property under local law.
9. Fair Market Value, based upon adequate recent comparable sales and offering data is usually the measure of Just Compensation.

4-1.07 Appraiser Qualifications

The Appraiser and Review Appraiser must each be qualified and competent to perform the appraisal and appraisal review assignment, and their qualifications consistent with those necessary to complete the required scope of work. As a measure of the level of qualifications, the Chief and Senior Property Officers will consider the following:

- **Competency:** The appraiser must have the knowledge and experience to identify the appraisal problem and to complete the assignment. If the appraiser lacks the knowledge

and experience, it should be disclosed and the methods for gaining the requisite knowledge to complete the assignment discussed and documented.

- **Experience:** General appraisal and valuation related experience will be considered, including experience reading plans. The appraiser should be able to demonstrate experience in solving similar appraisal problems and appraising similar properties as in the appraisal assignment.
- **Education:** Post-secondary education, and college degrees in real estate and related fields will be considered.
- **Training:** Specific professional courses and seminars in real estate or real estate appraisal offered by various professional organizations will be considered in determining appraiser qualifications. Particularly important are courses in appraisal for condemnation, for litigation or the appraisal of partial interests.
- **Other:** Certifications, licenses, professional designations and memberships in professional organizations are also considerations in evaluating an appraiser's qualifications.
- **Class Specifications:** Specific requirements are also found in MaineDOT class specification descriptions for appraisal staff.

All Consultant Appraisers assigned to perform appraisals will be certified or licensed by the Maine Department of Professional and Financial Regulation – Office of Licensing and Registration as follows:

1. Certified General Real Property Appraiser – May appraise real property of all types.
2. Certified Residential Real Property Appraiser – May only appraise residential real estate or real property of one to four units or land related to that property without regard to transaction value or complexity when a net income capitalization analysis is not required.
3. Licensed Residential Real Property Appraiser – May appraise only residential property of one to four units having a transaction value of less than \$1,000,000.

4-1.08 Organizational Placement

The valuation function operates under the Bureau of Project Development Division of MaineDOT. The Director of the Property Office and the Chief Property Officer direct the function. Appraisal personnel and Review Appraisers are assigned within MaineDOT's Highway, Bridge, Regional and Multimodal Programs. Personnel are further assigned to project teams within each program.

4-1.09 Controlling Laws and Regulations

Real property valuation is subject to the following Federal and State legal authorities:

1. U.S. Constitution, 5th and 14th Amendments;

2. Maine State Constitution, Article 1 Section 21;
3. 23 **MRSA** III.2 Section 153-B(2);
4. ***Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*** (as amended 2024), Title II;
5. 23 **CFR** 710; and
6. 49 **CFR** 24.

In addition to the above regulations, operation of the valuation function is subject to civil rights laws pertaining to all MaineDOT activities that involve employment, contracting for services and providing program services and benefits to the public.

4-1.10 Contracting for Valuation Services

MaineDOT valuation services are performed both by staff employees and by private consultant (fee) personnel. Fully qualified Staff Appraisers and Review Appraisers provide valuation and related services for right of way acquisition on the MaineDOT capital improvement program and also manage contracted valuation services. Consultant Appraisers are employed as required to meet workload needs of the transportation capital program or to provide specialized expertise that is not available within MaineDOT.

Contracting right of way services is fully discussed in Chapter 9. The following is a summary of requirements that are pertinent to appraisal and other property valuation services:

4-1.10(a) Contracted Services

Services that may be contracted are:

1. Preparation of Detailed Narrative Reports;
2. Preparation of Short Format Appraisals;
3. Expert testimony;
4. Project right of way cost estimates;
5. Negotiations; and
6. Supplemental appraisal services relating to changes in project scope, parcel ownership, unanticipated property impacts or the need to update valuations.

4-1.10(b) Contracting Modes

The above services may be contracted in the following modes:

1. Individual parcel or project valuation assignment;
2. Contract for valuation services for a specific period of time on a call basis;
3. Combined with other functions such as titles, acquisition and relocation for a combined “turnkey” right of way service contract; or
4. Placed in an engineering design or design/build contract for a specific project.

4-1.10(c) Fee Appraisal Agreement

Appraisal services on a project or parcel basis will be contracted by executing an Appraisal Agreement. The appraisal assignments will be listed by parcel number and owner on the Schedule of Appraisals, which will be referenced by and attached to the Appraisal Agreement.

4-1.10(d) The Appraisal Register

The Appraisal Register is the list of Consultant Appraisers who have been pre-qualified to work for MaineDOT, in accordance with MaineDOT Consultant Procedures. Periodically, on a need basis, MaineDOT will advertise for Appraisers to submit qualifications and an application for inclusion on the Register. Appraisers may apply for inclusion on the list at any time on their own initiative.

The Property Office is responsible for maintaining the Appraisal Register. The Chief Property Officer will review the list and new applications and then recommend additions or deletions to the Register. The Register will be updated at least once every 2 years. Applicants to the Appraisal Register will be advised in writing of the disposition of their applications. Persons who are deleted from the Register will also be advised in writing if a current mailing address is known. The Chief Property Officer will make a record of its proceedings and decisions.

The Chief Property Officer will determine the required content of an application for the Register. The Chief Property Officer will periodically confer with the Contract Procurement Office (CPO) to determine ways to increase applications from qualified contract appraisers who are minorities or who qualify as a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE).

4-1.11 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance in the valuation function is an inclusive process of evaluating performance and developing ways to continuously improve the accomplishment of program goals. Quality

assurance is a responsibility that is shared by all persons and administrative levels involved in the valuation function. The Property Office will establish goals and provide policy guidance for improving the level of quality in the valuation process. The R/W Supervisor will propose and coordinate quality assurance activities that will involve all valuation staff, which shall be scaled to the staff resources and current project workload. All professional staff will perform specific quality assurance tasks focusing on one or more of the factors listed below:

1. Effective coordination with Project Team Members responsible for other project development activities;
2. Timely assignment of Staff and Consultant Appraisers;
3. Assessment of appraisal-related training needs of staff personnel;
4. Identification of critical path tasks involving appraisals and valuation to eliminate barriers to timely completion of these activities;
5. Evaluation of Consultant Appraiser performance concerning quality of documentation, analysis of data, and timely delivery of appraisal products;
6. Effective performance evaluation and feedback of staff valuation personnel;
7. Development and understanding of valuation policy, practices and agency forms that support the effective and expeditious acquisition of right of way; and
8. Participation in evaluations

Quality assurance activities and tasks performed by professional staff will be reported in a manner outlined in Chapter 10 of this Manual. The goal is to continuously improve the performance level of valuation activities (e.g., appraisals, appraisal review, estimates) in terms of cost efficiency, timeliness and quality of work products. MaineDOT's continuing refinement of quality assurance includes the development of performance standards and evaluation methods to establish goals and measure progress in meeting goals.

4-1.11(a) Evaluation

On completion of an appraisal, the Appraiser's performance will be evaluated by the Review Appraiser or the R/W Supervisor. The MaineDOT Consultant Evaluation Form will be used for this purpose for consultant appraisers. A copy of the completed Form will be provided to the Appraiser and a copy will be routed to the Chief Property Officer. The evaluations will be considered in completing staff appraiser's annual performance evaluations and in determining whether to re-employ consultant appraisers.

4-1.12 Scope of Work

The scope of work concept was adopted by the Uniform Act Final Rule effective Feb. 3, 2005. The scope of work and development of an appraisal depends on the complexity of the appraisal problem. An Appraiser must properly identify the problem to be solved in order to determine the appropriate scope of work. Scope of work includes but is not limited to

- The extent to which the property is identified,
- The extent to which tangible property is inspected,
- The type and extent of data researched,
- The type and extent of analysis applied to arrive at opinions or conclusions.

Scope of work is a written statement agreed upon by the Appraiser and MaineDOT's R/W Supervisor. The scope describes the work that the Appraiser is assigned to do and which reporting format as described in Section 4-2 is appropriate. The scope of work should be developed cooperatively by the Appraiser and the reviewing appraiser or R/W Supervisor prior to the Appraiser beginning the assignment and define the general parameters of the work. The statement may be updated as necessary as the work progresses.

MaineDOT uses three appraisal formats in developing property appraisals. A description of each of these formats may be found in section 4-2. Each parcel should be initially evaluated by the review appraiser to determine scope of work and appraisal format. The Review Appraiser and Appraiser can discuss the initial evaluation and determine if any adjustments are necessary. When the appraisal tasks on all the parcels on the project are similar, a single scope of work for the project is appropriate. Where one or more parcels have unique issues or present complex valuation problems, scopes of work based on the specific parcel issues should be developed.

Below are the Federal guidelines for a Scope of Work. For more information of Scope of Work requirements, refer to 49 CFR 24.103:

SCOPE OF WORK: The appraiser must, at a minimum:

1. Provide an appraisal meeting the agency's definition of an appraisal. *The definition of appraisal should be in the State DOT's FHWA-approved Right-of-Way or Appraisal Manual. For Federal-aid projects the definition must be compatible with the definition found at 49 CFR 24.2.*
2. Afford the property owner or the owner's designated representative the opportunity to accompany the appraiser on the inspection of the property. *How this is to be handled should be in the State DOT's FHWA-approved Right-of-Way or Appraisal Manual.*
3. Perform an inspection of the subject property. *This should be specified in the State DOT's FHWA-approved Right-of-Way or Appraisal Manual.* The inspection should be appropriate for the appraisal problem, and the Scope of Work should address:
 - The extent of the inspection and description of the neighborhood and proposed project area,
 - The extent of the subject property inspection, including interior and exterior areas,
 - The level of detail of the description of the physical characteristics of the property being appraised (and, in the case of a partial acquisition, the remaining property),

4. In the appraisal report, include a sketch of the property and provide the location and dimensions of any improvements. *Also, it should include adequate photographs of the subject property and comparable sales and provide location maps of the property and comparable sales as called for in the State DOT's FHWA-approved Right-of-Way or Appraisal Manual.*
5. In the appraisal report, include items required by the acquiring agency, usually including the following list: *This should be in the State DOT's FHWA-approved Right-of-Way or Appraisal Manual.*
 - The property right(s) to be acquired, e.g., fee simple, easement, etc.,
 - The value being appraised (usually fair market value), and its definition
 - Appraised as if free and clear of contamination (or as specified),
 - The date of the appraisal report and the date of valuation,
 - A realty/personalty report is required per 49 CFR 24.103(a)(2)(i),
 - The known and observed encumbrances, if any,
 - Title information,
 - Location,
 - Zoning,
 - Present use, and
 - At least a 5-year sales history of the property.
6. In the appraisal report, identify the highest and best use of the larger parcel. If highest and best use is in question or different from the existing use, provide an appropriate analysis identifying the market-based highest and best use.
7. Present and analyze relevant market information. *Specific requirements for market information should be in the State DOT's FHWA-approved Right-of-Way or Appraisal Manual and should include research, analysis, and verification of comparable sales. Inspection of the comparable sales should also be specified.*
8. In developing and reporting the appraisal, disregard any decrease or increase in the fair market value of the real property caused by the project for which the property is to be acquired, or by the likelihood that the property would be acquired for the project. *If necessary, the Appraiser may cite the Jurisdictional Exception under USPAP to ensure compliance with USPAP while following this Uniform Act requirement.*
9. Report the Appraiser's analysis, opinions, and conclusions in the appraisal report.

4-2 VALUATION FORMATS

4-2.01 General

MaineDOT's process of determining fair market value includes four levels of valuation that correspond to the complexity of the acquisition. The levels differ in their format and degree of documentation. However, all result in a determination of value that is supported and fairly arrived at and that meets Constitutional obligations as outlined in the Uniform Act, and Maine Statutory standards for Just Compensation.

In addition to the instructions on valuation formats that are provided in this Section, the Appraiser will be familiar and comply with the guidance on special topics provided in Section 4-3. These provisions apply to valuations performed under all formats and are required by **Maine Revised Statutes** and/or Federal law or regulation.

MaineDOT has the responsibility to assure that appraisals are relevant to its program needs and reflect established and commonly accepted Federal and federally-assisted program appraisal practice. At a minimum the appraisal product should comply with the definition of an appraisal in 4-1.05 and the following five requirements:

1. An adequate description of the physical characteristics of the larger parcel being appraised (and in the case of a partial acquisition an adequate description of the remaining property) including items identified as personal property, a statement of the known and observed encumbrances, if any, title information, location, zoning, present use, an analysis of the highest and best use, and at least a 5-year sales history of the property.
2. All relevant and reliable approaches to value consistent with established Federal and federally-assisted program appraisal practices. If the Appraiser uses more than one approach, there shall be an analysis and reconciliation of approaches to value used that is sufficient to support the Appraiser's opinion of fair market value.
3. A description of comparable sales including a description of all relevant physical, legal and economic factors such as parties to the transaction source and method of financing, and verification by a party involved in the transaction.
4. A statement of the value of the real property to be acquired and, for a partial acquisition, a statement of the value of the damages and benefits, if any to the real property where appropriate.
5. The effective date of valuation, date of appraisal, signature, and certification of the Appraiser.

4-2.02 Report Style and Presentation

All reports will be bound in the left margin, with a durable cover. The binding must allow easy removal of individual pages. The cover will be labeled to identify the project and the city or town where it is located. All pages will be numbered consecutively and will indicate the project number, parcel number and owner's name. The location of the property will be identified by street address, or other identifier that will enable the property to be located for field view.

More than one appraisal may be included in one volume. Where a large number of appraisals are submitted on one project, the reports will be submitted in two or more volumes. The nature (paper or electronic copies) of these submittals will depend on the preference of the R/W Supervisor.

The Appraisal Report will be structured in three parts:

1. Part I – Preface;
2. Part II – Description, Analysis and Conclusion; and
3. Part III – Addenda.

Supplemental information that does not bear directly on the valuation may be included as an Appendix. Avoid bulky attachments. It is sufficient to refer to supporting Reports as being available on MaineDOT request.

4-2.03 Value Finding Format

The FHWA encourages agencies to allow use of the Value Finding Appraisal format to reduce appraisal time and costs. The Value Finding Appraisal can be used for simple acquisitions that are of low value and meet the other requirements set forth below.

Typically used when damages are anticipated to fall below minimum payment levels, this form of appraisal can be used on uncomplicated takings where adequate market data is available and there are no special benefits, nor severance damage accruing to the remainder property other than minor replacement or re-establishment items measurable by the "cost to cure". Examples of "cost-to-cure" items might be: reconnected piping, replacing septic systems, replacing walks, steps or drives, moving fencing, etc. Examples of uncomplicated takings might be unimproved lots, strip taking not involving severance damages or benefits, but including minor structures, signs or other land improvements.

Value Findings will be developed by qualified staff Appraisers or qualified technicians in accordance with MaineDOT Specifications.

The MaineDOT Value Finding Appraisal may be used only when:

1. The acquiring agency is required to prepare an appraisal even for low value acquisitions, if the acquiring agency has elected not to use the waiver of appraisal provision on the parcel, or the waiver provision has failed to generate a settlement.
2. The acquisition involves only vacant land and/or land with improvements where the impact to the improvements is minor and there is no loss in value to the remainder.
3. Highest and best use is the present use and is not materially affected by the proposed improvement.
4. Fair market value can adequately be estimated by the sales comparison approach with only minor adjustments, if any, required.

4-2.04 Short Format Appraisal

The Short Format Appraisal is appropriate for acquisitions where there are no severance damages other than those easily supported by a cost to cure, and the following additional conditions are present:

1. The land acquired is vacant or includes only minor improvements.
2. The acquisition does not affect the highest and best use of the property.
3. The property to be acquired is a total acquisition.

For total acquisition parcels or acquisitions involving significant improvements all three approaches to value must be considered and if any approach to value is excluded its omission must be explained.

When there is adequate market data, the comparable sales approach to value may be sufficient for partial strip acquisitions that have no improvements or only minor improvements.

Content and analysis of the short format appraisal must be sufficient for the appraisal problem and the anticipated magnitude of damages.

Both Staff and Consultant Appraisers perform appraisals using the short form format.

4-2.05 Detailed Narrative Report

The Detailed Narrative Report is MaineDOT's detailed Appraisal format that is applicable in all acquisitions in which the Waiver Valuation Procedure, Value Finding Format, or Short Format Appraisal is not applicable. Generally, its use is reserved for complex acquisitions including partial takes where there are severance damages to the remainder area and require a before and after appraisal method.

The before and after appraisal method is performed by experienced Staff Appraisers or by Consultant Appraisers listed on the MaineDOT Appraisal Register who are certified or licensed for the type of assignment by the Maine Department of Professional and Financial Regulation – Office of Licensing and Registration.

The Appraiser will use all relevant approaches (e.g., market, cost, income) in determining the value of the part acquired and the value of the remainder. The Appraiser will explain not using an approach unless it is obviously not relevant from the nature of the Appraisal problem.

Appraisers are responsible for informing MaineDOT of special circumstances that will affect the prescribed format and for requesting advice as to how to proceed.

4-3 SPECIAL APPRAISAL INSTRUCTIONS

4-3.01 General

The topics addressed below provide information and instructions on requirements that either cut across all appraisal formats or have important specialized application. Several requirements derive from the fact that MaineDOT, having power of eminent domain, operates under State and Federal laws and regulations that do not apply to private real estate transactions. In addition, MaineDOT has certain procedural requirements to ensure citizens that property acquisition activities are conducted in a fair and equitable manner. Appraisers who perform valuation services for MaineDOT must know and apply the rules and requirements so that MaineDOT fulfills its varied obligations.

4-3.02 The Appraiser's Certificate

A signed and dated "Certificate of Appraiser" will be included in each appraisal as the last page of the Report. It is the Appraiser's responsibility to be familiar with the content of the Certificate before accepting appraisal assignments. Any questions on interpretation or applicability should be resolved with the project Review Appraiser.

4-3.03 Tenant-Owned Improvements

Buildings, structures or improvements to real property that are owned by tenants will not be included in the appraised value of the property acquired. Instead, they will be listed individually on a separate Report and appraised as to their contributory value to the property. The Appraiser will also estimate each item's salvage value, which is the same as the value for removal from the site. MaineDOT will make a separate acquisition offer to the tenant owner of the improvements if the landowner disclaims ownership interest in the items in writing.

If the Appraiser becomes aware of tenant-owned improvements during inspection of the property, or if ownership of certain items is disputed between the landowner and a tenant, this should be reported to the project Review Appraiser, who will instruct as to how these items should be treated in the appraisal. See Chapter 5 for policy on the purchase of, and payment for, tenant-owned improvements.

4-3.04 USPAP Jurisdictional Exception

Federal and federally-assisted real property acquisition is governed by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Uniform Act) and implementing regulations found in 49 CFR Part 24. The criteria governing appraisals are found in 49 CFR 24.103 and have the force of law. Staff, certified and licensed Appraisers in Maine and other States working on federally-assisted projects are to prepare their reports in accordance with these regulatory requirements. Independent certified and licensed Appraisers are required by certification statutes to comply with the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice

(USPAP), promulgated by the Appraisal Standards Board of The Appraisal Foundation. The appraisal requirements of 49 CFR 103 and 104 are intended to be consistent with USPAP. If these requirements are found to differ from USPAP, the Appraiser is required to follow the requirements of the MaineDOT. The “Jurisdictional Exception” rule is the USPAP provision that retains applicability of the remainder of the Uniform Standards if any portion is determined to be contrary to law or public policy. This recognizes the preeminence of law and public policy and allows a certified or licensed Appraiser to comply with MaineDOT Appraisal Standards (49 **CFR** 24 and 23 **MRSA** 153-B) without violating the USPAP. Note the provision in the Certificate of Appraiser (Form VL-9): “That this appraisal assignment is completed in conformance with Federal Law as outlined in the Uniform Act and 49 CFR 24.103 and MaineDOT procedures as outlined in MaineDOT policy and procedural manuals.

Provisions in USPAP require an Appraiser to identify the part or parts of the USPAP disregarded in applying the Jurisdictional Exception, and to state the authority justifying this action. Appraisers who have questions or concerns about MaineDOT Appraisal Standards as they relate to the USPAP should address them to the MaineDOT project Review Appraiser or Chief Property Officer.

4-3.05 Compliance with Civil Rights and Nondiscrimination Requirements

MaineDOT directs the attention of Consultant Appraisers to the obligations stated in Appendix A of the Appraiser Agreement, titled “Notice to Fee Appraisers – Compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Subtitle A, Title 15, **Code of Federal Regulations**, Part 8 for Federal Aid Contracts.”

4-3.06 Additional Appraisals

The Chief Property Officer may authorize subsequent appraisals if necessary to support valuation of the property. Following are several, but not the only, circumstances in which a subsequent appraisal may be secured:

1. Unclear or disputed highest and best use of property,
2. High-value property (generally greater than \$500,000),
3. Significant passage of time from the date of appraisal to the date of acquisition, and
4. Unique property or complex acquisition.

4-3.07 Real vs. Personal Property Decisions

The determination of what is realty and what is personalty is critical to determine Just Compensation and relocation benefits and eliminate duplicate payments. The determination of realty/personalty items is part of the appraisal process. The appraisal report must specifically itemize items of personalty and items of realty that are in the portion of the parcel acquired. On

site meetings between the Appraiser, property owner, reviewer and relocation staff may be necessary in some cases. There may be items on the appraised property for which a question arises as to status as either realty or personalty. The MaineDOT project Review Appraiser should be consulted for specific instructions about these items.

Scopes of work for appraisal assignments must include the requirement that the Appraiser differentiate between items of realty and personalty, if any, list each in the appraisal report and specify ownership.

4-3.08 Fencing

The Appraiser will describe the type, condition and quantity (linear feet) of any fencing in the acquisition area. There will normally be no valuation, or payment to the property owner, for fencing that the plans indicate will be replaced or reset by MaineDOT. If fencing will not be replaced or reset by MaineDOT, the Appraiser will estimate its contributory value to the property and separately state the salvage value. If there are any unusual circumstances, the Appraiser will consult the project Review Appraiser.

4-3.09 Recording Critical Dates

The Appraiser will record the following dates and place them in the appraisal on the final Estimate and Summary of Damages page:

1. Date and manner by which the owner was contacted regarding the opportunity to accompany the Appraiser in inspecting the property pursuant to 23 **MRSA** 153B(2) and 49 **CFR** 24.102;
2. Date of inspection of the property;
3. Date the appraised value applies (Effective Date); and
4. Date the appraisal is signed by the Appraiser.

The date value applies must be the same as the valuation date shown on the certificate of Appraiser. It should be noted that if a report is revised a new signature date is used.

At or near the date of condemnation, the project appraiser will receive a list of unsettled parcels and a copy of the notice of layout and taking from the R/W Supervisor. The Appraiser will then save the original appraisal and create updated appraisals on all unsettled parcels to match the date of condemnation. Required actions include:

- 1) An investigation of any new market data in the project area that has occurred since the Appraiser did the prior market research;
- 2) A re-inspection and a representative photo taken of all unsettled parcels.

- 3) A cross-check of the notice of layout and taking with the appraisal to ensure that the acquisition areas are consistent.
- 4) A determination of the effect of any new market data on the appraised values;
- 5) An update of appraised values, if necessary; and
- 6) A new “date value applies” in the appraisals of all unsettled parcels on the Estimate and Summary of Damages and the Certificate of Appraiser pages to match the date of acquisition. An additional “date of inspection” should also be added on the Estimate and Summary of Damages page.

Any new market data affecting values will be provided to the Review Appraiser for their inclusion in the appraisal where appropriate. Estimate and Summary of Damages and Certificate of Appraiser pages will be revised and transmitted to the Review Appraiser for their insertion into the original and duplicate appraisals to replace existing pages or if electronic copy, submit new revised version. If appropriate, the determination of Just Compensation will be updated. New pages will reflect the updated inspection and valuation dates for all unsettled parcels.

4-3.10 Cost to Cure Items

Minor physical damage to property may be valued on a cost to cure if the value on this basis is less than the diminution in value if such cure were not made. Items that may be considered for cost to cure include reconnected utilities, fence relocation or replacement, walkways, steps, accessibility ramps, septic systems, drives, etc.

The Appraiser will state the basis for any cost to cure estimate and the source of information used. This may be consultation with a (named) contractor, reference to the cost of recent similar work, advertised installed prices or application of unit costs confirmed locally. The appraiser’s estimate will be what an owner would incur by hiring a qualified local contractor to perform the entire job, including any incidental expenses.

4-3.11 Wells

Wells that are the primary water supply to the property and are within the acquisition area or affected by the construction are eligible for replacement through MaineDOT’s Well Claims program that is administered by the MaineDOT Environmental Office. Secondary or unused water supplies are appraised as to their contributory value to the property.

4-3.12 Signs

The status of signs within the acquisition area relative to realty vs. personalty should be determined early in the project development process as discussed in Section 4-3.07. Items to consider in making the determination are discussed in Chapter 6 Relocation Section 6-7.04. Encroachment signs are referred to the Bureau of Maintenance and Operations for removal.

4-3.13 Items Not Compensable under Maine Law

The following are not compensable appraisal items under State law. However, several items are addressed in the relocation program. The Appraiser will not include any listed items as elements of damage on Appraisal Reports submitted to MaineDOT.

1. Removal cost of personal property;
2. Breakage of personal property;
3. Cost of replacement premises exceeding the value of old premises;
4. Business or income opportunity loss;
5. Business interruption;
6. Inferiority of new location;
7. Non-availability of acceptable replacement location;
8. Loss of goodwill;
9. Loss of profitable contracts;
10. Damages from frustration of contracts;
11. Loss of privacy;
12. Owner or tenant inconvenience;
13. Speculative damages (includes all above);
14. Decrease in business value on premises;
15. Value to taker;
16. Value to owner, as opposed to fair market value;
17. Damages due to the exercise of police power, such as restriction of traffic due to detours during construction, or installation of traffic control devices as part of the highway project; access management; and
18. Circuity of travel (a business does not have a proprietary interest in the traffic passing its site).

If the Appraiser has any questions on any of the above items, they should contact the project Review Appraiser for clarification. The Review Appraiser may request a written opinion from the Legal Services Office for inclusion in the appraisal report.

4-3.14 Opportunity for Owner to Accompany Appraiser

The Appraiser will contact the property owner and offer an opportunity for the owner or a representative to accompany the Appraiser during an inspection of the property pursuant to 23 **MSRA** 153B(2) and 49 **CFR** 24.102. The Appraiser will record the date and the manner of the owner contact and any response that was received.

If the owner cannot be contacted for any reason, or the owner is not responsive, the Appraiser will record efforts to contact and advise the MaineDOT project Review Appraiser.

4-3.15 Information Provided to Appraiser

On assignment, the Appraiser will be provided with the the following items to the extent applicable:

1. Signed copy of the Appraisal Agreement and the Schedule of Appraisal (Contract Appraiser);
2. Right of way plan sheets;
3. Construction plan sheets;
4. Five-year Conveyance Report;
5. Property Owner Report;
6. Preliminary Title Report, if available;
7. Aerial photos, if available;
8. Timber cruise, if available;
9. Specialty Reports, if secured by MaineDOT; and
10. Scope of Work.

4-3.16 Appraisal Corrections or Additions

Appraisal contracts are not completed until the appraisal(s) are accepted by the MaineDOT project Review Appraiser. Corrections or additions to appraisals will be submitted promptly as replacement or addendum pages that have been dated and initialed by the Appraiser.

Appraisal changes, valuation updates or additions caused by a change in the scope or character of work will be submitted and paid as agreed on between MaineDOT and the Appraiser.

4-3.17 Conflict of Interest – Procurement

No employee, officer or agent of MaineDOT may participate in the selection, award or administration of any contract for MaineDOT if that person has a financial or other interest in the firm selected for the award.

Employees, officers or agents shall neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors or parties to these agreements.

Any violation of the above is subject to the penalties, sanctions or other disciplinary actions in accordance with State law and regulations.

4-3.18 Specialty Appraisal Reports

Specialty Appraisals are necessary if the acquired property contains items that contribute to the value of the real estate that are not normally found in real estate transactions. This may include installed machinery and equipment, fixtures determined to be real property, or special-purpose properties built to a specific function or use. If the Specialty Appraisal has been performed by a MaineDOT Staff Appraiser, or by a Consultant Appraiser hired by MaineDOT, it will be reviewed by MaineDOT before it is transmitted to the real estate Appraiser. The real estate Appraiser will be instructed to use the Specialty Report to determine the value the specialty items contribute to the value of the whole property. It is not acceptable to simply add the Specialty Report value to the value of the real estate without the specialty items.

4-3.19 Confidentiality of Records

All Appraisal Reports and related documents and information are confidential documents and information will not be disclosed to anyone other than right of way officials of MaineDOT or the Federal Highway Administration until so authorized by those officials or by operation of law.

Appraisals are completed with MaineDOT as the client and intended user. The intended use of the appraisal is to provide a basis for the determination of Just Compensation and negotiation for the acquisition of real estate necessary for transportation projects.

23 **MRSA** Section 63 provides that records and correspondence relating to appraisals and other right of way functions “shall be open for public inspection after 9 months following the completion date of the project according to the record of the Department, not including those claims which have been appealed to the Superior Court, and said records to be open for public inspection following award of the court.” Consult the MaineDOT Legal Services Office for interpretation of this provision.

4-4 PROJECT DATA BOOK

4-4.01 Purpose of the Project Data Book

When deemed necessary by the R/W Supervisor, the Project Data Book is a cumulative collection of factual data that have been gathered in support of the preparation of project right of way cost estimates, Appraisal Waiver Worksheets and appraisals for the project. The Project Data Book consolidates general data for a related group of individual parcel reports. It avoids costly duplicative efforts to compile the information that serves a common need of Appraisers, Review Appraisers and other right of way personnel assigned to a project. On larger projects, the Project Data Book promotes project consistency and efficiency.

The Project Data Book compiles information that is used on appraisal comparable data sheets, neighborhood and regional descriptions, general exhibits, right of way cost studies and information relating to the area or region trends (time, utility, location, etc.). The information is limited to factual data. Evaluation and analysis is performed in the Appraisal Reports and other documents that are served by the project data that are compiled in the Data Book.

4-4.02 Responsibility for Compiling the Project Data Book

The Data Book is normally prepared by staff personnel who are trained and experienced in the appraisal process. It is produced under oversight of a Review Appraiser or the Chief Property Officer. A Contract Appraiser may also be employed as necessary.

4-4.03 Content of the Project Data Book

The content of the Project Data Book is intended to reflect the scope and complexity of the project it represents. The level of detail and corresponding effort necessary to complete the data book should vary with the number of parcels on the project, the range of uses, the type of acquisitions and the extent of recent real estate sales market activity. The following summary of content is intended to represent the necessary level of detail and effort for a complex project of significant scope. The content of non-complex projects may be modified appropriately to suit the intended need for these data in relation to the actual project under development.

The intended scope and content of the Project Data Book will be understood and agreed on by the MaineDOT staff who will develop the Book before data collection begins. If the work is contracted to a fee Appraiser, the scope and content will be mutually agreed on by the Consultant and the Contract Administrator and will be reflected in the Consultant agreement document.

Data collection for the Project Data Book will continue through submission of the last appraisal on the project. This is necessary so that late project appraisals will have the same benefit of current market data as appraisals that are prepared early in the project. Revisions and updates to the Data Book will be dated and signed by the person entering the data.

The Project Data Book will contain the following elements:

1. Title page;
2. Table of contents;
3. Qualifications of preparer(s);
4. Assumptions and limiting conditions;
5. References;
6. Description of project, maps, aerial photographs, etc.;
7. Area and neighborhood analysis;
8. Market data; and
9. Supporting documentation and exhibits.

Each of the above elements is described fully in the following Sections.

4-4.03(a) Title Page

This will include:

1. Project location by municipality,
2. Project number and WIN,
3. MaineDOT identified as the client and intended user,
4. Effective date of Project Data Book, and
5. Name(s) and affiliation of person(s) preparing the book.

4-4.03(b) Table of Contents

List the major parts of the Report and subheadings with page references.

4-4.03(c) Qualifications of Preparer(s)

Provide the qualifications of all persons providing significant contribution in preparing the Project Data Book.

4-4.03(d) Assumptions and Limiting Conditions

Assume that the project will be constructed in accordance with the current design plan, unless there is information to the contrary. This must be cited by source and in specific detail. State any assumptions applicable to the research and assembly of the Project Data Book.

4-4.03(e) References

Provide names and titles of individuals who have supplied significant information for the Data Book, (e.g., municipal officials, contractors, and real estate professionals).

4-4.03(f) Description of the Project, Maps, Aerial Photographs, etc.

Describe, concisely, the proposed transportation project improvement. Describe resulting changes in access, frontage, elevation, drainage, utilities and proximity. Include a project location map relating the project location to the municipality or area. All maps will include a north arrow and identification of the project and the municipality. All maps and plans may be bound as facing pages opposite the description, tabulation or discussion topic to which they relate.

4-4.03(g) Area and Neighborhood Analysis

Present a narrative discussion and analysis of the following items:

1. Define and delineate the real estate market area.
2. Evaluate and analyze the current demand and supply relationships in the local real estate market and describe factors that influence the market.
3. Describe the existing supply of property for the specific uses within the defined market area that are affected by the project.
4. Identify uses, sites and parcels of historic significance and describe the effect on the project of these places.
5. Discuss current patterns of land use and trends in the area first and the neighborhood second. This includes new construction planned or under way, vacant sites as potential competition for the subject(s), adequacy and availability of utilities, access, impaired sites nearby, etc.
6. Discuss current economic factors affecting the area and neighborhood, including population, employment, income, interest rates, rents, zoning, and other regulations. Discuss the probability of future changes for these factors, as relevant.
7. Describe the neighborhood before and after completion of the proposed transportation project.
8. Forecast how anticipated changes in the inventory of real property resulting from the project will affect the subject neighborhood.
9. Attach and provide a brief evaluation of any published economic, damage, cost or other general studies that will be relevant for use in any property valuations.

4-4.03(h) Market Data

The following applies:

1. Reporting. State the extent of the process of collecting, confirming and reporting data. This statement of scope should be brief. If the property is improved and land-only valuations are required, include a statement limiting the scope. If before and after appraisal procedures are anticipated, the data collection process must include sufficient comparable sales of the after condition of the property as well as comparable sales of the before property.
2. Method. The sales comparison approach is the most easily understood method for the presentation of market value and Just Compensation. Greater reliance will often be placed on this than on other approaches. The market approach only is required for most parcels. It is therefore imperative that sufficient relevant market data are included for analysis in order to provide a sound basis for conclusions made from the sales comparison approach.

Current accurate comparable sales information will be provided in a quantity that is sufficient to support the value conclusions as representative of the local market. Data must provide a sound basis for valuation of both the before and the after condition of each parcel. Three comparable sales are generally considered the minimum acceptable support for simple valuations; more are recommended when available, particularly for complex appraisal problems.

3. Neighborhood Sales. The market data survey must include an analysis of all recent sales of similar properties in the subject neighborhood. Discuss and evaluate the existing supply of available similar properties (the competition). If relevant, discuss the sales history of comparables as to time on the market, changes in asking price, resale of the same property, and sales agreements that fell through.
4. Value Indicators. The following indicators of value may be included in the Project Data Book for the purpose of illustrating a trend or extreme, but may not be used as the only basis for value:
 - a. Unconfirmed sales,
 - b. Listings,
 - c. Earnest money agreements,
 - d. Offers to purchase,
 - e. Lease or purchase options,
 - f. Sales to or from agencies having power of eminent domain,
 - g. Estate sales between relatives,

- h. Trades and/or exchanges,
- i. Sales with generous financing terms,
- j. Foreclosure sales,
- k. Sales made under duress,
- l. Bankruptcy estate sales, and
- m. Auctions.

It is not acceptable to deviate from the foregoing except in rare cases where no other data exists and the Appraiser submits the documents, verification and analysis to the project Review Appraiser for approval for use in an Appraisal Report. Sufficient market data are not always available to evaluate all types of properties subject to acquisition. When market data are limited, or comparability is weak, the Appraiser must demonstrate a concerted effort to obtain other sources or types of supporting data.

5. Inspection of Sales. It is essential to inspect all sales included in the data package. If a timely field inspection is not possible due to weather or other factors, additional documentation of familiarity with the sales will be provided, such as dates of earlier inspections. The sale must be inspected at the earliest opportunity. A waiver for inspection of sales will only be granted under extreme and unusual circumstances. The waiver request will be in writing and will be fully explained and supported.
6. Confirmation of Sale. The Data Book preparer will inspect and personally confirm all market data used for Appraisal Reports. Market sales information is considered reliable when the facts are verified by personal contact with the buyer or seller, or in some cases, agents to the transaction. Not every sale can be confirmed by direct contact with the buyer or seller. In such instances, the Appraiser will verify the transaction facts with the agent or attorney representing the parties or with other sources of reliable information who may be party to the sale. The sale conditions and the source of verification will be identified on the comparable data sheet.
7. Date of Sale. The date of the meeting of the minds, or earnest money agreement date, should be used as the date of sale if possible. Otherwise, the date the deed of transfer was signed, not the date of recording, should be considered the date of sale.
8. Use of Data Gathered by Others. Market data on file with MaineDOT may be shared on request, with no obligation by MaineDOT as to its accuracy or relevance. Any staff or contract valuation professional who receives market data from MaineDOT will independently verify, confirm, and inspect the data if necessary.
9. Comparable Market Data Sheets. A comparable market data sheet (sale sheet) must be included for every sale or value indicator. The preparer is not required to use the MaineDOT Form VL-3, but all pertinent data shown on the Form must be included in each market data submittal. Descriptions must be sufficiently clear to locate each sale in the field.

Estimate the land/improvement allocation for each improved property. The basis for the allocation, including supporting data, reasoning and correlation, must be provided. A statement that the purchaser or seller allocated the values, or that it came from another appraisal, is not acceptable without further support.

10. Photographs. Attach photos of each comparable property to provide the user with a clear understanding of the property. This requirement applies to both occupied and vacant property. At a minimum, each photo will be identified with the following information:
 1. The location from which the photo was taken
 2. The direction in which the photo was taken
 3. By whom the photo was taken
 4. The date on which the photo was taken
11. Sales Summary Chart. Attach a sales summary chart or a recapitulation of the sales data.
12. Sales Map. Include a sale map that shows the location of each sale referenced by number, in relation to the location of the subject property or the project location. The map must have a north arrow and must identify the properties and their locations sufficiently that they can be found in the field.

4-4.03(i) Supporting Documentation and Exhibits

Attach any documentation or supporting data that may be pertinent to the Report, including:

1. Title reports;
2. Specialty reports;
3. Special instructions from MaineDOT;
4. Legal opinions or references;
5. Cost to cure estimates and calculations, including cost data relied on to establish the contributory value of improvements acquired (improvements must be valued as they contribute to the overall property value; depreciated replacement cost may be an accepted measure of value if it is demonstrated that the market responds in that manner; the standard of valuation is the fair market value of the entire property; totaling the separate money values of a property's parts is not acceptable);
6. Reproduction cost of new buildings and improvements;
7. Building inspection reports;

8. Rental and cost data survey;
9. Zoning ordinances and other land use regulations and maps;
10. Copies of zoning changes, applications, maps, meeting minutes and variances to demonstrate the reasonableness and probability of rezoning or variance, if zoning issues are expected to influence value;
11. Comprehensive planning documents and maps;
12. Subdivision covenants and restrictions;
13. Environmental or regulatory restrictions;
14. Leases;
15. Economic studies;
16. Environmental studies or analyses performed (discuss any hazardous materials on the project properties or adjacent properties, recent cleanup of the project or adjacent properties or major cleanup; include information on pending actions that may influence the environmental standing of subject parcels);
17. Current dated right of way plans;
18. Tax maps;
19. Flood maps;
20. Wetland maps;
21. Utilities maps;
22. Soils survey maps, soil descriptions and uses, particularly for agricultural use;
23. Design reports and project descriptions (design plans should be retimed until superseded or the project is closed out); and
24. Assessed values, real estate taxes, trends and equalization adjustment factors.

4-5 APPRAISAL REVIEW

4-5.01 General

The appraisal review function is an integral part of the valuation process. A determination of fair market value by the Appraiser serves as the basis of MaineDOT's offer of Just Compensation. Therefore, the appraisal(s) of a property must be reviewed and fair market value determination approved before the initiation of negotiations to acquire property.

Beyond the determination of fair market value, the Staff Review Appraiser manages the appraisal process and performs the primary quality assurance role. The Staff Review Appraiser represents the MaineDOT's needs and interests to the appraisal process and represents (and sometimes defends) legitimate appraisal practice to the MaineDOT. The Review Appraiser conveys and interprets appraisal policy, provides information to management on the status of appraisal assignments, evaluates appraisal assignment performance, secures appraisal corrections, and approves completion for payment of appraisals performed under contract.

The Review Appraiser must remain independent and not be influenced to approve a directed value determination or to accept appraisals that are inappropriate or flawed. The Review Appraiser should be flexible enough to help advance the programmatic goals of MaineDOT while not sacrificing appraisal integrity.

4-5.02 Review Appraiser Qualifications

The Review Appraiser performs an oversight as well as an operational role in the valuation process. The Review Appraiser will be fully qualified by training and experience to perform the same type and level of appraisals on which reviews are performed. Review Appraiser qualifications should be at or above peer level with the appraiser being reviewed. Qualifications are generally outlined in 4-1.05 (a). Additionally, the Review Appraiser must be thoroughly familiar with MaineDOT right of way policies as well as with Appraisal Standards, including the following:

1. Uniform Standard of Professional Appraisal Practice,
2. Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisition,
3. 23 **MRSA** 153 through 157,
4. 49 **CFR** 24.103,
5. MaineDOT *Right of Way Manual* and
6. Appraisal principles and practices as applied to the use of eminent domain.

The Review Appraiser is a staff employee of MaineDOT or a fee appraiser contracted by MaineDOT who has extensive experience in the appraisal of property for right of way and who has also performed varied assignments in other right of way functions such as acquisition and property management.

4-5.03 Appraisal Review Responsibilities**4-5.03(a) Scope of Responsibilities**

On appraisals or other valuation documents reviewed for each parcel, the Review Appraiser is responsible for the following actions and determinations:

1. Ensure that all appraisals submitted to MaineDOT contain the necessary documentation and are factually accurate.
2. Ensure that the Appraiser's value conclusion contains only value and damage elements that are compensable under eminent domain in Maine.
3. Maintain adequate records of the status of appraisals on a project basis.
4. Secure appraisal corrections or addendums from Appraisers to resolve omissions or errors noted in review.
5. Determine the fair market value of the part acquired and damages to the remainder.
6. Determine the salvage value for improvements or structures that are anticipated to be retained by the owner or sold for removal.
7. Determine the contributory value for any tenant-owned improvements.
8. Determine the cost to cure of minor elements of physical damage.
9. Review Specialty Appraisals as to the way in which the value of the specialty items contributes to the value of the whole property.
10. Prepare parcel related documents, including:
 - a. Form VL-15, Review Appraiser's Value Determination,
 - b. Form VL-16A, Statement of Determined Damages (1),
 - c. Form VL-16B, Statement of Determined Damages (2), and
 - d. Property Tax Pro-ration (Form VL-14).
11. Prepare project related documents:
 - a. Tabulation of Appraisals,
 - b. Cost Estimate,
 - c. Incidental, and
 - d. Review Appraiser's Summary Report

12. The Review Appraiser's Summary Report will document the findings and conclusions arrived at during the review and will identify each appraisal report as follows:
 - **Recommended:** The recommended appraisal will be the accepted appraisal that serves as the basis for approval and the establishment of the amount believed to be Just Compensation.
 - **Accepted:** An accepted appraisal meets all requirements of MaineDOT specifications but is not recommended to serve for approval as the basis for Just Compensation.
 - **Not Accepted:** The appraisal does not meet MaineDOT specifications or requirements.
13. Ensure appraisal quality.
14. All appraisals must be approved by a Staff Reviewing Appraiser prior to serving as the basis for MaineDOT's determination of Just Compensation.

The above responsibilities are carried out through the activities described in the following sections.

4-5.03(b) Desk Review for Documentation and Accuracy

The Review Appraiser, or other qualified person under supervision of the Review Appraiser, will make a documentation and accuracy check of the appraisal. This will be performed as soon as practical after receipt of the appraisal but before making a determination of value. The purpose of the desk review is to ensure that the appraisal contains all required elements under MaineDOT Specifications and that factual information and mathematical calculations are correct. The desk review will not evaluate matters of valuation judgment. The Reviewer will promptly inform the Appraiser of any errors or omissions revealed by the desk review.

4-5.03(c) Property Inspection

Typically, the Review Appraiser will make an on-site review of the project and property appraised. The inspection should be performed as recent as is feasible to the time the property is appraised. Earlier inspection, such as just prior to appraisal assignment, will suffice if there are no indications of significant physical change in the property or the market influences in the area of the project.

In some cases on non-complex projects in remote locations, Appraisal Reviews may be accomplished without a property inspection if the Review Appraiser is familiar with the area from previous projects. The Reviewer will rely on previous knowledge, the information contained in each appraisal, and other reliable sources. Any questions regarding omitting the onsite reviews should be addressed to the Chief Property Officer.

4-5.03(d) Appraisal Corrections, Modifications and Revisions

The Review Appraiser will notify the Appraiser in writing of any needed appraisal corrections, modifications or revisions and set a reasonable date for expected response.

Minor changes or clarifications that do not affect the value may be made in ink on the Appraisal Report and then initialed and dated by the Review Appraiser.

At or near the date of condemnation, the Review Appraiser will obtain a copy of the Notice of Layout and Taking from the condemnation unit and compile a list of unsettled parcels derived from the project negotiator's interim status report. If there are any unsettled parcels on the project, the Review Appraiser will transmit the list and a copy of the Notice of Layout and Taking to the project Appraiser and instruct the Appraiser to update those appraisals to the date of condemnation as required in Section 4-3.09 of this Manual.

The Review Appraiser will ensure that the appraisals on all unsettled parcels have been updated in a timely manner. The Original should be saved as Original. It is duplicated, named Updated and revisions made. Sixty days after condemnation, the review appraiser will transmit the updated duplicate appraisal and any available negotiator notes or status reports on all unsettled parcels to the Legal Services Office.

4-5.03(e) Avoiding Value Divergences

Before the valuation process begins and when using more than one Appraiser to value the same property(s), there are several preventative measures that can be taken in order to avoid or minimize divergences in value:

1. Develop a clear Scope of Work
2. Establish the appraisal problem before the selection of the Appraisers.
3. Assign the Review Appraiser who will review the appraisals before the selection of the Appraisers in order to participate in the determination of the appraisal problem and the selection of the Appraisers.
4. Provide each Appraiser with the same parcel information to ensure that it is consistent and accurate. Either provide a list of items considered personalty or realty, or work with assigned Appraisers to ensure a consistent list is developed.
5. Conduct a meeting between the Review Appraiser and each Appraiser to discuss the appraisal assignment without discussing values.

4-5.03(f) Resolving Value Divergences

The Review Appraiser will reconcile significantly divergent value conclusions among appraisals of the same property in the manner discussed below.

Widely divergent value conclusions usually arise from 1 or more of the following causes:

1. Difference in judgment among Appraisers such as to highest and best use of the property, damages or special benefits to the remainder, adjustments to comparable sales, personalty vs. realty, comparables used, selection of capitalization rate, depreciation amounts, etc.; and/or
2. Technical divergences relating to the size of property, age of the improvements, zoning, selling prices of comparables, inadequate data search, leases, non-compensable items, encumbrances, date of valuation, math errors, incorrect or omission of relevant data, etc.

The Review Appraiser is responsible to clearly identify the basis for the difference in appraisal values, and to explain, reconcile or resolve the differences in establishing fair market value. This may necessitate contacting one or all Appraisers to discuss critical elements. The Review Appraiser should not challenge the Appraiser's judgment. The objective is to explore and fully understand the Appraiser's reasoning, and/or to determine whether the Appraiser(s) have considered specific elements that the Review Appraiser considers relevant to value, and that would explain the difference in Appraisers' judgment. The Review Appraiser may ask the Appraiser(s) to submit supplemental information or analysis that will better explain the appraisal value conclusion.

If the value differential among appraisals is due to factual error, omissions of fact or analysis, or flawed reasoning the Review Appraiser will request the Appraiser to submit correction or reanalysis as appropriate. Flawed reasoning means defect in logic or failure to provide complete reasoning, not merely a difference in judgment between the Appraiser and Review Appraiser.

Differences in Appraiser judgment as to highest and best use may occur in locations that are undergoing transition in land use due to population growth or economic activity. The Review Appraiser is the final authority in determining highest and best use after fully understanding the basis for contrasting appraisal judgments. In making the decision the Review Appraiser should consider the current or currently zoned use as being the most likely highest and best use unless there is a specific compelling reason for a different use (e.g., the probability of rezoning the parcel).

After examining the appraisals and conferring with Appraisers as appropriate, the Review Appraiser may decide that differing value conclusions are not reconcilable and they reflect a reasonable range of expert judgment. It is the Review Appraiser's responsibility to determine which appraisal best represents the most reliable estimate of Just Compensation for MaineDOT's proposed acquisition. The Review Appraiser may determine fair market value within the range of the appraisals based on experience and explained judgment. More than one well-supported value conclusion could be the basis for an offer in excess of the approved appraisal when that appraisal is the lower opinion of value. The fair market value may reflect factors such as consistency with unit values established for other properties acquired, or knowledge of recent settlements that may

have established a pattern in unit value for the type of land acquired. The Review Appraiser will explain the basis for the fair market value conclusion by writing a memo to the project correspondence file and the Right of Way Support Manager stating the differences between the appraisals and why one was approved over the other(s).

The Review Appraiser may recommend that MaineDOT obtain an additional appraisal to resolve the divergence between two or more appraisals. This is done with the hope the new appraisal will support the opinion of value of one appraisal over the other(s). There is always the possibility that the new appraisal will differ significantly from the previous ones and result in another divergence. At this point the Review Appraiser will decide which appraisal best represents an estimate of Just Compensation or will form a Reviewer's independent determination of value.

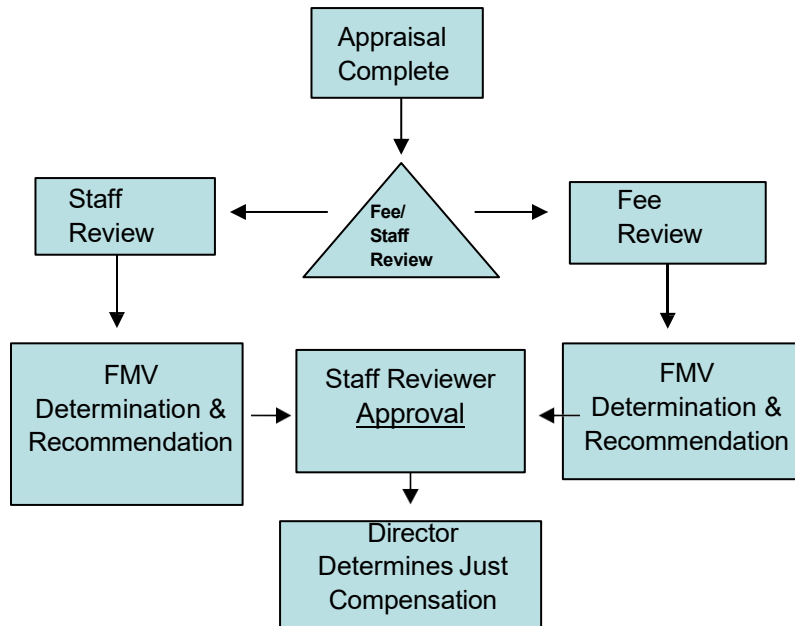
4-5.03(g) Determination of Fair Market Value

The determination of fair market value is the primary mission of the Review Appraiser. The fair market value is established only after completion of the preliminary steps above, and serves as the basis for the establishment of Just Compensation by the agency. The determination will be based on the total body of value information available to the Review Appraiser and not exclusively on the Appraisal Report. If the Review Appraiser is led to a value conclusion that significantly differs from the appraisal value, an independent determination will be performed as provided in Section 4-5.04.

4-5.03(h) Approval of the Appraisal

The appraisal review process examines analysis and presentation of data and value conclusions and assures all appraisal requirements are met. The Review Appraiser accepts the appraisal, uses it as a basis for setting fair market value and recommends approval. This review process may be accomplished by either Staff or Fee Review Appraisers. However, 49 CFR 24.104(a) requires the appraisal *approval* and the establishment of Just Compensation remain the function of an Agency official. At MaineDOT, appraisal approval is the function of a staff Review Appraiser and the Just Compensation determination will be made by the Director of the Property Office or their designee. Staff Review Appraisers conducting appraisal reviews will approve the recommended appraisal as an extension of the review process. Staff Review Appraisers overseeing fee reviews are required to assure the fee review is appropriately conducted and that the fee reviewer's recommendation is supportable. The level of oversight and process will depend on the complexity of the appraisal problem, availability of comparable data and skill and qualification of the fee reviewer.

Once the appraisal has been reviewed and approved, the Review Appraiser will recommend the determined fair market value on the Tabulation of Appraisals and the Appraisal Summary Memo and will calculate the tax pro-rata for parcels with fee acquisitions. The Review Appraiser will sign and date the determination of value under the parcel certification statements on Form VL-14, complete Forms VL-15 or VL-16, whichever is appropriate, and complete the Incidental Form and the Cost Estimate Sheet.



Review & Approval Process

4-5.03(i) Determination of Just Compensation

The Cost Estimate Sheet will be transmitted to the Property Office for approval by the Director of the Property Office, or designee, as the Agency's determination of Just Compensation. While the determination of Just Compensation will not be less than the approved appraisal it may exceed that amount if the Director determines that a greater amount reflects the value of the property. Place copies of all forms in the project correspondence file. The original VL-15, VL-16A or VL- 16B, and Incidental and Cost Estimate Forms are transmitted to the Condemnation Unit to be used as the basis for the generation of the offer letters and offer-assent forms.

4-5.03(j) Quality Assurance – Appraisal Review

The Review Appraiser's quality assurance role is served in the ongoing conduct of responsibilities. The Review Appraiser is the main contact with the Appraiser and is the available authority on Appraisal Standards as they apply to properties being appraised. The Review Appraiser has the following quality-related responsibilities in addition to determining the fair market value of property to be acquired for right of way:

1. Maintain a good professional relationship with Staff and Contract Appraisers.
2. Respond in a timely manner to questions raised by Appraisers about their assignments.
3. Maintain adequate records of appraisal assignments and due dates to identify potential delays sufficiently in advance to take corrective measures.

4. Review appraisals and related documents to establish fair market value.
5. Provide constructive and timely advice to Appraisers with the purpose of elevating the quality of submitted appraisals to meet MaineDOT standards.
6. Advise Appraisers and MaineDOT management on the application of appraisal methods and standards to unique or complex appraisal problems.
7. Provide information to MaineDOT management as requested on the status of appraisals on active projects.
8. Keep records of the status of appraisals returned for corrections or modifications, and follow up as necessary to secure revisions promptly.
9. Evaluate the performance of Appraisers under contract on completion of assignment.

4-5.04 Review Appraisers Independent Determination of Value

The Review Appraiser is authorized to form an independent determination of value that differs from the Appraiser's opinion of value. Before making an independent determination, the Review Appraiser will confer with the Appraiser in an effort to reconcile views. In doing this, the Review Appraiser will respect the Appraiser's professional responsibility to advance a value conclusion arrived at by a valid application of the appraisal process.

A Review Appraiser's determination of value will be based on an evaluation of value information by others and may be further supported by market information and analysis performed independently by the Review Appraiser.

The Review Appraiser will recommend the independent determination on a memo stating the basis and documentation for the determination. A copy of the memo will be placed in both the original and duplicate appraisal along with an accompanying note placed on the Estimate and Summary of Damages page that states: "*See Reviewer's Determination (Date), \$_____*". A copy of the memo will be placed in the project correspondence file and another copy will be sent to the Chief Property Officer.

4-6 SPECIAL VALUATION SERVICES

4-6.01 General

Valuation services in MaineDOT include a variety of tasks beyond establishing fair market value for property that is purchased for right of way. The Appraiser and Review Appraiser staff and contract personnel are called on to support certain activities in project development, property management and relocation. This Section discusses special valuation responsibilities and the coordination and communications necessary to perform these tasks effectively.

4-6.02 Project Cost Estimates

Cost estimates are secured for all phases of project development at various stages (e.g., Capital Work Plan, Initial Team Meeting, PDR, Final Estimate). The estimate for right of way may include the cost of titles, mapping, appraisals, right of way acquisition, relocation and demolition. Staff or Contract Appraisers and Review Appraisers are tasked to provide project estimates as required for project development.

4-6.03 Valuation Services in Support of Property Management

Valuation services are requested by the Property Manager through the R/W Supervisor and are provided to support property management activities as follows:

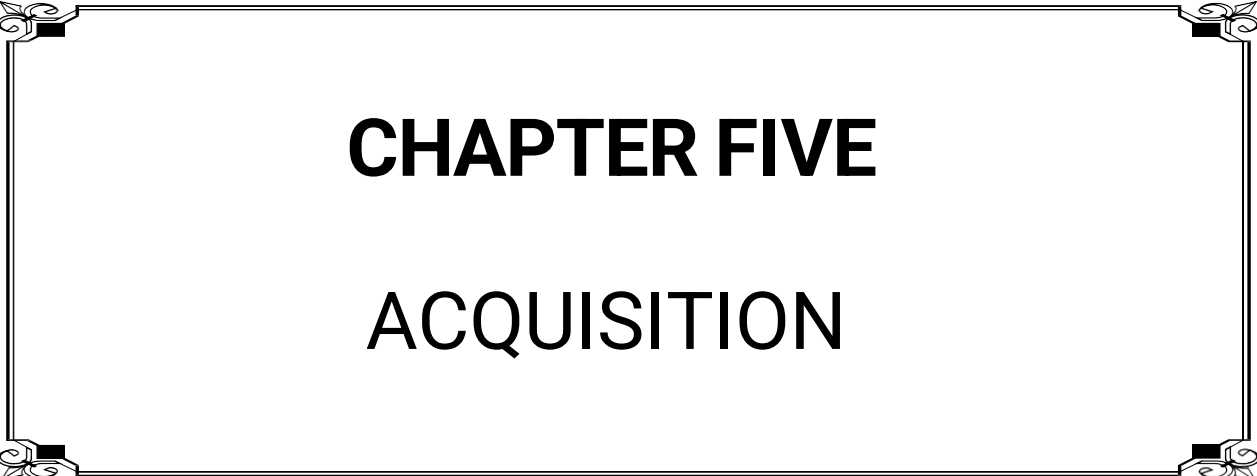
1. Prepare value estimates of surplus property that is offered for sale by MaineDOT.
2. Prepare value estimates of uneconomic remnants.
3. Determine fair market rent for temporary occupancy pending construction.
4. Determine fair market rent for long-term rental of surplus property or air rights.
5. Prepare value of access control modifications to support community development or private development.
6. Determine salvage value of acquired buildings and improvements.

4-6.04 Valuation Services in Support of Relocation

Valuation services are requested by the Relocation Specialist through the Chief Property Officer and are provided to support relocation program activities as follows:

1. Determine rent for continued occupancy of tenants and for owners of MaineDOT-acquired property, not to exceed short-term market rent.

2. Determine economic rent of owner-occupied dwellings purchased by MaineDOT for the determination of owner to tenant replacement housing benefits.
3. Estimate the cost of replacement housing alternatives for displaced persons requiring housing provided by MaineDOT under provisions of Last Resort Housing.



CHAPTER FIVE

ACQUISITION

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

CHAPTER FIVE

ACQUISITION

5-1 PROPERTY ACQUISITION — GENERAL

5-1.01 Purpose and Objectives of the Acquisition Function

The acquisition of property rights that are needed for right of way is an essential element in the highway project development process. It is therefore MaineDOT's first acquisition policy to be respectful of owners and sensitive to their concerns and rights under the U.S. and Maine Constitutions, as well as other applicable laws.

Whenever possible, MaineDOT's policy is to acquire the necessary property by direct negotiations with the perfection of title done by blanket project condemnation. This requires personal contact with owners, providing **full** information about the project and its effect on their property, as well as an offer of just compensation based on supported valuation. Chapter 5 defines the policies and practices that promote this goal while simultaneously promoting effective and timely delivery of right of way for project construction. It is also intended to **promote public confidence** in MaineDOT and **protect property owner rights** as required by Federal and State laws and regulations. It is intended to be a flexible document to serve as a reference and guide for Negotiators and other MaineDOT personnel.

The process of acquiring real property includes appraisal, appraisal review, waiver valuations, establishing estimates of just compensation, negotiations, relocation assistance, administrative and legal settlements, and court settlements and condemnations. The real property interests acquired for any project funded under title 23 must be adequate to fulfill the purpose of the project. Except in the case of an Early Acquisition Project, this means adequate for the construction, operation, and maintenance of the resulting facility, and for the protection of both the facility and the traveling public (23 CFR 710.305(b)). Grantees must ensure all acquisition and related relocation assistance activities are performed in accordance with 49 CFR part 24. If a grantee does not directly own the real property interests used for a title 23 project, the grantee must have an enforceable subgrant agreement or other agreement with the owner of the ROW that permits the grantee to enforce applicable Federal requirements affecting the real property interests, including real property management requirements.

5-1.02 Laws and Regulations

All citizens are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution's Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments that they will not be deprived of property without due process of law, nor will property be taken for public use without payment of just compensation. The **Maine Constitution in Article 1 Section 21** states that "**Private property shall not be taken for public uses without just compensation, nor unless the public exigencies require it.**" MaineDOT protects and implements these fundamental rights in performing property acquisition activities.

The United States and the State of Maine have extended Constitutional protections by enacting laws and regulations governing private property acquisition practices. The ***Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*** Titles I and III (***Uniform Act***)

is the controlling Federal Statute that is codified by ***Federal Regulations*** in 23 ***CFR*** 710 and 49 ***CFR*** 24. ***Maine Revised Statutes*** annotated (***MRSA***) Title 23 establishes the authority and direction under Maine law for implementing these policies. Title 23 ***MRSA*** Sections 154 through 155 specifically focus on the acquisition of property, related negotiations and compensation for the property. It is the Negotiator's responsibility to ensure that the provisions of these laws are fully and equitably applied to all property acquisitions and that all affected owners are treated fairly in the acquisition process.

5-1.03 Organization

Project Development Team members who are trained and qualified as right of way representatives are assigned as Negotiators to perform acquisition activities in their respective Teams. The assigned right of way personnel operate in a matrix environment under policy direction and overall supervision of the Chief Property Officer, but act as members of the self-directed Project Development Teams reporting to the R/W Supervisor in performing project-related responsibilities. This organizational structure places sufficient authority with the personnel who are responsible for project activities to ensure orderly and timely delivery of right of way needed for project construction, while fully protecting owner rights and providing the services that are required in laws and regulations.

5-1.04 Work Flow

Right of way functions (e.g., acquisition, valuation, relocation, property management) are structured around 3 specific program areas relating to the highway system categories. These program areas are Highway, Regional, Bridge, and Multi-Modal. A Team Negotiator is assigned to perform the negotiation tasks from initial offer through condemnation and post-condemnation activities. Team Negotiators maintain a close relationship with the R/W Supervisor to ensure that any issues relative to acceptable completion of the right of way function are within the parameters of Federal and State laws and regulations.

5-1.05 Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC)

QA/QC are the basic program activities that MaineDOT personnel at all levels use to ensure that the right of way acquisition process is effectively being accomplished within the established goals and objectives of MaineDOT. See Chapter 10.

Quality Assurance includes the policy guidance, program management tools and specific training necessary to ensure that responsible personnel are conducting right of way operations in an effective and efficient manner. The various activities used to test and evaluate program activities form the basic elements of the QA function.

Right of way personnel at all levels share a responsibility to strive to improve operational quality. This can be advanced by the following tasks:

1. Follow up phone calls with owners after acquisition process is complete,

2. Tracking and increasing rate of successful settlements,
3. Sharing personal best practices with other staff, and
4. Identifying personal training needs.

5-1.06 Conveyance Methods

5-1.06(a) Condemnation

The primary means of property conveyance by MaineDOT is the condemnation process. This exercise of the State's eminent domain authority extinguishes all claims on the property and provides the State with clear title to that property. Condemnation is initiated after presentation of an offer of just compensation to the property owner. Negotiations based on fair market value continue for a period of 60 days after the date of taking at which time all unsettled parcels are referred to the State Claims Commission, as required under 23 **MRSA** Section 155. Negotiations continue through the construction phase of the project until the parcels are settled or scheduled for hearing with the State Claims Commission.

Condemnation is accomplished by filing a Notice of Layout and Taking with the appropriate County Registry of Deeds. This method allows for one filing in the County records rather than a number of individual deeds. With all rights extinguished, the sole remaining issue is the amount of compensation. This is either resolved through amicable agreement with the property owner based on continuing negotiations, or by decision of the State Claims Commission. The State Claims Commission is an independent impartial board composed of knowledgeable persons that provide an informal forum for hearing compensation claims arising from eminent domain cases. See Section 5-5 for a description of the role and the process of the State Claims Commission.

5-1.06(b) Deed

On projects with only one or a limited number of acquisitions, title to the property to be acquired may be obtained by securing a deed. These are generally instances where sufficient interest can be secured without using eminent domain procedures. This includes acquisitions where the amount of compensation is not disputed and an agreement can be negotiated.

In acquisition by deed, the Negotiator will contact the owner, present all pertinent information, make the offer, and secure an offer-assent form, which is then submitted to the Title Office for preparation of closing documents. If the agreement is for a greater amount than the appraisal, full justification for the additional amount must be included in the accompanying cover memorandum.

Closings are similar to private transactions. When all deeds and documents (e.g., partial mortgage releases, tax lien releases) necessary for transfer of title to the State are in order and a check has been prepared for the parties in ownership, arrangements are then made for completion of the transaction.

Whether acquisition is by filing condemnation or by deed, the rights and interests of affected property owners are protected. The property acquired is valued, the amount of just compensation is determined and an offer in writing is made to the owner. Importantly, negotiation efforts to reach amicable settlement continue after acquisition by condemnation.

5-1.06(c) Federal Land Transfers

When it is determined that a project will necessitate acquisition of rights from property owned by the United States of America, the provisions listed in 23 CFR 710.601 should be followed. As explained in paragraph (c) of this CFR, MaineDOT can file an application with the Federal Highway Administration or it can make application directly to the land-owning agency if the agency has the authority to convey. If application is made to FHWA and they concur in the need for the transfer and the project is federally funded, the land-owning agency will be notified by FHWA and a right of entry requested. The land-owning agency will then have a four-month period in which to respond. After proper consents have been obtained, a deed is signed and recorded. Early coordination with FHWA is recommended.

Procedures are as follows:

The MaineDOT, through the Title Office, may file an application with FHWA.

Applications shall include the following information:

- (1) The purpose for which the lands are to be used;
- (2) The estate or interest in the land required for the project;
- (3) The Federal-aid project number or other appropriate references;
- (4) The name of the Federal agency exercising jurisdiction over the land and identity of the installation or activity in possession of the land;
- (5) A map showing the survey of the lands to be acquired;
- (6) A legal description of the lands desired; and
- (7) A statement of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S.C. 4332, *et seq.*) and any other applicable Federal environmental laws, including the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470(f)), and 23 U.S.C. 138.

If FHWA concurs in the need for the transfer, the Federal land management agency will be notified and a right-of-entry requested. For projects not on the Interstate System, the Federal land management agency shall have a period of 4 months in which to designate conditions necessary for the adequate protection and utilization of the reserve or to certify that the proposed appropriation is contrary to the public interest or inconsistent with the purposes for which such land or materials have been reserved. The FHWA may extend the reply period at the timely request of the Federal land management agency for good cause.

FHWA may participate in the payment of fair market value or the functional replacement of impacted facilities under 23 CFR 710.509 and the reimbursement of the ordinary and reasonable direct costs of the Federal land management agency for the transfer when reimbursement is required by the Federal land management agency's governing laws as a condition of the transfer.

Deeds for conveyance of real property interests owned by the United States shall be prepared by the eligible party and must be certified as being legally sufficient by an attorney licensed within the State where the real property is located. Such deeds shall contain the clauses required by FHWA and 49 CFR 21.7(a)(2). After the eligible party prepares the deed, it will submit the proposed deed with the certification to FHWA for review and execution.

Following execution by FHWA, the eligible party shall record the deed in the appropriate land record office and so advise FHWA and the affected Federal land management agency.

When the need for the interest acquired under this subpart no longer exists, the party that received the real property must restore the land to the condition which existed prior to the transfer, or to a condition that is acceptable to the Federal land management agency to which such property would revert, and must give notice to FHWA and to the affected Federal land management agency that such interest will immediately revert to the control of the Federal land management agency from which it was appropriated or to its assigns. Where authorized by Federal law, the Federal land management agency and such party may enter into a separate agreement to release the reversion clause and make alternative arrangements for the sale, restoration, or other disposition of the lands no longer needed.

Federal Land transfers are usually handled by the Title Office with information gathered from other units within MaineDOT. It should be noted as stated above that obtaining approvals from the federal level can take 4-6 months to accomplish. This should be factored into the right of way project schedule when this type of situation occurs.

5-1.07 Estates Acquired

Typically, MaineDOT purchases full fee title (the full bundle of rights) to property that is needed for the traveled way and other permanent highway features. However, in many instances, an easement conferring specific and limited control over the property is sufficient for the construction and maintenance of the highway project. MaineDOT may use any of its standard forms of easements to purchase only the rights needed for the highway facility. Following are the most frequent types of property interests that are used by MaineDOT:

1. Fee Simple Absolute, or Fee. This estate represents the acquisition of all right title and interest in a property.
2. Easement for Highway Purposes. This estate represents acquisition of nearly the same rights as fee simple absolute, except that the abutting owner retains the underlying fee interest, or a right of reversion if the easement is extinguished.
3. Slope Easement. This easement is used to ensure and maintain the integrity of embankments that are adjacent to the highway project site.
4. Drainage Easement. This easement protects and maintains drainage facilities that were constructed to serve the site's drainage requirements.
5. Inlet and Outlet Ditch Easement. This easement is used to accommodate water flowages into and out of drainage areas.

6. Temporary Construction Right. This interest provides for the temporary use of property that is needed during the construction period (e.g., work areas, equipment maneuvering). The rights obtained expire on the Projex X49 “Construction Complete” milestone date.
7. Grading Rights. Rights that provide for matching the topography of abutting properties in with the new construction and are usually for the benefit of the parcel. These rights are not necessary for the completion of the project.
8. Wrought Portion or Prescriptive Easement. This interest is claimed after open and notorious use for over 20 years where no record of any ownership rights can be found. Wrought portion is typically claimed for traveled ways, shoulders, drainage side and back slopes and other supporting structures.

The purpose of maintaining a diverse range of easements is to custom match the property rights acquired to the specific needs of the project. MaineDOT is authorized to acquire only land and rights in land that are needed for the highway facility, allowing the least intrusion on continued private use and ownership.

5-2 ACQUISITION FORMS AND REPORTS

5-2.01 Building the Acquisition File

The Acquisition File serves as a permanent record of all contacts with property owners. It includes, but is not limited to:

1. Completed parcel related forms,
2. Parcel related correspondence,
3. Summaries of discussions with the owner,
4. Pertinent information about the project or schedule,
5. Counteroffers,
6. Proposals for the retention of items,
7. Real/personal property determinations, and
8. Any other useful data obtained from the owner.

The file content is an informational data source to the negotiating agent and any person who is subsequently assigned to work on the matter. It is also necessary to present a full record of the matter to document claims, for audit purposes, and to support State Claims Commission proceedings.

Forms used as part of the record may be augmented, as necessary with approval of the Chief Property Officer, to meet specific circumstances or needs that may be unique to the particular property acquisition at hand.

Arrange the file in **chronological order** with the initial actions, applicable data, owner contacts, etc. and place them in the file in the sequence in which they occurred. Good file maintenance practices should be applied. Distinguish the original documents from duplicates. Also, cull unnecessary papers from the file before it is closed and placed in permanent storage.

5-2.02 Scanning Documents into MaineDOT's Electronic Record Management System

It is important to note the right of way records relating to right of way appraisal and negotiations are confidential under Maine Law. Further, relocation assistance requirements mandate that some displaced persons provide copies of sensitive personal financial documents in order to qualify for relocation benefits. The confidentiality of these documents needs to be carefully considered and protected prior to scanning them into MaineDOT's Electronic Record Management System.

5-2.03 Description and Special Instruction on Important Acquisition Forms and Reports

An important purpose of the acquisition forms that are included in the parcel file is to ensure that all information that MaineDOT is legally required to provide to property owners is properly presented. In addition to the forms, it is important to provide a checklist of items that should be

discussed personally with the property owner. Certain forms are for internal administrative and reporting purposes. The right of way agent should realize that information on pre-designed forms cannot anticipate the wide variety of acquisition situations that will be encountered. If certain important information is not addressed in the forms, or if information items called for in the forms does not seem relevant, consult with the Chief Property Officer.

On all forms, mark the lines that are not applicable to the parcel or situation “N/A.”

The following discusses the forms (or processes) that are most frequently used in the acquisition process:

1. Offer Letter (Forms AQ-1 and AQ-2). The Offer Letter includes information describing the taking and the property rights to be acquired. It also includes entries for a breakdown of the total value to the elements necessary for the owner to make an informed decision. A total taking of land requires only that the highest and best use and fair market value be stated. A partial taking, however, requires additional information to be provided, including highest and best use after the taking, fair market value of the part taken, severance damage to the remainder (if any), special benefits when applicable, and a statement of net damage allocating values to each of those items. These forms are consistent with the requirements of **23 MRSA 154**.
2. Owner’s Offer – Assent (Form AQ-15). In completing and signing this form, the owner agrees that the State acquires the land, including buildings as identified in the right of way map, through eminent domain. It also states the amount of compensation and the projected date of the vacation and removal of the buildings or other improvements, where applicable. This form does not transfer ownership of any land or rights in land to MaineDOT. Its intent is to release the property owner’s right to appeal the damage award.
3. Initiation of Negotiations Statement (Form AQ-20). Federal Regulations require owners be given a reasonable time to consider the offer and respond with any information they may have prior to the filing of the condemnation notice. Reasonable time has been determined to be a **minimum** of 28 days. The Negotiator will complete an Initiation of Negotiations Statement specifying the date of completion of initiation of negotiations with all owners on a project. The completion date on the statement is the beginning date of the owner’s opportunity to consider the offer and respond. In cases where whole parcels are acquired, the appraisal problem is complex or the acquisition is contentious, additional time should be allowed for the owner to respond. See Section 5-3.02(f) and 49 CFR 24.102(f) Basic Negotiation (Appendix)
4. Negotiator’s Contact Information. This is the complete and cumulative record of negotiations contacts with the owner or a representative. Each time there is a contact with the property owner, the Negotiator should make an entry in RMS specifying what was discussed, any forms or other information presented to the owner, and conclusions reached during the contact. It is important to document the record to ensure that future contacts address any outstanding issues or questions in an effort to reach an amicable settlement for the acquired property. Negotiator should also document internal MaineDOT discussions in the contact forms. Complete narrative

reports of each contact are necessary to adequately document the parcel file for future reference.

5. Waiver Offer Settlement Agreement (Form AQ-8). This Agreement Form accompanies MaineDOT's Waiver Valuation Procedure for non-complex acquisitions less than \$15,000. It is important that the owner understand the process and, in particular, that the valuation does not arise from an appraisal of the property. The Negotiator should carefully explain the estimate of just compensation to the owner. For parcel offers greater than \$10,000 the negotiator must be a separate person from who did the valuation. See Chapter 3 for policy on the Waiver Valuation Procedure.
6. Administrative Settlement Agreement (Form AQ-7). The Settlement Agreement, to be signed by the owner, releases MaineDOT from all claims, demands or causes of action as a result of the project construction. It includes the amount paid at condemnation and any additional amounts included as part of the settlement. The Negotiator should document in the file all actions and conclusions reached in discussions with the owner to support the Agreement.
7. After Condemnation Settlement Agreement (Form AQ-9). After date of condemnation and receipt of the compensation check, the owner will be asked to sign the version of the form indicating that either (1) the amount of the check received in payment for rights taken by condemnation is acceptable or (2) the amount is not acceptable and MaineDOT is requested to refer the matter to the State Claims Commission.
8. Negotiator's Statement (Form AQ-6). This statement is completed and signed by the Negotiator after execution of a Settlement Agreement. The Negotiator certifies that he or she has no direct or indirect interest in the property, the agreement was obtained without coercion or threat, the agreement is inclusive of all considerations agreed to by the owner, and it is understood that the rights were secured in connection with a Federal-aid highway project, if applicable.
9. Right of Way Certificate (Form AD-3). The certification is assurance that all requirements of law regarding the purchase of right of way and relocation that are prerequisite to construction have been completed. Detailed information is provided including the number of owners, parcels, replacement housing payments to owners and tenants, and moving costs for all residential, farm or business properties. This form is necessary for the project construction authorization. This form is an essential part of the Project Record. See Chapter One, Section 2.02(b) for a complete discussion of the Right of Way Certificate.
10. Negotiator's Certificate (Form AQ-5). After receiving the project assignment the Negotiator will sign and date a certification stating that the Negotiator has no present or future financial interest in any of the properties assigned for negotiation on the project nor are any of the property owners related in any way.
11. Status Report. Thirty days after condemnation the assigned agent will prepare a status report outlining the settlement status of each parcel to include any special

- agreements or other requests that have been made by the owner to MaineDOT. Copies of this report will be sent to the project file, Negotiator file, the R/W Supervisor and the Project Resident.
12. Status Report to Legal. Sixty days after condemnation the Negotiator will complete a status report for transmittal to the MaineDOT Legal Division outlining the status of all unsettled parcels on the project. Included in the report should be any special agreements or requests proposed by MaineDOT.
 13. Work Permit or Rights of Entry (Form AQ-4). Temporary rights are sometimes needed to ensure proper grading between the construction project and adjacent properties. These rights could include rights for excavating, placement of fill, loaming, seeding and other incidental work. The usual method for obtaining the necessary rights is by agreement with the owner through a work permit. The owner's signature on the work permit transfers the temporary right for these purposes to the MaineDOT. The use of work permits on Emergency Relief (ER) projects are approved in advance by the Property Office Director and coordinated with FHWA.
 14. Administrative Settlement Justification (Form AQ-3). When an administrative settlement is reached, the Negotiator will complete the justification explaining the reasons for settlement and certifying that it is in the public interest.

5-3 DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS

5-3.01 Preparation for Negotiations

5-3.01(a) Assignment

Based on staff availability, type of project and complexity of acquisitions, the R/W Supervisor assigns Right of Way Negotiators to the Project Teams to ensure the timely delivery of right of way for project construction. Each agent or Negotiator is responsible for performing the acquisition elements of the individual parcels assigned in conformity to the procedures set forth in this *Manual*.

Prior to starting negotiation activities, the R/W Supervisor will confirm “NEPA Complete” and that authorization for negotiation and acquisition has been obtained. In the Projex database, authorization for negotiation will be represented by a date in the Right of Way Negotiation/Acquisition field, found in the Status/Authorization section under the Description heading. If date information is missing, then the R/W Supervisor should notify both the Project Manager and the Property Office to resolve the authorization issues prior to initiating negotiations.

Upon assignment, the Negotiator should initially make a thorough review of the parcels to be acquired, noting the complexity and special circumstances that are involved. The Negotiator should estimate the lead-time necessary to complete the acquisition process for each of the parcels. At this time, the sequencing and priority of parcel acquisition should be decided to ensure that early action is taken for those acquisitions that may require an extended negotiation process or where there are relocations involved. A sequential order can then be established for the initial contact with each of the property owners, allowing as much time as practical to finalize the acquisition and secure the necessary rights by the scheduled project construction date.

5-3.01(b) Acquisition File Documents

Many of the acquisition file documents are included in the MaineDOT Realty Management System Database (RMS). These documents are designed to self-populate based on data that was previously entered into the system. It is important that the Negotiator use these documents and keep subsequent files, contact summaries, etc. in RMS up to date. It is the responsibility of the R/W Supervisor to ensure work completed by a consultant negotiator is properly entered in the system.

The **Negotiator will reconfirm** that the **second phase right of way authorizations** are approved and then assemble and ensure that the following documents are present in the Acquisition file:

1. Parcel plan showing the acquisition as it relates to the whole property;
2. Project right of way plan and profile sheets;
3. Aerial Photography, if available;
4. Appraisal Report or Waiver Valuation Worksheet;

5. Review Appraiser's determination of value, if appropriate;
6. Statement of just compensation;
7. Agreement forms;
8. Waiver Valuation Offer Settlement Agreement, if applicable;
9. Owner Contact Report Forms;
10. The Negotiator's Certificate; and
11. Memorandums relating to the individual parcel and copies of previous correspondence that was sent to or received from the owner.

The Negotiator is responsible for ensuring that the parcel file is complete and that all of the previously noted correspondence, agreements and other documents are present. In addition, the Negotiator will review the content of all documents to ensure that there are no errors, omissions or contradictory statements. This review is a basic Q&A action that is an essential step in the process.

5-3.01(c) Preparation for Initial Owner Meeting

The greatest influence on whether a successful settlement is reached is the extent and quality of the Negotiator's preparation. A prepared, knowledgeable Negotiator projects a sense of confidence, encourages the trust of the owner, and reflects that MaineDOT has thoroughly and fairly considered all the effects of the project on the property.

Initially, the Negotiator should become completely familiar with the project and determine why the project is needed, what the anticipated benefits to the community will be and, most importantly, a thorough understanding of the impact on each of the affected property owners. The Negotiator will learn from experience that certain questions can be anticipated and should be addressed before contact with the owner. The Negotiator should consult with other members of the Project Team to clarify elements as they affect specific properties (e.g., slopes, driveways, drainage, tree removals or replacements, project landscaping).

The Negotiator should be able to explain the valuation process, and in particular, the appraisal process, if it is the basis for the value determination. The owner should be convinced by the Negotiator's presentation that the value of the property rights acquired are fairly determined and are based on properly analyzed market information. If there are damages to the remainder in the after condition, they should be known by the Negotiator. If a partial acquisition is not assigned damages to the remainder, the Negotiator should be able to explain why the property does not suffer economically in the after condition. If necessary, the Negotiator should consult with the Review Appraiser or the Appraiser to explain aspects of the value that the owner may be expected to ask about. The Negotiator should be able to explain the value to the owner, as well as the process by which it was established.

The Negotiator should view the property to be acquired before meeting with the owner. Selectively, and depending on circumstance, the primary comparable sales relied on by the Appraiser in determining the property value should be viewed. This will further support the

Negotiator's knowledge and confidence in the fairness of value and provide a basis for an informed discussion with the owner.

Finally, prior to scheduling the initial contact with the owner, the Negotiator should become familiar with the facts of the present ownership (e.g., who are the fee owners, what are the ownership interests, what are the names of all parties of interest and the proper pronunciation of those names).

5-3.02 Initial Negotiations

5-3.02(a) The Negotiations Environment

The initial offer meeting is the most important contact the Negotiator will have with the owner. It is essential, therefore, that the tone of the first meeting be one that conveys a thoroughly professional demeanor, with the Negotiator displaying an understanding of the project, the property to be acquired, the effect of that acquisition on any remaining property, and the valuation process.

The Negotiator should focus on establishing a positive business relationship with the owner (or representative of the owner). The meeting should be arranged at a time and place that are convenient to the owner and supportive of serious business interchange. The Negotiator should not hesitate to suggest that distractions be minimized (e.g., suggesting that the sound on a television be muted).

A property owner who is older, or who has a disability, should be accommodated in any way that is reasonable. For example, an older owner may welcome a suggestion that a relative or trusted friend be present at the initial offer meeting. However, the Negotiator should avoid meeting the owner with a group of people who do not have any interest in the property.

If an owner exclusively speaks a language other than English, and the Negotiator cannot communicate in that language, arrange for interpretation services.

The order and pace of the first meeting are entirely within the professional judgment of the Negotiator. There can be a plan developed for the meeting, but the Negotiator should remain flexible and respond to the needs or concerns of the owner. During early discussion, there may be a sense that the Negotiator's planned order of discussion is causing some tension or discomfort to the property owner. For example, an owner may be so anxious to know the dollar amount of the offer that he or she finds it difficult to concentrate on the preliminary information about the project and its effect on the property. At that point, it may be wise to make the offer, allow time for the owner to contemplate the amount, and then proceed in presenting the information that is important to the owner's understanding of the acquisition and the offered amount.

5-3.02(b) Coercive Actions Prohibited

The Negotiator will not take any coercive actions to compel a property owner to agree to the offer for property to be acquired. This includes deferring timing of negotiations or condemnation or

advancing condemnation. The Negotiator will not provoke or sustain heated arguments, or attempt to intimidate an owner. An example of intimidation would be to state “All your neighbors have settled, why are you being unreasonable?” If the level of tension at a meeting rises to the point that further discussion would not be effective, the Negotiator should end the meeting as gracefully as possible, while attempting to preserve the opportunity to resume discussion at another time.

5-3.02(c) Discussion of Project, Acquisition and Process

The Negotiator should use the meeting plan that was previously developed, but allow enough flexibility to react to any questions or concerns of the owner as the meeting proceeds. The nature and scope of the project should be explained using terms that are easily understandable to the typical layperson. The use of project and parcel plans along with other visual aids can enhance the owner’s understanding of the project. The Negotiator may refer to a nearby location that has a condition similar to how the subject property will appear after the project. This might be a similar driveway treatment or degree of slope in the front yard.

The owner’s familiarity with the project may be limited or quite extensive, depending on the extent of early involvement during the environmental or public hearing process. In either case, a review of the nature and scope of the project, including the benefits to the community and impacts on the remaining property as a result of the acquisition, may be beneficial at this time. On the other hand, these basic elements may be read as simplistic and time-wasting “window dressing” to an owner. The Negotiator must read the reactions and temperament of the owner and adjust accordingly.

If the Negotiator at any time during a meeting encounters an excessively hostile atmosphere or feels menaced or threatened, immediately terminate the negotiations. The Negotiator’s personal judgment will be the guide to determining whether a meeting should be ended. The events should be immediately reported to the R/W Supervisor, who will determine what further action will be taken.

An explanation of the project activities, such as the time that MaineDOT will require possession and information on the construction schedule including anticipated completion date, can help alleviate pre-existing concerns.

The Negotiator should explain that MaineDOT generally acquires the property through the exercise of eminent domain, which provides the State with clear title to the property. This does not restrict the owner’s right to contest the dollar amount of Just Compensation. The process for resolving a compensation issue should be explained. The Negotiator should describe the role of the State Claims Commission as a fair, impartial and informal means for owner views on compensation to be heard.

5-3.02(d) Project Presentation Outline

The Negotiator should also explain construction details and their effect on the owner’s property. The presentation should provide a full parcel specific explanation of the acquisition, to include:

- Project Purpose and Need.
 - Project termini
 - Typical section
 - Schedule
 - Public process
- Specific Property Impacts
 - Typical Section in front of property
 - Horizontal and Vertical centerline changes
 - Super elevations
 - Takes
 - Fee Simple, including a definition of the term,
 - Easements, including a definition of the terms,
 - Rights, including a definition of the term.
 - Drainage
 - Personal Property including a definition of the term
 - Site improvements within the Taking, trees, shrubs, pavement, lawn etc.
 - Drive grades before and after

The transfer of property rights by deed should be discussed to the extent it is applicable to the acquisition situation.

The owner should be further advised of the protections provided by Federal and State law and regulations, including that payment of the determined compensation will be made to the owner before MaineDOT requires possession, and the right to challenge compensation before the State Claims Commission and to the State Courts. If the acquisition causes displacement from a home or business location, there are benefits, rights and protections that apply. See Chapter 6 for relocation requirements.

5-3.02(e) Notification of Potential Buyers

The Negotiator will advise the owner of responsibility under **23 MRSA 153-B4**. This provides that if an owner decides to sell the property after the owner is notified that MaineDOT intends to purchase or acquire the property by eminent domain, the owner must inform the potential buyer of MaineDOT's intent.

5-3.02(f) Presentation of Offer

Presentation of the offer, in writing, represents the **Initiation of Negotiations**. Initiation of Negotiations is a regulatory phrase and represents an important milestone in the acquisition process. This milestone serves as the beginning of the minimum 28 day offer consideration period and also serves as the date certain displaced persons become eligible for relocation benefits. Care should be taken on every parcel and item to document the date, time and place that the written offer was delivered and to whom it was delivered.

Item that should be discussed during the presentation of the offer are as follows:

- Offer and basis for offer

- Amount and general description of the valuation process
 - Proposed Condemnation Date
 - Payees included on the check, (Note that only the owner is included on checks \$1000.00 or less). Any encumbrances (for example, mortgages) may be included on larger payments).
 - Owners may cash check without violating their rights to negotiate or appeal
 - Relocation Benefits (If Applicable).
- Recourse
 - Negotiate
 - State Claims Commission
 - Superior Court
- Follow-up
 - Agent/Negotiator address. Phone and e-mail addresses
 - Commitment to follow up. It is the Negotiator's responsibility to follow up on mail negotiations and negotiate in good faith, not the owner's responsibility to follow up. Request for phone number or e-mail if one is not available.

After the project is described, the effects on property are addressed, and other relevant information is provided to the owner, the Negotiator should present the amount of the compensation offer. The written Offer Letter (Form AQ-1 or AQ-2) provides a description of the acquisition and a breakdown of value that separately states the value of the whole, each part acquired and damages to the remainder. There may be more than one type of property right being acquired from the property such as a fee simple acquisition along with certain easements. The basis of the values should be explained to the owner. A property owner may possess more than one larger parcel on a project. The owner should be presented a separate offer letter for each larger parcel acquisition. The Negotiator should inform the owner that the check may include as payees any individual or entity who has a recorded interest in the property (i.e. mortgage, tax lien). Additionally, the owner should understand that they can cash the check without indicating acceptance or affecting their rights of appeal.

Owner reactions to the offer will vary widely. Some may express a willingness to settle for the offered amount without hesitation. Others may object to the acquisition and the offer and possibly not state a reason for their dissatisfaction. A negative reaction would not necessarily be an unalterable one. The owner may need time to consider the offer, or may wish to consult with family or advisors privately. It is important for the Negotiator to keep the lines of communication open and actively listen to the owner and not presume to know their concerns or what questions they may have. Some questions that are presented may not be immediately answerable, and it is proper to defer an answer until the question can be thoroughly researched.

5-3.02(g) Reasonable Time to Consider Offer

Federal regulations (49 CFR Part 24.102 (f)) require that the owner shall be given a reasonable opportunity to consider the offer and present materials which the owner believes are relevant to that value of the property, and to suggest modifications to the purchase price. Any objections from the owner shall be seriously and carefully received, documented and considered. The owner may present information pertaining to value or ownership that was not previously known which might affect the appraised value. If the appraisal omitted certain features (e.g., special landscaping, outbuildings) or if the remainder will suffer an element of damage that is not reported in the appraisal, MaineDOT will appropriately revise the offer amount. To ensure that the owner

is provided **reasonable time to respond**, MaineDOT will not file a condemnation until **at least** 28 days have elapsed from the date the owner receives the State's written offer. It should be noted that cases will exist where 28 days **does not represent an adequate time frame**. In these cases, additional time should be allotted in the project schedule to ensure owners have adequate time to respond. The Negotiator is expected to make every effort to follow-up with unsettled owners prior to the condemnation to ensure the owner has every opportunity to consider and respond to the offer of just compensation. In cases where negotiations are initiated by mail, the owner will be given a **minimum** of 28 days from the receipt date evidenced by the postal return receipt "green card" or other postal tracking systems.

5-3.02(h) Objections and Counteroffers

The owner may express objections during the course of discussion of the acquisition and the offer of just compensation. The owner may view the whole situation as a complete disturbance of an otherwise orderly and settled life. These feelings should be acknowledged in a non-defensive manner without rebuttal. Further discussion may reduce tension, or may heighten it. The Negotiator must decide whether it is productive to continue the meeting. If not, the Negotiator should close the meeting while attempting to preserve a businesslike relationship that may be resumed more productively in future contacts.

The owner may present a counteroffer to MaineDOT's offer of just compensation. Once a counteroffer is made, the Negotiator should ask the owner to explain the basis for the counteroffer and proceed to explore the owner's reasoning for the increased amount. The Negotiator should use their best judgment in approving or disapproving counteroffers within the range of their authority. This information should be noted and reported to the R/W Supervisor with a recommendation. The counteroffer may be based on relevant value factors that were not previously considered, in which case a revision in the just compensation offer will be made. Also, if an administrative settlement is warranted, these factors may contribute to the support of a settlement.

5-3.02(i) Owner Requests and Proposals

The owner may present additional proposals for consideration by MaineDOT. For example, requests for changes in construction or design features that could be made to moderate the impacts of the project on the property. Other minor elements may include requests to harvest existing crops, the retention of shrubbery and household appliances not considered personal property. Additional costs incurred by MaineDOT in construction concessions to the owner can be used as incentives for reaching settlements. Transmit these requests to the R/W Supervisor and/or Project Manager for consideration.

5-3.02(j) Initiation of Negotiations Statement.

When the Negotiator has contacted all impacted owners on a project and all offers have been presented, the Negotiator will complete an Initiation of Negotiations Statement (Form AQ-20), certifying that all offers have been received.

5-3.03 Follow-up Contacts**5-3.03(a) Scheduling**

After the initial contact with each owner on the project, the Negotiator will assess the status of unsettled parcels to determine the extent of follow-up action considered necessary. Circumstances of each case will guide the Negotiator in making decisions on the number of contacts both prior to and after the date of actual condemnation.

At least 3 weeks prior to condemnation, the Negotiator will ensure that RMS has been updated pertaining to settlement status of each parcel and any special agreements or requests that have been proposed to MaineDOT. This information will be made available to the review appraiser, the Project Resident and the R/W Supervisor. This information will serve as a guide for the Negotiator to follow up with the Project Resident after the project construction has begun to discuss specific items relating to abutting property owners' special settlement specifications or other appropriate items that may have been agreed to. This information is also relied upon as a flag to update the appraisals on all unsettled parcels.

A standard number of contacts are not specified, and the scheduling of follow-up discussions will be based on the professional judgment of the Negotiator. At least one follow-up contact should be made with each unsettled owner prior to condemnation. The primary objective is to reach an amicable settlement with the owner and discussions should continue to work toward that objective.

Schedule subsequent contacts with unsettled parcel owners to the extent that it will be productive in reaching a settlement. Opportune times for contact include, but are not limited to, the time between initial contact and the date of condemnation, termination of the 60-day referral period, completion of project construction and just prior to scheduling for State Claims Commission hearing.

Sixty days after condemnation, the Negotiator will write a status report to the MaineDOT Legal Division concerning the status of all unsettled parcels on the project and any special agreements or requests that have been proposed to MaineDOT.

5-3.03(b) State's Offer Accepted

If MaineDOT's offer is accepted, the owner will be requested to execute the appropriate settlement agreement. This affirms acceptance of a proposed settlement amount and releases the State of Maine from any further claim or causes of action arising from the acquisition of real property. The Negotiator will advise the owner of the date of possession by MaineDOT, which will be in compliance with notices required according to the status of the occupancy and whether there will be displacement from a home or business.

5-3.03(c) Terminating Negotiations

A reasonable and sufficient number of meetings or phone contacts should be made as determined by the Negotiator. At some point, it may become apparent that there are irresolvable differences that prevent an amicable settlement of compensation. This decision should be made early in the negotiation process based on clear statement by the owner that no further contact or discussion is desired. Other circumstances that call for immediate termination of further contact include:

1. The Negotiator being menaced,
2. The owner being represented by legal counsel and negotiations being transferred to Legal Division,
3. The owner becoming incapacitated, and
4. The owner's whereabouts are unknown.

Referral to the State Claims Commission is appropriate at this time; however, negotiations may be resumed at the owner's initiative.

5-4 NEGOTIATIONS BY MAIL

5-4.01 Circumstances for Use

It is MaineDOT's policy to make personal contact with property owners to deliver the acquisition offer whenever practical. However, circumstances may prevent personal contact or may cause unreasonable delay in delivering the offer. Following are conditions in which an offer may be delivered by mail:

1. The owner resides out of State.
2. The owner refuses personal contact.
3. The whereabouts of the owner cannot be determined.
4. The owner is represented by an attorney who requests offer delivery by mail.
5. Following up on initial offers where appropriate.

If the owner is a minor, is incarcerated, or has been adjudicated not competent, the file should be referred to the Legal Division for an appointment of a guardian ad litem to protect the owner's interests and rights. All further correspondence will be with the guardian.

Other situations may also warrant delivery of the offer by mail as decided by the Property Office Director or the R/W Supervisor.

5-4.02 Procedure

The acquisition documents are sent with an explanatory cover letter to the owner's address by certified mail with return receipt requested. The contact packets should include, at a minimum, a section of the right of way plan relating the project to the property, a plan or sketch of the property, the Offer Letter (Form AQ-1 or AQ-2), Offer Assent Forms (Form AQ-15), a stamped return envelope, and the MaineDOT right of way brochure "A Land Owner's Guide to the Property Acquisition Process." The cover letter should provide a full parcel specific explanation of the acquisition, to include:

- Project Purpose and Need.
 - Project termini
 - Typical section
 - Schedule
 - Public process
- Specific Property Impacts
 - Typical Section in front of property
 - Horizontal and Vertical centerline changes
 - Super elevations
 - Takes
 - Fee
 - Easements
 - Rights
 - Personal property (if any)
 - Site improvements within the Taking, trees, shrubs, pavement, lawn etc.

- Drive grades before and after
- Offer and basis for offer
 - Amount and general description of the process
 - Proposed Condemnation Date
 - Payees on check
 - Cash check without voiding rights to negotiate or appeal
- Recourse
 - Negotiate
 - State Claims Commission
 - Superior Court
- Follow-up
 - Agent/Negotiator address. Phone and e-mail addresses
 - Promise to follow up. It is the Negotiator's responsibility to follow up on mail negotiations and negotiate in good faith, not the owner's responsibility to follow up. Request for phone number, seasonal address or e-mail.

If the owner's address is not known, or if the initial mailing is returned undelivered, the Negotiator will consult with the R/W Supervisor to determine the correct constructive delivery of the offer.

The negotiation by mail procedure is only effective if it is clear and convenient for the owner to respond. It is required that the Negotiator makes a follow-up phone call within 2 weeks of delivery of the offer package. This will confirm that the owner understands the offer and other information (e.g., the owner's rights, options, and the effect of the acquisition on remaining property). If there is any doubt about the owner's understanding, or if the owner so requests, arrange for a personal visit unless it is not physically or economically practical.

5-5 STATE CLAIMS COMMISSION

5-5.01 Role and Composition of the Commission

The State Claims Commission established under 23 **MRSA** Sections 151 and 152, is an independent, impartial board composed of persons who are knowledgeable in the determination of fair market value for condemnation. The Commission is composed of 5 members appointed by the Governor, 2 of whom must be qualified real estate appraisers and 2 of whom are attorneys. One of the attorney members is designated to be Chair by the Governor. The 5th member of the Commission is a member of the board of county commissioners of the county in which the property is located, and is appointed for each hearing or series of hearings.

5-5.02 Referrals to the Commission

Pursuant to 23 **MRSA** Section 155, MaineDOT shall file a petition with the Commission requesting a hearing and award of just compensation for any property owners who have not negotiated an agreement with MaineDOT regarding just compensation after 60 days from the date of taking. The State Claims Commission operates under 23 **MRSA** Section 156, wherein the chairman of the board, after receiving MaineDOT's petition, assigns a date for a hearing which will be after the date of project completion. The chair then assigns no more than 3 members of the board to hear the case, one of which is an appraiser and one attorney. Notice of the time and place of the hearing is mailed by registered or certified mail to all parties of interest at least 14 days before the hearing date.

Before the hearing, the State Claims Commission views the property involved. The interested parties are notified of the viewing and can be present if they so desire.

MaineDOT is represented by the Legal Division at the hearing and may present evidence related to title, engineering, and appraisal opinion as to the fair market value of the property. Property owners may either represent themselves or employ counsel. In making an award, the Commission is not limited by the range of testimony presented, but may reach a decision based on the viewing, testimony and its own judgment.

As soon as practical after the hearing has concluded, the Commission will make an award in writing, specifying the following:

1. The owners and encumbrances;
2. The nature of the interest taken;
3. The commission's decision on elements of damage;
4. Gross damage;
5. Net amount of award;
6. Interest on the award;
7. Award of just compensation; and
8. Withholding for any advance payment for relocation replacement housing

5-5.03 Cooperation with State Claims Commission

MaineDOT is responsible for referring unsettled parcels to the Commission 60 days after the date of condemnation. At the time of referral, all parcel file information will be reviewed to ensure that it is complete and accurate. In referring such parcels, MaineDOT will provide the Commission with the names and addresses of the owner(s) of record and the holders of any mortgages, tax liens or other encumbrances; a copy of the notice of condemnation; the statement of MaineDOT, and a plan of the property involved as served upon the owner(s) of record for the Commission's information. Appropriate personnel must be available at the time of the hearing to provide evidence relative to title, engineering, appraisal or other necessary information for the property involved.

5-5.04 State Claims Commission Awards

At the completion of a hearing, the Commission sends an attested copy of the award to MaineDOT and the property owner(s). MaineDOT or any of the aggrieved parties have 30 days to file an appeal with the Superior Court. If no appeal is made within 30 days, it MaineDOT's responsibility to then pay the awarded amount, if any, to the parties within 60 days of the issuance of that award by the Commission.

Parcel files will contain copies of Claims Commission awards and comments from those involved in the case relative to the decision relating to appealing the award.

5-6 ACQUISITION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Parcels on which compensation remains unsettled 60 days after condemnation will be administratively reviewed before referral to the State Claims Commission. Additionally, parcels whose owners have presented counteroffers significantly above traditional guidelines will be reviewed on an as needed basis. Each parcel is reviewed to assure that all relevant materials are in the file and that it is ready for presentation before the State Claims Commission. The review will also determine whether there is a basis for an increased offer amount, which will be a final offer of settlement to the owner. The Administrative Settlement process recognizes that there are reasonable differences in judgment as to value of real property, and appraisals are an expert opinion value, but do not represent fixed and unalterable judgments. The Committee will determine if an administrative settlement is reasonable, prudent and in the public interest. If so, the Committee will provide a written justification in support of the settlement. The written justification will state all relevant facts and circumstances considered by the Committee in arriving at a final offer, including trial risks. Appraisers and review appraisers will not be pressured to adjust their estimate of value to justify such settlements, as this would invalidate the appraisal process.

5-6.01 The Acquisition Review Committee Composition and Responsibilities

The Acquisition Review Committee("ARC") is a committee chaired by the Chief Property Officer, that consists of the R/W Supervisors from the Highway, Regional, Bridge, and Multimodal Programs as appropriate, along with the Property Office Director, and the Real Estate Attorney from the Legal Services Office. The Committee will meet as often as workload requires. Meeting minutes will be kept that record the date, time and place of meeting and names of resource persons present, and the decisions reached.

The Acquisition Review Committee is a government decision panel discussing matters relating to the appraisal and negotiation for real estate purchases and meetings are not open to public attendance. The Committee may call on any persons to provide factual information or expert opinion. Positions that may be called by the Committee include: Program Manager, Project Manager, Mapper, Appraiser, Review Appraiser, Negotiator, Relocation Specialist, Chief Surveyor, R/W Supervisor or Real Estate Attorney.

5-6.02 Committee Procedures

The Committee Chair will prepare an agenda and send a notice of meeting via e-mail to Committee members. The cases are considered individually in committee session. Parcels that are presented for administrative settlement are reviewed and recommended for increased offer based on the facts of each parcel acquisition.

The Committee has broad latitude in deciding the basis for an increased offer and is not restricted to valuation issues. Considerations may include risk of the State to a high court award, cost to the State in advancing cases through the State Claims Commission and courts, equity with settlements made with other property owners, substantial market changes between the time of valuation and condemnation.

Each Committee member will come prepared to discuss knowledge of the parcel and bring relevant material (e.g., files and plans) to aid in the discussion. Staff, who are familiar with the case, including the Appraiser and the Negotiator, may be asked their views and recommendations in person or by submission of a memorandum.

The Committee will reach decisions by consensus. Per the provisions of Administrative Policy Memorandum No. 10, the Director, Bureau of Project Development, will approve settlement amounts greater than \$400,000. An increased offer amount will be a final MaineDOT offer prior to referral to the State Claims Commission.

A copy of the justification for any settlement shall be placed in the project files. The records of the Committee are subject to confidentiality provisions of 23 **MRSA** 63. Records are open to public inspection after 9 months following the completion date of the project, or for claims appealed to the Superior Court, records will be open for public inspection following award of the Court.

5-7 ADVANCE AND EARLY ACQUISITION

5-7.01 Advance Acquisition Defined

Advance acquisition is the purchase of property needed for an identified highway project in advance of the completion of the environmental review process. Advance acquisition is used under limited circumstances to alleviate a hardship to the owners (hardship acquisition), or to preclude imminent development of the property (protective purchase).

5-7.02 Advance Acquisition – Criteria for Use and Approval Authority

The following criteria are applicable to both hardship and protective purchase advance acquisition:

1. Advance acquisition may only be used for one or a limited number of parcels on a project.
2. The project must be included in the current approved State Transportation Improvement Plan.
3. The preliminary alignment for the project must be established. Preliminary alignment is defined as the date in Projex's "Actual Date" field for the X11 milestone, "Preliminary Alignment Complete".
4. The proposed advanced acquisition of the property must be strictly for highway purposes and needs.
5. If the proposed advanced acquisition is of a business or commercial operation, such operation must cease its business functions/operations prior to acquisition by MaineDOT subject only to the following exceptions:
 - a. The owner of a business or commercial operation who has purchased property for a new location and has entered into binding contracts for the construction of a new facility with a firm completion date may negotiate with MaineDOT to remain on the acquired property under an Occupancy Agreement with terms acceptable to MaineDOT for a specified period of time pending completion of the new facility; and,
 - b. The owner of a business or commercial operation who has entered into a binding purchase and sale agreement for a new business location conditioned upon the early acquisition of his existing business by MaineDOT may negotiate with MaineDOT to remain on the acquired property under an Occupancy Agreement with terms acceptable to MaineDOT for a predetermined period of time necessary for the owner to close the purchase of the new business location and move inventory, equipment and other business property from the acquired property to the new location.

6. The proposed advanced acquisition must be submitted by the Project Team to the Chief Property Officer for approval.
7. MaineDOT has complied with applicable public involvement requirements under 1 **MRSA** 406 and 23 **CFR** 450 and 771.111.
8. A determination has been completed for any property that is subject to the provisions of 23 **USC** 138, known as Section 4(f) (property – parks and recreational areas).
9. Procedures of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation are completed for properties subject to the rules of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and Title 54 USC Chapter 3001 (historic preservation).

The Director, Bureau of Project Development has approval authority for advance acquisitions. Advance acquisition proposals shall be submitted to Federal Highway Administration for approval.

The R/W Supervisors of each program will maintain records for all advance acquisition proposals in the project and parcel files. Additionally, the acquired property should be maintained under normal property management procedures and, if time permits, a reasonable rental should be obtained on a short or long-term basis depending on the time available between acquisition and the date of construction.

5-7.03 Hardship Acquisition Procedure

Advance acquisition may be authorized when the owner of a property has a reasonable basis for claiming a hardship arising from a pending highway acquisition. When MaineDOT concurs with an owner's request for a hardship acquisition, MaineDOT is not required to accelerate condemnation if an agreement cannot be reached with the property owner. If an agreement can't be reached then MaineDOT may defer acquisition of the property to the time it would normally occur in the schedule. The owner should be informed of this possibility when the request for hardship acquisition is accepted.

MaineDOT may consider the following conditions as hardship circumstances:

1. Health/Safety Risks. Continued occupancy of a residence poses health or safety risks to the occupants. For instance, a family member may be incapacitated and unable to use a bathroom on the second floor or a house may contain environmental risks such as lead base paint when there are children in the household.
2. Financial Hardship. The owner will suffer a financial loss due to an inability to sell the property when there is a valid need. For instance, a property owner may wish to take a job in another state and is unable to sell the house at a fair price because of market knowledge of pending highway acquisition.

In addition to the health, safety or financial hardship, the owner must also document an inability to sell the property for fair market value within a typical period of time. Some factors to consider include whether:

1. The property owner openly marketed the property through a realtor, a listing service or through other means.
2. The owner or realtor conducted a market analysis to determine a listing price disregarding any increase or decrease in value caused by the project.
3. The property has been on the market for an amount of time typical in the area and available for inspection by prospective buyers.
4. The property owner documents an inability to find a broker willing to list the property due to the impending project.

MaineDOT will carefully consider all requests for hardship acquisition on their merits. A right of way agent who becomes aware of a situation that could fall within the hardship acquisition criteria is encouraged to bring the matter to the attention of the R/W Supervisor and the Property Office, for full review. It is appropriate for Property Office staff to assist an owner in preparing a written request for hardship acquisition.

When MaineDOT determines that a hardship exists and elects to proceed, the offer of just compensation must be based on an appraisal of the fair market value, and negotiations must proceed in good faith with sufficient information provided to the property owner for making an informed decision.

5-7.04 Protective Purchase Procedure

MaineDOT may acquire a limited number of parcels in advance of general project acquisition if development of the property is imminent and would limit future transportation choices or increase project cost. The protective purchase authority may be used proactively, within overall criteria, to purchase key property that is known to be attractive for speculative commercial purchase. In this way, protective purchase may protect a proposed corridor from being excluded from consideration because of rising costs that may have been initiated by the project itself.

Potential protective purchase properties may be identified by Property Office personnel or other staff involved in early project development or by local planning or development authorities. The potential for development must be clearly demonstrated and the development must be imminent.

MaineDOT will ensure that the acquisition of property under either the protective buying or the hardship acquisition criteria would not influence the environmental assessment of a project including the decision relative to the need to construct the project or the selection of a specific location.

5-7.05 MAP-21 Section 1302 Advance Acquisition

MaineDOT will use the following process in order to utilize the opportunities provided under MAP-21:

- 1) MaineDOT will certify to the following concerning the property in question
 - a. MaineDOT has authority to acquire the real property interest under State law; and

- b. The acquisition of the real property interest-
 1. An individual Categorical Exclusion has been prepared;
 2. will not limit the choice of reasonable alternatives for the project or otherwise influence the decision of the FHWA on any approval required for the project;
 3. does not prevent the lead agency from making an impartial decision as to whether to accept an alternative that is being considered in the environmental review process;
 4. The current project is included in the current Statewide Transportation Improvement Program(STIP) as a standalone acquisition project;
 5. complies with other applicable Federal laws (including regulations);
 6. will be acquired through negotiation, without the threat of condemnation Section 3 below outlines MaineDOT's strategy in using condemnation as a closing tool only using Federal Funding under MAP-21;
 7. will not result in a reduction or elimination of benefits or assistance to a displaced person required by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (42 U.S.C. 4601 et seq.) and title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.) and;
 8. Does not involve any property subject to Section 4(f) or Section 106 protection.

2) MaineDOT will provide the property owners with a revised Notice to Owner of Interest to Acquire prior to using the MAP-21 acquisition process. The notice will include a full explanation of the property owner's rights under Federal and state laws, as well as termination of negotiations in the event of no agreement as to the amount of just compensation or administrative settlement. MaineDOT will also state the maximum number of days it will negotiate before terminating negotiations. MaineDOT will use its condemnation authority as a closing tool only. No demolition will occur until NEPA for the project has been completed.

3) One of the following two outcomes will occur after the Notice to Owner of Interest to Acquire is provided to the property owners:

- a. MaineDOT provides a written offer and negotiates a settlement including full consideration of any materials or information provided by the owners. If agreement with the property owner is reached, MaineDOT will use its condemnation authority as a closing tool only.
- b. If MaineDOT and the owners do not settle or cannot agree on just compensation or an administrative settlement, MaineDOT will terminate negotiations in writing. The termination notice will inform the owner that MaineDOT may return and move forward with the standard acquisition process using condemnation. MaineDOT will reserve the right to move forward either using State funds OR using Federal funds once NEPA is complete for the project.

4) Eligibility for relocation assistance begins on the date of the initiation of negotiations to acquire the property. MaineDOT will establish eligibility by delivering a Comparable Replacement Housing Notice for owner-occupants or a Rental Assistance Payment Estimate for tenants. The occupants will also be given an Initial Relocation Notice Letter which provides an overview of the

relocation process and protections. It is understood that any formal rule-making adopted by FHWA will supersede this policy.

5-7.06 Early Acquisition Defined

Early Acquisition is the acquisition of real property at any time MaineDOT has the legal authority to do so, based on program or project considerations. MaineDOT may undertake early acquisition for corridor preservation, access management, or other purposes.

MaineDOT may acquire property with State funding before authorization by FHWA for right of way acquisition. The cost of this property may be credited to the non-Federal share of the federally funded project at the time of the project agreement, provided the acquisition complies with the following conditions:

1. The original project agreement covering the project was signed on or after June 9, 1998.
2. Property is acquired in compliance with Maine statutes.
3. The early acquisition must be associated with a project that is included in the Capitol Work Plan.
4. The property proposed for early acquisition must be impacted by all reasonable potential alignments.
5. The proposed early acquisition of a property must be strictly for highway purposes and needs and incorporated into a Federal-Aid Project.
6. If the proposed early acquisition is of a business or commercial operation, such operation must cease its business functions/operations prior to acquisition by MaineDOT subject only to the following exceptions:
 - a. The owner of a business or commercial operation who has purchased property for a new location and has entered into binding contracts for the construction of a new facility with a firm completion date may negotiate with MaineDOT to remain on the acquired property under an Occupancy Agreement with terms acceptable to MaineDOT for a specified period of time pending completion of the new facility; or,
 - b. The owner of a business or commercial operation who has entered into a binding purchase and sale agreement for a new business location conditioned upon the early acquisition of their existing business by MaineDOT may negotiate with MaineDOT to remain on the acquired property under an Occupancy Agreement with terms acceptable to MaineDOT for a predetermined period of time necessary for the owner to close the purchase of the new business location and move inventory, equipment and other business property from the acquired property to the new location.
7. The early acquisition must be submitted by the Project Team to the ARC committee for review.

8. The property is not part of a public park, recreation area, wildlife and waterfowl refuge or a historic site of national, State or local significance (known as “4(f)” property).
9. Acquisition and related relocation are in compliance with the ***Uniform Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*** (as amended) and 49 CFR Part 24.
10. Acquisition is in compliance with the requirements of Title VI of the ***Civil Rights Act*** of 1964.
11. The FHWA concurs with MaineDOT determination that the acquisition did not influence the environmental assessment for the project, including the need to construct the project or the project design or location.

The amount of the credit will be the cost of the early-acquired property unless Maine determines there has been a significant lapse of time, or increases in real estate values between the date of acquisition and the date of credit. If either of these conditions applies the amount of the credit may be the current fair market value at the time of the credit as supported by a real estate appraisal. The total credit to a project will not exceed Maine’s pro rata share of total project cost.

The Federal rules applicable to early acquisition are at 23 ***CFR*** 710.501.

5-8 FUNCTIONAL REPLACEMENT OF PUBLIC-OWNED FACILITIES

5-8.01 Purpose

The Functional Replacement Program is designed to provide relief to public agencies when a highway project requires the acquisition of an essential public facility. This policy recognizes that the proper measure of compensation for essential facilities is their replacement cost rather than depreciated current fair market value. Payment of depreciated value for a public facility imposes the cost of replacement on the local or other owning agency, whereas the need to replace arises from the State- and Federal-funded highway project. The Functional Replacement Program refines the concept of just compensation so as not to burden the agency suffering the loss of facility or the citizens who fund that agency. Authority for functional replacement is in 23 **CFR** 710.509.

To qualify the property must be in public ownership and use, and the replacement must remain in public ownership and continue the public use of the facility being acquired. The facility may be Federal, State or locally owned. Facilities of volunteer fire departments are eligible if the real property is in public ownership. Some common types of facilities replaced include fire stations, schools and municipal buildings. State DOT maintenance facilities have been the most common type of replacement due to their location adjacent to the highway.

Functional replacement is an option for the owning agency. The acquiring agency informs the owning agency of its right to an estimate of just compensation based on the appraisal of fair market value and of the option to choose either just compensation or functional replacement. The agency may elect to be compensated on the basis of appraised fair market value.

It is important for MaineDOT to identify practical functional replacement situations early in the project life to ensure adequate time for initiating and completing the various required approvals and completing the construction of the replacement facility in sufficient time to meet the project construction date. The agency involved should be contacted by the Negotiator or other assigned acquisition agent to determine whether the facility will remain in existing use and whether agency management wishes to consider employing the functional replacement process.

The R/W Supervisor in each program will be the lead for administering functional replacement. Other Offices will have consultation and review responsibilities as determined for specific projects.

5-8.02 Procedures

5-8.02(a) Initial Meeting and Request

At the time that a publicly owned facility is identified as being in the acquisition area of a proposed highway alignment, MaineDOT will meet with representatives of the owning agency to secure information and explore options. This meeting will:

1. Confirmation. Confirm that the facility is publicly owned. If the facility is leased, even on long-term approximating its economic life, it does not constitute ownership.

2. Applicability. Explore the need of the owning agency for continuance of use. If the facility is no longer serving an essential public purpose, it is not appropriate to replace it. Compensation will be on the basis of current fair market value. This would apply, for example, if an older fire station to be acquired overlapped the service area of an existing newer and larger fire station.
3. Purpose. Determine if the facility serves a unique and essential public purpose. Most public facilities are special purpose and uniquely serve the use for which they were constructed. However, if the facility can be replaced by purchasing an existing building on the open market, or if the use can be discontinued without harm to the public interest, functional replacement is not appropriate.
4. Compensation. Determine the intentions of the owning agency. The option of payment of monetary just compensation should be explored. Officials of the owning agency may prefer the flexibility of a monetary payment, based on an appraisal, rather than replacement in kind.
5. Agreement. If functional replacement is appropriate and desired, MaineDOT and the owning agency will agree on the form and content of an agreement that will define the replacement and the responsibilities of the parties.

The owning agency must make a formal request that the facility be replaced as an alternative to a payment of monetary value (fair market value). This will include a presentation that the facility serves an essential public purpose that must be continued in the public interest. If functional replacement is approved by MaineDOT, MaineDOT will review the request and must concur in the finding of essential public purpose.

MaineDOT will make a formal determination that functional replacement is in the public interest. The determination will be forwarded for concurrence to FHWA if Federal participation in the cost of the functional replacement is anticipated (23 **CFR** 710.509b (5)).

5-8.02(b) Betterments and Increases in Capacity

The issues of betterments and increases in capacity should be fully explored with the owning agency. A replacement facility will not be an exact copy of what is acquired. It will be a structure that serves the same function (e.g., school, jail), but it will be constructed to current standards of construction and design. The replacement desired by the owning agency may serve a larger population or service area. Or features may be included in design that improves quality, level of service or range of services. For instance, an acquired fire station may be replaced with a much larger building with community rooms for public functions, or the replacement function may be combined in a larger building that also includes a town hall.

MaineDOT will not influence the type and extent of replacement except to limit reimbursement to that necessary to provide replacement utility that is equivalent to the facility that is acquired by MaineDOT.

MaineDOT will reimburse for betterments or increases in capacity that meet legal and regulatory standards for the type of facility being replaced. This is within the “equivalent utility” criteria. Significant features in a new building should be confirmed as standards by means of reference to buildings of a similar function that were recently constructed by other jurisdictions in the area. Other references would be standards that have been promulgated by national standard-setting organizations or provisions in State law or agency regulations providing minimum standards for the use and occupancy of public facilities.

MaineDOT and the owning agency will reach an agreement on responsibility for the costs of betterments and increases in capacity before committing to functional replacement.

5-8.02(c) Agreement Between the Parties

The agreed functional replacement terms, conditions, responsibilities and cost sharing will be set forth in an agreement between MaineDOT and the owning agency. The agreement will serve as the contract between the parties and will be reviewed by FHWA prior to execution. All elements of the acquisition of the facility by MaineDOT and the replacement will be addressed in the agreement. The agreement will provide that the owning agency will keep auditable records of all costs.

5-8.02(d) Replacement Site

The owning agency will be reimbursed for the actual and reasonable cost of a suitable replacement site. For state funded projects, if a pre-owned site is used by the agency, MaineDOT will pay the fair market value of the site acquired for the highway. Acquiring agencies need to be diligent in insuring that the owning agency does not receive a double payment by receiving compensation for both the displacement and replacement site.

5-8.02(e) Review and Oversight

MaineDOT will authorize the owning agency to incur costs and begin work. The contracting process of the owning agency may be used unless otherwise provided in the agreement. For Federal projects, all Federal contracting requirements must be met.

MaineDOT will perform review and oversight on the replacement project, including the following elements:

1. Site selection and purchase,
2. Replacement facility plans and specifications,
3. Contract documents,
4. Progress inspections during construction, and
5. Final inspection at completion.

Each functional replacement situation is unique. The Director, Project Development Bureau, will assign responsibility for review and oversight of each functional replacement project in accord with the knowledge, skills and special resources required by the type of facility being replaced. Other MaineDOT offices may be asked for advice and assistance in planning, coordinating and reviewing a project as circumstances warrant.

MaineDOT will formally approve the completion of the project before making final payment to the owning agency.

5-9 SUPPLEMENTAL ACQUISITION ACTIVITIES

5-9.01 Coordination with Legal Services Office

The right of way function maintains an open line of communication on all levels with the Legal Services Office. Consultation is generally informal. This enables appropriate and timely right of way actions involving legal issues. When a formal opinion is needed, a request will be made in writing to the Chief Counsel through the Chief Property Officer.

The R/W Supervisors work with the Legal Services Office on the following activities:

1. Title certifications,
2. State Claims Commission activities,
3. Superior Court Appeals on compensation,
4. Closings - acquisition by deed,
5. Legal advice on acquisition compensability questions, and
6. Legal settlements after Superior Court filing.

5-9.02 Tenant-Owned Improvements

Any improvements that are considered to be real property if they were owned by the landowner are also to be considered real property if they are owned by the tenant. MaineDOT will acquire the same interest in these improvements as if they were owned by the landowner.

The Property Owner Report will indicate whether a tenant is in occupancy on the property to be acquired. Any structures or improvements that are real property and that are owned by the tenant must be identified. A separate offer may be made by MaineDOT to acquire tenant-owned improvements provided the owner of the land disclaims interest in those property items.

A review of the property lease may, but not always, clarify property ownership issues.

It is accepted practice for commercial tenants to lease space that is essentially vacant or partially vacant and to build out or add to the interior to suit their particular needs. In these instances, unless otherwise precluded by the lease agreement, the tenant is entitled to payment for these improvements because MaineDOT is required to acquire an equal interest in all buildings, structures or other improvements (23 **MRSA** Section 154-E).

On residential property, a tenant may own outbuildings (e.g., storage sheds) or above- or below-ground swimming pools. The Negotiator will inquire from the landowner as to the status of these items and make a separate offer to the tenant if the owner signs a statement disclaiming interest.

The basis for the amount of the offer for tenant-owned improvement is the higher of the contributory value of the items to the whole property or the value for removal, also known as salvage value. The payment for an improvement may not result in the duplication of any compensation that was otherwise authorized by law.

Before payment can be made to a tenant for any improvements, its owner must assign, transfer and release to MaineDOT all of their rights, title and interest in the property improvement. The Negotiator will draft a short release document and present it to the owner to sign. When the Negotiator is unable to obtain a release from the owner of the improvement, this fact should be noted in the parcel acquisition record. The parcel will be referred to the State Claims Commission for proper distribution of the parcel valuation. Both the owner and the tenant would have the right to challenge any decision by the Commission by filing a claim with the Superior Court for further adjudication.

5-9.03 Uneconomic Remnants

An uneconomic remnant is a remaining part of a property in which the owner would be left with an interest that MaineDOT has determined has little or no utility or value to the owner. MaineDOT will offer to acquire any remainder property that is determined to be an uneconomic remnant as required under 23 **MRSA** Section 154-C.

When the Negotiator becomes aware of a potential uneconomic remnant that was not previously identified, it should be brought to the attention of the R/W Supervisor for a final decision.

At the time of negotiation, the owner may express concern that a remainder property is of no use or is a burden for reason of taxes and maintenance. This should be brought to the attention of the R/W Supervisor for consideration and decision as to whether it meets the definition of uneconomic remnant that is stated above. However, MaineDOT is not obligated to purchase an uneconomic remnant if that remnant is contaminated with hazardous or other wastes.

It is clearly evident that if the entire property is being acquired, valuation will be based on the total property value. The owner is entitled, however, to the value of the part taken and damages to the remainder and must be informed of those amounts if he or she so chooses.

5-9.04 Developer Project Acquisitions

Plans for private development (e.g., shopping centers, strip malls) may require changes in existing traffic patterns on the highways that are adjacent to the developed area. Design plans that include existing right of way limits are submitted to MaineDOT by the developer. After review of these plans, the need for an additional right of way as a result of the developer's project are identified and transmitted to the developer for further action. A right of way plan prepared by the developer's engineering firm will be submitted to MaineDOT's Chief Surveyor for approval.

Upon approval of final plans by MaineDOT, the developer shall acquire or obtain any additional right-of-way or easement rights so required before commencing construction. Title to such right-of-way or easement rights so acquired shall be conveyed to "State of Maine, its successors and assigns forever, acting by and through its Department of Transportation". Easement language should follow MaineDOT format, and easement types should follow MaineDOT practice. Standard easement language for easements typically required for highway projects is available from MaineDOT upon request.

Prior to acquisition of rights, draft deeds and easement documents must be submitted to MaineDOT for approval. Unless previously approved by the Legal Services Office, conveyances of permanent rights to the State of Maine must be by warranty deed. When rights are acquired and conveyed, the original signed documents shall be forwarded to the MaineDOT Property Office, along with a final stamped and signed Right of Way Plan plans showing the new R/W limits.

The developer shall not file deeds or easements conveying permanent property rights to the State of Maine at the County Registry of Deeds or record any Right of Way Plan. MaineDOT's Title Office will record both approved deeds and Plans at the Registry. The developer should submit a completed Maine Revenue Services Real Estate Transfer Tax Declaration form with each deed. On each transfer tax form, the box in Section 6(c) should be checked and the following language inserted in that section: *"Seller and Buyer are exempt pursuant to 36 MRSA 4641-C(1). This is a conveyance for transportation purposes."*

5-9.05 Donations

MaineDOT can accept donations of property that would otherwise be acquired for a project. Prior to acceptance of any donation, MaineDOT must inform the owner of the right to receive just compensation for the property, based on an appraisal by a qualified appraiser unless the property comes within the purview of the Waiver Valuation Procedure. All donations of property prior to approval of the NEPA document must meet the environmental requirements of **NEPA** and 23 **USC** 323(d). It should be noted that it is **not** MaineDOT's policy to solicit donations. Typically, the offer to donate should come from the owner rather than the acquiring agency. The accepting agency should ensure the owner understands the right to receive just compensation before the donation is accepted by having the owner acknowledge that right in writing.

The owner will sign an agreement that states the owner's awareness of the right to have the property appraised and to receive just compensation. Also, the owner will be advised of the date by which the property is to be vacated. The completed agreement should be submitted to the R/W Supervisor for review and approval. Where appropriate, advice will be requested from the Legal Division.

On Federal-aid projects, a credit to the State's matching share can be made based on the fair market value of the donated property. This value cannot include any increases or decreases in value caused by the project. The fair market value should be based on an estimate that is prepared by a qualified staff appraiser commensurate with the complexity of the underlying property acquisition.

Credit for any donations that are made in exchange for construction features or services will be limited to the estimated fair market value less the cost of those features or services.

5-9.06 State and Local Contributions

Real property owned by the State of Maine or by a municipality that is incorporated within the right of way of a federally funded project may be used as a credit toward the non-Federal matching share of the project. This provision does not apply to property that was initially acquired with any kind of Federal financial assistance, or to lands already in use for transportation purposes.

The amount of the credit will be the fair market value as discussed in Section 5-9.05.

The prerequisite conditions in Section 5-7.04 apply to the credit to the extent they were applicable at the time the real property was initially acquired by the State or the municipality. A certification as to compliance with these requirements will be made by the donating agency. Relocation benefits will apply to persons displaced from pre-owned property unless the property was rented specifically on the basis of short-term occupancy pending need for project purposes.

5-9.07 Property Pin Replacement

Maine Law, 14 MRSA Section 7554-A requires MaineDOT to establish policies and procedures for replacing landmark property boundary markers that are obliterated by any public improvement. The law requires maintenance of records that describe the landmark and its location in sufficient detail to reestablish the point of former location. The law gives MaineDOT the flexibility of re-establishing the point, or making payment to the owner for the cost of re-establishment.

MaineDOT survey crews and staff responsible for the development of existing conditions plans should review title and boundary surveys to determine the existence of boundary markers. The locations should then be confirmed in the field, plotted on right of way maps and maintained in appropriate databases.

Negotiators should confirm the existence and location of the boundary markers with property owners at initiation of negotiations, make note of the confirmation and discussion in the Negotiator's Log, and report any conflicts to the Property Office.

MaineDOT will re-establish the point of former location of any disturbed boundary marker as shown on a right of way map or in MaineDOT records at no cost to the owner, upon the owner's request.

Under certain conditions, the MaineDOT may reimburse a property owner for reasonable survey costs to set a marker on the new right of way line. These conditions are:

- The property owner has provided a copy of a mathematically retraceable boundary survey completed by a Licensed Professional Land Surveyor on or after October 3, 1973, which shows the location of the disturbed boundary markers and,
- The location of the disturbed boundary markers is shown on the MaineDOT right of way maps and property owner surveys and,
- The subject property is impacted by a taking in fee simple absolute that changes the point of intersection with the new right of way line and sideline boundaries or,

- The subject property is bisected by a project being built on new location. In this case, new boundaries are being created by the bisection of the parcel, so there are no existing pins to disturb. Reimbursement is intended to set pins on the new boundaries.

MaineDOT is not responsible for resolving boundary disputes between abutting owners. In the event of a boundary dispute, MaineDOT reserves the right to re-establish the boundary marker at the point of former location.

Requests for re-establishing or setting boundary markers should be made to the Chief Surveyor through the Project Negotiator via email. The Chief Surveyor will consider all appropriate information presented in deciding the eligibility for reimbursement and the amount of the reimbursement. The decision of the Chief Surveyor is final.

5-9.08 Acquiring from Special Entities

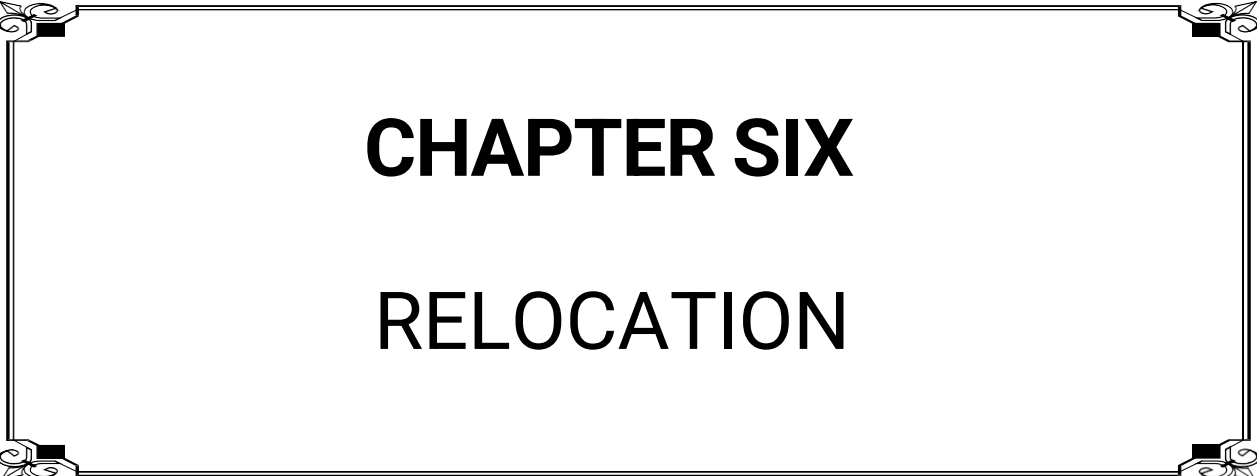
Special entities include utilities, railroads, Indian nations and political jurisdictions. MaineDOT has frequent contact with these entities and it is important that they be dealt with consistently. In addition, the relationship of special entities with MaineDOT is controlled by State and Federal laws and regulations. MaineDOT is involved with special entities at the earliest planning phase, and frequently agreements are reached in the public interest that involves restoration of facilities or construction features that mitigate damage. Monetary payment based on appraised value may not be the sole determinant of just compensation.

Right of Way Project Team members will be guided by the Chief Property Officer and Director of the Property Office in acquisition activities involving special entities.

5-9.09 Dedications

Dedications are acquisitions of real property for transportation projects that arise from the actions of local planning and zoning authorities. A large private development proposal may secure local zoning approval subject to “dedication” of a part of the tract for highway use. The dedicated part may enable improvements identified in MaineDOT’s Capital Work Plan or resolve transportation needs created by the development proposal.

Dedications arise from local zoning and are not initiated by MaineDOT. MaineDOT is interested in assuring that it has unencumbered title to land it accepts for highway use. Therefore the private owner making the dedication will be advised that MaineDOT may condemn over the transfer to assure clear unencumbered title to the property. Dedications should not be made with the sole intent to use as right of way for a federal-aid project.



CHAPTER SIX

RELOCATION

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

CHAPTER SIX

RELOCATION

6-1 GENERAL INFORMATION

6-1.01 Introduction

On occasion, the acquisition of property for a highway on a new location, or to expand an existing facility, causes the displacement of residences, businesses, non-profit organizations, or farms. MaineDOT implements a comprehensive program of services and benefits to ensure, to the maximum possible extent, the timely and successful relocation of residential displaced persons and the re-establishment of businesses in new locations. These benefits are defined in Federal law and Maine Statutes and provide assistance in addition to the just compensation paid for acquired property that is required under the U.S. Constitution's 5th Amendment.

MaineDOT's relocation program carries out provisions of the ***Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*** (as amended in 1987). This law is known as the ***Uniform Act***. The MaineDOT program also complies with 23 ***MRSA*** Sections 241 through 247. The provisions of this Chapter conform to Federal regulations implementing the ***Uniform Act*** found at 49 ***CFR*** 24.

The instructions in this Chapter will guide the administration of the relocation program in a manner that is equitable, consistent and cost effective. The objective is to ensure that displaced persons and households will not suffer disproportionately as a result of MaineDOT's capital improvement program. Effective relocation program services will also encourage and expedite acquisition by agreement, minimize litigation, promote public confidence and ensure that the policies are implemented in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

6-1.02 Applicability of Relocation Program Benefits

The provisions of this Chapter are applicable to any qualified person who is displaced as a result of a program or project with Federal or State of Maine funding in any phase of the project cost. State or Federal funds need not participate in the costs associated with the payment for the property to create eligibility.

Property acquired by any State agency, county, town, or local government as a contribution to a MaineDOT-funded project will not be accepted unless all of the payments have been made and all of the assistance and assurance as required by this Chapter are provided.

Any person who qualifies as a displaced person must be fully informed of their rights and entitlements to relocation assistance and payments provided by this Chapter, the Uniform Act, 49 CFR 24 and Maine Statute.

6-1.03 Overview of the Relocation Program

The relocation of residents who have been displaced for highway acquisition is a needs-oriented program. The program benefits must achieve a replacement housing standard that is at least comparable to the housing before displacement, but that also meets needs-based criteria of cost, income and housing quality. This contrasts with the property acquisition process, which is based on the market value of what is acquired, without regard to the financial circumstances of the owner.

The following are key provisions and assurances of MaineDOT's relocation program:

1. MaineDOT will not require any person to move until at least 1 replacement dwelling that is within the financial means of the displaced household dwelling is available for purchase or lease. The replacement must also meet specific qualitative standards of decent, safe and sanitary (DS&S) housing explained in Section 6-1.07.
2. Persons required to relocate will be provided a written 90-day Advance Assurance Notice (RA-31). This will be followed by a 30-day Notice to Vacate letter (RA-32) that will provide a firm date by which the displaced household dwelling must be vacated.
3. A property owner or tenant may designate a representative to receive offers, correspondence, and information and to provide any information on their behalf required by the displacing agency by providing a written request to MaineDOT that includes the person's name and contact information and what if any notices or information, the representative is not authorized to receive.
4. A person's temporary move from their dwelling or business for the project may not exceed 12 months. MaineDOT must contact any person who has temporarily moved from their dwelling or business when that temporary move has lasted for a period beyond 12 months because that person is considered permanently displaced and eligible as a displaced person. MaineDOT shall offer such eligible persons all required relocation assistance benefits and services for permanently displaced persons. MaineDOT may not deduct any temporary relocation assistance benefits previously provided when determining permanent relocation benefits eligibility.
5. MaineDOT will provide qualified displaced persons with advisory assistance to help them locate replacement housing and adjust to the move.
6. MaineDOT will provide payments for the increased cost of comparable replacement housing and reimburse for moving costs.

7. Persons who disagree with determinations of eligibility or relocation payment amounts have the opportunity to be heard in an administrative appeal process.

6-1.04 Eligibility for Relocation Benefits

The milestone for determining that a move (displacement) is a direct result of MaineDOT's acquisition is the initiation of negotiations for the parcel. Only displaced persons are eligible to receive relocation program benefits. A displaced person is defined as: Any person who moves from real property, or moves personal property from real property, as a direct result of the acquisition of that real property in whole or in part for a program or project undertaken by MaineDOT. Persons who move as a result of a written notice of MaineDOT's intent to acquire the property are also considered displaced persons.

All occupants of a property at the date that MaineDOT presents a written offer to purchase the property are eligible for relocation benefits, subject to the restrictions identified below.

A tenant who moves as a direct result of a voluntary acquisition is eligible for relocation assistance when there is a binding written agreement between the agency and the owner that obligates the agency, without further election, to purchase the real property.

MaineDOT may advance the date of eligibility for benefits to alleviate a hardship. This is done by issuing a letter of intent to acquire the property. See Section 6-4.03 for further information on this provision.

Displaced business, non-profit organization, or farm owners may need to relocate from adjacent property that is not acquired. An example would be a MaineDOT acquisition of property containing a factory. A warehouse used to store raw material and finished product is on adjacent property that is not acquired. Reimbursement for moving costs would extend to the warehouse as well as the factory, because the facilities are dependent on each other, and the displacement of the factory causes relocation of the warehouse. The decision to approve relocation from property not acquired is based on the circumstances of each case. The key criteria are that there be a unity of use between the property acquired by MaineDOT and the facility off the right of way, and the acquisition causes the need to relocate from both.

A person who occupies real property prior to its acquisition, but who does not meet the length of occupancy requirements in Sections 6-7 and 6-8, is a displaced person and is still eligible for **some** relocation benefits.

The following is a listing of persons who do not qualify as displaced persons:

1. A person who moves before the initiation of negotiations, unless MaineDOT determines that the person was displaced as a direct result of the project by issuance of a letter of intent to acquire;

2. A person who initially enters occupancy of the property after the date of its acquisition for the project;
3. A person who has occupied the property for the purpose of obtaining assistance under the ***Uniform Act***;
4. A person who is not required to relocate permanently as a direct result of the project. If a tenant-occupant is not displaced but will be required to move temporarily in connection with the project, the temporary housing must be DS&S. The tenant will be reimbursed for all moving expenses and increased housing costs during the temporary relocation;
5. An owner-occupant who voluntarily sells property to MaineDOT after being advised in writing that MaineDOT will not acquire by condemnation if the property cannot be purchased by amicable agreement. This provision of 49 **CFR** 24.101(b)(1)(i)(A) is only applicable if MaineDOT is purchasing property for purposes other than highway right of way. This may include purchase of property for housing of last resort;
6. A person who MaineDOT determines is not displaced as a direct result of a partial acquisition;
7. A person who, after receiving a notice of relocation eligibility, is notified in writing that he or she would not be displaced for a project. This notification will only be issued in a case where a person has not moved. MaineDOT will reimburse expenses incurred to satisfy any binding contractual obligations entered into after the effective date of the notice of relocation eligibility;
8. An owner-occupant who voluntarily sells their property, after being informed in writing that if a mutually satisfactory agreement of sale cannot be reached; MaineDOT will not acquire the property. In these cases, however, any resulting displacement of a tenant is subject to the regulations in this part;
9. A person who retains the right of use and occupancy of the real property for life following its acquisition by MaineDOT;
10. A person who is determined to be in unlawful occupancy or a person who has been evicted for cause, under applicable law, prior to the initiation of negotiations; and
11. A person who is not lawfully present in the United States and who has been determined to be ineligible for relocation benefits as provided in 49 **CFR** 208. Also, see Section 6-1.11.

6-1.05 No Waiver of Relocation Assistance of Benefits.

Neither the MaineDOT, nor a local agency functioning under these guidelines, may propose or request that a displaced person waive their rights to relocation assistance or benefits. All displaced persons are entitled to a clear explanation of the benefits available to them and will not be pressured into foregoing these benefits.

6-1.06 Relocation Program Definitions

The following definitions are used in the relocation program:

1. **Acquisition Date:** The date MaineDOT obtains title to the real property.
2. **Adequate Replacement Housing:** A dwelling that meets the criteria for comparable replacement housing that is functionally equivalent to the displacement dwelling.
3. **Business:** Any lawful activity, except a farm operation, (see definition of farm), that is conducted primarily:
 - a. For the purchase, sale, lease and rental of personal and real property;
 - b. For the manufacture, processing or marketing of products, commodities or any other personal property;
 - c. For the sale of services to the public;
 - d. For outdoor advertising display purposes advertising a business on the same premises, when the display must be moved as a result of the project; or
 - e. By a nonprofit organization that has established its nonprofit status under applicable Federal or State law.
4. **Comparable Replacement Dwelling:** A dwelling that is:
 - a. Decent, safe and sanitary (DS&S) as described in Section 6-1.07 of this Chapter;
 - b. Functionally equivalent to the displacement dwelling. The term “functionally equivalent” means that it performs the same function and provides the same utility. Although a comparable replacement dwelling need not possess every feature of the displacement dwelling, the principal features must be present. Generally, functional equivalency is an objective standard reflecting the range of purposes for which the various physical features of a dwelling may be used. However, in determining whether a replacement dwelling is functionally equivalent to the displacement dwelling, MaineDOT may consider reasonable tradeoffs for specific

features when the replacement unit is “equal to or better than” the displacement dwelling.

- c. Adequate in size to accommodate the occupants;
 - d. In an area that is not subject to unreasonable adverse environmental conditions;
 - e. In a location that is generally not less desirable than the location of the displaced person’s dwelling with respect to public utilities and commercial and public facilities and that is reasonably accessible to the person’s place of employment;
 - f. On a site that is typical in size for residential development with normal site improvements, including customary landscaping. The site need not include special improvements such as outbuildings, swimming pools, or greenhouses. (See also definition 8. Dwelling Site);
 - g. Currently available to the displaced person on the market. However, a comparable replacement dwelling for a person receiving government housing assistance before displacement may reflect similar government housing assistance;
 - h. Within the financial means of the displaced person. (See also definition 12. Financial Means); and
 - i. For a person receiving government housing assistance before displacement, a dwelling that may reflect similar government housing assistance. In such cases, any requirements of the government housing assistance program relating to the size of the replacement dwelling shall apply. (24.2(a)(6)(ix).
5. **Displaced Person:** Any person, as defined in Section 6-1.06.20, who moves from real property, or moves personal property from real property, as a direct result of the acquisition of that real property in whole or in part for a program or project undertaken by MaineDOT
6. **Dwelling:** The place of permanent or customary and usual residence of a person, according to local custom or law. This may include a single-family house; a single-family unit in 2-family, multi-family or multi-purpose property; a unit of a condominium or cooperative housing project; a non-housekeeping unit; a mobile home; or any other residential unit.
7. **Dwelling Site:** The term dwelling site means a land area that is typical in size for similar dwellings located in the same neighborhood or rural area.
8. **Family:** Two or more individuals living together in a single-family dwelling unit. They may be related by blood, adoption, marriage or legal guardianship, or not be related by blood or legal ties but live together by mutual consent.

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9. **Farm Operation:** Any activity that is conducted solely or primarily for the production of one or more agricultural products or commodities, including timber, for sale or home use and is customarily producing these products or commodities in sufficient quantity to be capable of contributing materially to the operator's support.
10. **Federal Financial Assistance:** A grant, loan or contribution that is provided by the United States, except any Federal guarantee, insurance or tax credit (low income tax credit) and any interest reduction payment, to an individual in connection with the purchase and occupancy of a residence by the individual.
11. **Within the Financial Means of a Displaced Person:**
- a. A replacement dwelling purchased by a homeowner in occupancy at the displacement dwelling for at least 90 days before initiation of negotiations (90-day homeowner) is considered to be within the homeowner's financial means if the homeowner will receive the full price differential, all increased mortgage interest costs and all eligible incidental expenses that are described in Sections 6-8.03 and 6-6.04, plus any additional amounts that are required to be paid in Section 6-11 Replacement Housing of Last Resort
 - b. A replacement dwelling rented by an eligible displaced person is within the displaced person's financial means if, after receiving rental assistance under Section 6-9.02, the person's monthly rent and estimated average monthly utility costs for the replacement dwelling do not exceed the person's base monthly rental for the displacement dwelling as defined in section 6-9.02(b).
 - c. For a displaced person who is not eligible to receive a replacement housing payment because the person does not meet length-of-occupancy requirements, comparable replacement rental housing is considered to be within the person's financial means if MaineDOT pays that portion of the monthly housing costs of a replacement dwelling that exceeds the person's base monthly rental for the displacement dwelling as defined in section 6-9.02(b) 2 or 3. Such rental assistance will be paid under replacement housing of last resort.
12. **Household Income:** The term household income means total gross income received for a 12-month period from all sources (earned and unearned) including, but not limited to wages, salary, child support, alimony, unemployment benefits, worker's compensation, social security, or the net income from a business. It does not include income received or earned by dependent children and full time students less than 18 years of age. See 49 CFR 24.2
13. **Initial Occupant:** Any person who is in occupancy of real property at the initiation of negotiations for the acquisition of the property or Also, has been given a written notice

- of MaineDOT's intent to acquire the real property by a given date. In each case, the property must be subsequently acquired, with the person moving, or moving personal property, from the real property after having established eligibility as a displaced person.
14. **Initiation of Negotiations for the Parcel:** The date MaineDOT initially presents the owner or representative with the written offer for acquisition of the property.
 15. **Last Resort Housing Project:** A project that is authorized for the construction, purchase and/or rehabilitation of dwellings as replacement housing units for highway displaced persons.
 16. **Mobile Home:** The term *mobile home* includes manufactured homes and recreational vehicles used as residences. A recreational vehicle may be considered a replacement dwelling if: (a) it is purchased and occupied as the primary place of residence; (b) it is located on a purchased or leased site and is connected to or has available all necessary utilities for functioning as a housing unit on the date of inspection by the acquiring agency; (c) it meets all local, State and Federal requirements for a decent safe and sanitary dwelling.
 17. **Mortgage:** A lien to secure advances on, or the unpaid purchase price of real property, under the laws of Maine, together with the credit instruments, if any, secured thereby.
 18. **Nonprofit Organization:** An organization that is recognized under Maine law as a nonprofit organization and so is exempt from paying Federal income taxes under Section 501 of the Internal Revenue Code (28 **USC** 501).
 19. **Owner:** A person who purchases or holds any of the following interests in real property:
 - a. Fee title, a life estate, a 99-year lease, or a lease including any option for extension with at least 50 years to run from the date of acquisition;
 - b. An interest in a cooperative housing project that includes the right to occupy a dwelling;
 - c. Purchaser of installment purchase contract, or bond for deed, by which title passes to the buyer on completion of payments; and
 - d. Any other interest, including a partial interest that in the judgment of MaineDOT warrants consideration as ownership.
 20. **Person:** A partnership, company, corporation or association as well as an individual or family.

21. **Rent Supplement:** The amount in addition to present rent that is necessary to enable a displaced person to lease or rent a comparable replacement dwelling.
22. **Replacement Housing Payment (RHP):** The amount, when added to the amount MaineDOT pays for the displacement dwelling, will enable the displaced owner to purchase a comparable replacement dwelling.
23. **Small Business:** A business having 500 or fewer employees working at the site that is being acquired or being permanently displaced by a program project. The site must be the location of economic activity. Sites occupied solely by outdoor advertising signs or devices do not qualify as businesses for purposes of reestablishment expenses.
24. **Tenant:** An individual or family who rents, or is temporarily in lawful possession of, a dwelling unit, including a sleeping room.
25. **Utility Costs:** The term *utility costs* means expenses for **electricity, gas, other heating and cooking fuels, water and sewer.**
26. **90-Day or More Owner:** An initial occupant who has owned and occupied the dwelling from which they are being displaced not less than 90 or more consecutive days immediately prior to the initiation of negotiations.

6-1.07 Standards for Decent, Safe and Sanitary Housing

Decent, Safe and Sanitary (DS&S) is the term used to indicate basic health and safety standards that are applicable in referring replacement housing to displaced persons. Also, residential displaced persons must occupy DS&S replacement housing to qualify for Rent Supplement or owner RHP. It is important that this key term is understood in order to apply it accurately and consistently.

The term “DS&S dwelling” means a dwelling that meets applicable local housing occupancy codes. The following are minimum criteria if any of the following standards are not exceeded by the local code. The dwelling shall:

1. Be structurally sound, weather tight and in good repair;
2. Contain a safe electrical wiring system adequate for lighting and other devices;
3. Contain a heating system that is capable of sustaining a healthful temperature (approximately 70°F) for a displaced person;

4. Be adequate in size with respect to the number of rooms and living space needed to accommodate the displaced person. Have an adequate number of rooms to provide separate bedrooms for children of the opposite gender and meet the requirements of local codes.
5. Have a separate, well-lighted and ventilated bathroom that provides privacy to the user and contains a sink, bathtub or shower stall, and toilet, all in good working order and properly connected to appropriate sources of water and to a sewage disposal system;
6. In the case of a housekeeping dwelling, there shall be a kitchen area that contains a fully usable sink properly connected to potable hot and cold water that is properly connected to a sewage drainage system and adequate space and utility service connections for a stove and refrigerator;
7. Contain unobstructed egress to safe, open space at ground level. If the replacement dwelling unit is on the second story or above, with access directly from or through a common corridor, the common corridor must have at least 2 means of egress;
8. For a displaced person who is disabled, be free of barriers to accommodate reasonable ingress, egress or use of the dwelling by such displaced person. This includes doors of adequate width, ramps, or other assistance devices to traverse stairs and access bathtubs, shower stalls, toilets and sinks. MaineDOT will consider other items that may be necessary, including physical modifications, based on the displaced person's needs.

6-1.08 Relocation Records and Files and Reports

Complete and accurate records are essential to a successful relocation program. They are important in calculating relocation payments, providing advisory services, issuing required notices and supporting audit reviews and claims for Federal reimbursement. Records should be developed concurrently to the activity being recorded. They should be maintained in a well-organized manner on a parcel basis.

Relocation records may contain personal and financial information that must be kept confidential. Therefore, store relocation records and files in a locked facility. Do not share information from files with any other person, including other MaineDOT employees, unless authorized by management. Refer public or media requests for records to MaineDOT's Chief Legal Counsel. The relocation records on federally assisted projects will be available for inspection by representatives of the Federal Highway Administration. Persons who are appealing a MaineDOT relocation action will be provided reasonable access to the records that pertain to their claim.

The MaineDOT standard relocation forms, plus all memoranda and correspondence concerning the relocation claim, comprise the official file. Extraneous papers should not be kept in the official file. Original signed documents, not copies, should be retained in the record file. Relocation

records will be controlled and retained as provided in Administrative Policy Memorandum No. 121 revised, dated March 18, 2015.

MaineDOT provides a yearly statistical report of relocation and real property acquisition to the Federal Highway Administration. The format for this report is in the Federal regulation at 49 **CFR** 24, Appendix B.

6-1.09 Civil Rights

The **Maine Human Rights Act** declares it unlawful to discriminate against any person for reason of race, color, sex, physical or mental disability, religion, ancestry or natural origin. Further, Title VI of the **Civil Rights Act of 1964** states that “No person...shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Any complaint or inquiry of discrimination in the administration of MaineDOT’s relocation program should be brought to management’s attention by whoever receives it. MaineDOT will review the matter and attempt to resolve the issue amicably. If resolution is not achieved in this manner, MaineDOT will request review by the Maine Human Rights Commission. MaineDOT staff will cooperate fully in any review.

In administering the relocation program, MaineDOT commits to comply with other Federal laws and Executive Orders. These are listed at 49 **CFR** 24.8.

6-1.10 Assurances and Certifications

MaineDOT has provided assurances to the Federal Highway Administration that are required by Sections 210 and 305 of the **Uniform Act**. These affirm MaineDOT’s commitment to comply with provisions of the **Uniform Act** and Federal implementing regulations at 49 **CFR** 24 and 23 **CFR** 710. The assurances of compliance also apply to any local government that acquires property and displaces persons for projects that are reimbursed with State or Federal funds.

6-1.11 Persons Not Legally Present in the United States

The **Uniform Act** prohibits relocation payments or relocation advisory assistance to persons who are not legally present in the United States. Each person submitting a relocation claim will be required as a condition of eligibility to certify status as either a citizen or national of the United States or an alien who is lawfully present in the United States. An exception to the denial of benefits is permitted if MaineDOT determines that the denial would result in exceptional and extremely unusual hardship to the person’s spouse, parent or child who is a citizen or an alien in legal residence in the United States.

The circumstances involving persons who are not legally present can be complex, and MaineDOT is committed to implementing provisions in a fair and nondiscriminatory manner. Any situation or issue involving persons not legally present in the United States should promptly be brought to the attention of the Property Office for review and determination. See Section 6-7.02(d) for further guidance concerning this topic.

6-1.12 Multiple Occupants of a Displacement Dwelling

If 2 or more occupants of a displacement dwelling move to separate replacement dwellings, each occupant are entitled to a reasonable prorated share, determined by MaineDOT, of any relocation payments that would have been made if the occupants had moved together to a comparable replacement dwelling. However, if MaineDOT determines that the occupants maintain separate households within the same dwelling, the occupants will have separate and independent eligibility for relocation benefits.

6-1.13 Process for Payment of Claims

The process for payment of claims for relocation benefits requires diligence and attention to detail. Each displaced person may be eligible for 2 to 6 separate benefit amounts, and each may have different eligibility or qualification criteria. The claims may be processed at different times in the relocation process. Reimbursable costs must be confirmed as actual, reasonable and necessary. Claims must be paid and delivered in a timely manner to ensure that displaced persons have the means to purchase or rent replacement housing and pay for moving costs.

MaineDOT shall endeavor to make expeditious payment to displaced persons. If additional documentation is required to support a claim, the displaced person is to be advised promptly and advised specifically what is required.

The following provides guidance on the critical elements for processing claims:

1. Tenant displaced persons must file claims for payment within 18 months after the date of displacement.
2. Owner-occupant displaced persons must file claims within 18 months after the later of the date of displacement or the final payment for acquisition of the property.
3. MaineDOT, at its discretion, may make advance payment to displaced persons to alleviate hardship circumstances that would prevent a timely move. Adequate measures will be taken to ensure that the funds are applied to the intended purpose.
4. MaineDOT, at its discretion, may deduct any rent that a displaced person owes the State for relocation claims. However, no deduction will be made if this would prevent the displaced person from obtaining a comparable replacement dwelling. No

deduction will be made from any relocation claim to satisfy an obligation to any other creditor unless so ordered by a court.

5. MaineDOT will promptly notify a displaced person in writing if part or all of a claim is disapproved. The notification will provide the basis for the determination and the procedure for appeal.
6. The Relocation Agent will provide reasonable assistance to a displaced person if it is necessary to complete and file any required claim for payment.
7. A person will not receive a relocation payment if it duplicates a payment under the Federal, State or local law that MaineDOT determines has the same purpose and effect as a payment under this Chapter.
8. If a displaced person has moving costs paid by an employer, the displaced person would not be eligible for duplicate moving costs paid by MaineDOT.
9. Any lawful occupant evicted for cause on or after the initiation of negotiations will retain the right to relocation payments and other assistance unless MaineDOT determines otherwise under 49 CFR 24.206.

6-1.14 Quality Assurance

Quality assurance in relocation is an inclusive process of evaluating performance and developing ways to continuously improve the accomplishment of program goals. Quality assurance is a shared responsibility of all persons involved in the relocation function.

Quality in the relocation function includes the following elements:

1. Effective coordination with project team members responsible for other project development activities;
2. Timely and relevant assistance provided to displaced persons, with special focus on those having special needs, including the elderly and disabled;
3. Assessment of relocation-related needs of relocation personnel (e.g., training, equipment);
4. Identification of critical path tasks involving relocation, including prioritizing so that more time is available to those having more serious relocation problems;
5. Evaluation of consultant staff who are employed by MaineDOT to perform relocation services;

6. Participation in process and performance evaluations,; and
7. Participation in the continuous refinement of relocation practice and policy to reflect best practices in the field of work.

Quality assurance is a focus on achieving improvement in the performance of the relocation function using tools of policy, training, evaluation and communications. MaineDOT's continuing refinement of quality assurance includes the development of performance criteria and evaluation methods to establish goals and measure progress in meeting goals.

6-2 RELOCATION PLANNING

6-2.01 General

The primary goal of MaineDOT's relocation program is the timely and orderly relocation of persons who are displaced by a project. This requires obtaining detailed knowledge of the needs and intentions of displaced persons. It also requires securing information on available replacement housing and sites for displaced businesses. Relocation planning is a process of obtaining and evaluating information on the displaced person's needs and the recourses required to meet those needs.

All projects involving displacements require relocation planning to be undertaken as a formal process in order to:

1. Ensure that sufficient replacement housing will be available;
2. Identify displaced persons who have special needs (e.g., older individuals, disabled, low-income individuals);
3. Determine the need for special relocation services (e.g., language interpretation, transportation to view potential replacement housing);
4. Determine the time required to complete relocation on the project; and
5. Determine relocation staffing, or whether a project office is needed to serve displaced persons.

Most MaineDOT projects involve 1 or a few displacements and do not require preparation of a formal relocation plan. However, the process of defining needs and resources discussed in this Section should meet the minimum criteria as determined by MaineDOT for projects having a low scale of displacement.

Relocation planning is only effective if it is performed early in the project development process. This is necessary so that methods and strategies can be developed to alleviate any problems that are identified before displacement occurs. For instance, if last resort housing is needed, it will require additional time to plan and provide the housing; see Section 6-11. Similarly, large families or low-income households may require additional time to find housing or may need intensive relocation services from MaineDOT.

6-2.02 Conceptual Stage Relocation Planning

Relocation planning should begin as soon as displaced persons are identified on a project location. This is known as the conceptual stage. At this stage, there may be more than one proposed highway alignment under consideration. Sufficient information is developed at this

stage to provide a cost estimate for relocation and to identify the number and type of dwellings and businesses that will be affected by each proposed. Neighborhood and displaced person characteristics are described as can be determined from visual inspections and secondary sources (e.g., newspaper reports, leaders of community organizations).

The information and conclusions developed in conceptual stage planning will be used in the environmental impact statement or the environmental assessment if these documents are required. They will also be used in the public hearings and meetings conducted for the project.

Consider the following elements when developing a conceptual stage relocation plan:

1. An estimate of households to be displaced, including the family characteristics (e.g., minorities, approximate income levels, tenure, older individuals, large families);
2. Any divisive or disruptive effect on the community (e.g., the separation of residences from community facilities, separation of neighborhoods);
3. Impact of the displacement on housing availability where relocation is likely to take place;
4. The number of businesses, nonprofit organizations and farms that would be acquired and the estimated number of employees affected;
5. An assessment of the effect the nonresidential displacements will have on the economy and stability of the community;
6. A list of businesses being displaced that will require advance coordination and planning so they can be contacted and advised of the studies being made by MaineDOT and of the opportunities for their input through public hearings and meetings;
7. A description of available housing in the area that is appropriate to provide housing for the types of families to be displaced. Contact may be made with local real estate firms, listing services, newspapers, housing agencies, local community organizations, etc.;
8. A description of special relocation advisory services that may be necessary for identified unusual conditions (e.g., a concentration of older displaced persons);
9. A description of the actions that may be needed to remedy insufficient relocation housing, including, if necessary, housing of last resort;
10. Outcome of consultation with local officials, service agencies and community groups regarding the impact on the community affected; and
11. An estimate of relocation costs, separated as follows:

- a. Cost of moving personal property for residential units, businesses, farm operations and nonprofit organizations;
- b. Cost of replacement housing payments (RHP) for displaced individuals and families, including typical mortgage interest differentials and closing costs incident to the purchase of replacement facilities;
- c. Cost potentially incurred by businesses, farms and nonprofit organizations in searching for replacement facilities; and
- d. Reestablishment costs for small businesses, farms and nonprofit organizations.

Use MaineDOT Forms RA-1, RA-2, RA-3, RA-4, RA-5, RA-6, RA-7 and RA-10 to record conceptual stage data. A narrative report may be prepared to summarize data and conclusions. The Relocation Specialist will forward the planning documents and Form RA-10 with comments to the Chief Property Officer and Project Manager.

6-2.03 Relocation at Right of Way Stage

The right of way stage begins when a location for the project is approved. At this point, the displacements on the project are identified. Relocation planning at this stage identifies the housing needs, desires and intentions of displaced persons, and develops priorities and strategies for meeting relocation needs. If the project has significant relocation, MaineDOT will prepare a formal relocation plan before starting negotiations to acquire property on the project.

A Relocation Agent will be assigned to conduct interviews with displaced households and business operators and examine the real estate market for properties of the type and cost (rent or purchase) that will meet displacement needs.

The relocation planning activity will be scoped to fit the anticipated complexity and nature of the displacement. Whether or not the relocation plan is a formal report, the Relocation Agent will conduct and document the following activities to the extent applicable:

- 1. Personally interview each household. Information secured will include household composition (e.g., gender, age, and family status), dwelling characteristics, gross family income, employment location, housing cost (e.g., rent, mortgage details, utilities), desires and intentions for replacement housing, and concerns relating to age and/or disability. For Residential displacements use Form RA-11.
- 2. Conduct a personal interview with the principal owner of each displaced business. At a minimum, these interviews should include the following items:
 - a. The business's replacement site requirements, current lease terms, other contractual obligations, and the financial capacity of the business to accomplish the move.

- b. Determine the need for outside specialists in accordance with Section 24.301(g)(12) who will be required to assist in planning the move, assist in the actual move and reinstall machinery and other personal property.
 - c. Identify and resolve any issues of personal property vs. realty prior to commencing the appraisal.
 - d. Estimate the time required for the business to vacate the site.
 - e. Estimate the difficulty in locating a suitable replacement property and estimate the number of suitable business sites available.
 - f. Identify the need for any advance relocation payments required to support the move and determine the MaineDOT's capacity to provide them. For business displacements use Form RA-12.
3. Provide a copy of the MaineDOT relocation brochure and discuss points in the brochure that are relevant to the circumstances of the household or business. This serves as the General Information Notice that is required to be provided to each potential displaced person. See Section 6-4.01.
4. Prepare an inventory of the characteristics and needs of individuals and families to be displaced based on the standard of comparable replacement housing. Use Form RA-11. Also, inventory the businesses, farm operations, nonprofit organizations and personal property to be displaced, recording data on Forms RA-12 and RA-13 and summarizing all data on Form RA-2.
5. Develop an estimate of currently available comparable replacement housing. Include the type of buildings, number of rooms and adequacy of housing as related to the needs of the persons or families to be relocated. Address the type of neighborhood, proximity of public transportation and commercial shopping areas, and distance to any pertinent social institutions (e.g., house of worship, community facilities). This estimate should be developed to the extent necessary to determine whether relocation resources are sufficient to meet displacement needs. Use Forms RA-3, RA-4, RA-6 and RA-15.
6. Prepare an analysis and correlation of replacement housing needs and resources using Form RA-8.
7. Outline the special relocation problems and challenges, particularly relating to income, disability, age and housing characteristics needed. Evaluate the possible need for last resort housing.
8. Identify Federal, State and community programs that are active in the project area and discuss contacts with organizations that may be beneficial to project displaced persons.
9. Identify economic activity or public or private projects in the area that may affect the supply and demand for housing or cause concurrent displacement. Evaluate the effects on project relocation.

10. Estimate the lead-time and staffing required to perform efficient delivery of relocation benefits and carry out a timely, orderly and humane relocation program.
11. Develop an updated relocation cost estimate using Form RA-10.
12. Assess the need for a field office. Consider the number of displaced persons served, the relocation problems that will be encountered, and the capacity to provide services from a Division Office.
13. Summarize the information above, providing conclusions and recommendations for consideration of MaineDOT management.

The completed relocation plan will be routed to the Relocation Manager. The Program Manager or the Director, Bureau of Project Development will approve special services or resources needed to perform relocation as recommended in the plan.

6-2.04 Last Resort Housing Plan

If housing of last resort is determined necessary to provide comparable housing within displaced persons' financial means, a report will be developed that evaluates options and methods of providing housing. The assigned Relocation Agent will prepare the report at the earliest time that the need is identified and refine it as the case proceeds. The scope of the report will relate to the complexity of the relocation problem and the options available for consideration. See Section 6-11 for further discussion of last resort housing.

6-3 RELOCATION ADVISORY SERVICES

6-3.01 Purpose

Relocation advisory services are the elements of direct personal assistance that are provided to displaced persons to assist them in locating comparable replacement housing or replacement sites for businesses. In addition, advisory services are the means to provide information to displaced persons on program benefits and assist them in completing claims and provide help in adjusting to relocation. This Section provides guidance in determining the scope and level of services to be provided and in planning and delivering these services to displaced persons.

MaineDOT performs relocation assistance advisory service that ensures that displaced persons will receive services relevant to their needs and are delivered without regard to race, color, religion, sex or national origin. The services are intended to assist each displaced person to relocate to Decent, Safe and Sanitary (DS&S) housing that meet the displaced person's specific needs. The services are provided by personal contact. If personal contact cannot be made, the assigned Agent will record the efforts made to make personal contact and offer services.

6-3.02 Eligibility for Advisory Services

Relocation assistance advisory services will be offered to the following persons:

1. Permanently or temporarily displaced persons as defined in Section 6-1.04;
2. Any person occupying property that is adjacent to the real property acquired, when the Senior Property Officer determines that a substantial economic injury to that person will result from the acquisition;
3. Any person who, because of the acquisition of real property used for their business or farm operation, moved from other real property used for a dwelling or moves their personal property from such other real property; and
4. Any person who occupies property after acquisition by MaineDOT on a short-term basis subject to termination when the property is needed for the project (23 **MRSA** 243-4).

6-3.03 Advisory Service Requirements

MaineDOT's relocation assistance advisory services program includes the following measures, facilities and services that are provided consistent with each displaced person's needs and circumstances as determined in the relocation planning phase:

1. Determine the relocation needs, preferences and intentions of each person to be displaced; see Section 6-2.03.
2. Explain the relocation eligibility requirements that pertain to benefits that are applicable to the class of displacement. Advise displaced persons that payments are not considered income for tax purposes.
3. Provide current and continuing information on the availability, purchase prices and rental costs of comparable replacement dwellings. Explain that no one can be required to move unless comparable replacement dwelling is available.
4. Inform the person of the specific comparable replacement dwelling and the price or rent used as the basis for establishing the upper limit of relocation payments. The basis for the determination should be explained.
5. Provide reasonable opportunity to minority persons to relocate to DS&S replacement dwellings that are not located in areas of minority concentration and that are within their financial means. However, MaineDOT will not provide a higher payment than is otherwise needed to enable a person to relocate to a comparable replacement dwelling.
6. Offer all displaced persons, especially the older and disabled individuals, transportation to assist in finding replacement housing. Transportation options can include cab or bus fare, providing rides in a state owned or personally owned vehicle, or reimbursing a displaced friend or relative on a per mile basis. Reimbursement rates will be at the state mileage rate.
7. Provide current and continuing information on the availability, purchase prices and rental costs of suitable commercial properties and locations for businesses.
8. Assist any person who is displaced from a business or farm operation to obtain and become established in a suitable replacement location.
9. Minimize hardships to persons adjusting to relocation by providing counseling and advice as to other sources of assistance that may be available. Provide other help as may be appropriate.
10. Where feasible, inspect housing before referring it to the displaced person to ensure that it meets applicable standards.
11. Provide persons to be displaced with appropriate information concerning Federal and State housing programs, disaster loans and other similar programs administered by Federal, State and local agencies. Agencies that can be contacted include social welfare agencies, urban renewal agencies, redevelopment authorities, and public housing authorities, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Veterans Administration and the Small Business Administration.

12. Advise any individuals that may be eligible for government housing assistance at the replacement dwelling that such assistance could limit the size of the replacement dwelling. Also, advise the displaced person relative to the long-term nature of a rent subsidy, vs. the limited 42-month duration of the relocation assistance rental payment.
13. Maintain contact with local information sources on private replacement properties, including real estate brokers, real estate boards, property managers, apartment owners and operators, and home building contractors.

Advisory services will be offered on a basis commensurate with the displaced person's needs. This may require only minimum assistance when displaced persons are well informed and mentally, physically and financially able to manage their displacement, and neither need nor desire MaineDOT's assistance. A much greater degree and intensity of services and assistance will be provided to those who are older, infirm, immobile or otherwise unable to cope with their displacement or economic problems.

The Relocation Agent must offer assistance to every displaced person. The displaced person may specifically state that there is no need for assistance, other than providing payment offers and processing claims. Even then, the Agent must make a subjective judgment as to the ability of the displaced person to competently locate, acquire and occupy a DS&S replacement dwelling. If the Relocation Agent does not feel that the displaced person possesses the ability to relocate without help, the Agent should make efforts to furnish assistance or refer other service providers having specialized knowledge, skills and programs.

6-3.04 Relocation Payments Not Considered as Income

Each displaced person who is eligible for a relocation payment of any kind will be advised that relocation payments are not considered as income for purpose of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 as amended (redesignated as Internal Revenue Code of 1986). Also, relocation payments are not to be considered for the purpose of determining eligibility of any person for assistance under the **Social Security Act** or any other Federal law, except for any Federal law providing low-income housing assistance. displaced person will be provided reference to 49 **CFR** 24.209, which contains these provisions.

Payments of relocation benefits shall not be considered to constitute Federal financial assistance. Accordingly, payment of relocation benefits that involve construction of a new home or business will not trigger NEPA or other actions because federal funds are used in the effort.

6-3.05 Local Relocation Office

The volume of relocation, the needs of the displaced persons, or a remote project location may prevent effective delivery of services provided from a Region Office. In this case, a project relocation office will be established. The office should consider transportation options available to displaced persons and be convenient and accessible to the displaced persons served by the office. The determination whether or not to establish a local relocation office will be made on a project-by-project basis. The project office will be open during hours convenient to the persons served, including evening hours when necessary. Consideration should be given to the employment of staff in the local relocation office who are familiar with the conditions of the area.

6-3.06 Information Maintained on a Project Basis

The following information will be maintained and/or provided for the displaced persons of each project when appropriate:

1. Current lists of replacement dwellings available to displaced persons without regard to race, color, religion, sex or national origin drawn from various sources, suitable in price, size and condition for displaced persons to the extent they are available;
2. Current lists of comparable commercial properties and locations for displaced businesses;
3. Current data on costs for security deposits, closing costs, typical down payments and interest rates and terms;
4. Maps showing the location of schools, parks, playgrounds, shopping and public transportation routes in the area, where applicable;
5. Schedules and costs of public transportation, where applicable;
6. Copies of MaineDOT's brochure explaining its relocation program, local ordinances pertaining to housing, building codes, open housing, consumer education literature on housing, shelter costs and family budgeting;
7. Subscriptions for apartment directory services, neighborhood and general circulation newspapers and internet sites. Use multiple listing services where available; and
8. Other important information of value to displaced persons in the particular area.

6-3.07 Public Information

To ensure that the public has adequate knowledge of the relocation program, MaineDOT will present information and provide an opportunity for discussion of relocation services and payments

at public hearings and meetings, provide copies of the relocation brochure and give full and adequate public notice of the relocation assistance program.

In an area where a language other than English is predominant, public information will be published in the predominant language as well as in English, unless MaineDOT determines this is not necessary and an alternative means (e.g., interpreters) is used for the displaced person who is unable to communicate effectively or comfortably in English.

The MaineDOT relocation brochure describes the relocation program and the replacement housing policy contained in this *Manual*. The brochure will be made available to interested or affected individuals and organizations. The brochure states where information about State policies implementing the relocation assistance program can be obtained.

6-3.08 Public Hearings

The following provides guidance on public hearings:

1. Corridor Public Hearings. The corridor hearing is held to receive public input regarding a proposed project before there is a commitment to a specific location. Several alternative alignments may be presented for discussion. Relocation impacts and the measures MaineDOT will take to alleviate them will be discussed for each location or alignment under consideration.

The following information will be presented:

- a. The estimated number of individuals, families, businesses, farms and nonprofit organizations that are to be relocated by each of the alternatives under consideration;
- b. The availability of relocation assistance and services, eligibility requirements and payment procedures; and
- c. Studies that have been or will be made and the methods that will be followed to ensure that housing needs of the displaced person will be met.

The MaineDOT representative presenting the information above will be open to hear comments, questions and concerns from persons at the meeting.

2. Highway Design or Combined Public Hearings. The social, economic and environmental effects of the project will be presented and discussed at the hearing that is conducted after the location has been selected or announced as a “favored” location. Displacement is a primary social and economic impact. The discussion on relocation will be more detailed and focused than at the corridor hearing. Information

will be presented on the scope of displacement on the project and the basic elements of the MaineDOT's relocation program. The following information will be discussed to the extent applicable:

- a. Number and type of displacements (e.g., residential and commercial);
- b. General availability of replacement housing;
- c. Time frame in which acquisition and relocation will occur;
- d. MaineDOT's commitment to offer comparable replacement housing within financial means to every person who is displaced from a home;
- e. Information on moving cost benefits and payment limits;
- f. Owner replacement housing payment (RHP) and rent supplements (RS) for tenants;
- g. Business relocation benefits including moving costs, reestablishment expense payments and search expense payments with ceiling claim amounts;
- h. Mortgage interest rate differential eligibility requirements and payment;
- i. Payment of closing costs incidental to the purchase of a replacement dwelling;
- j. MaineDOT's appeal process, see section 6-3.10; and
- k. The name, location and phone number of a MaineDOT representative who can provide further information or answer questions that arise after the meeting.

6-3.09 Occupancy Criteria for Benefits

Relocation advisory services are intended to assist persons in relocating and must be offered to all displaced persons on the project. They may also be offered to all persons occupying property that is immediately adjacent to the real property acquired if MaineDOT determines that the occupant suffers a substantial economic injury due to the acquisition. MaineDOT's intent is to liberally apply this provision so that any person approximate to the project requesting assistance will be considered for this service on the merits of the person's need.

Questions on eligibility frequently arise during advisory service discussions. The following points summarize the basic criteria for benefits:

1. Move cost reimbursement is available to all displaced owners and tenants including those in occupancy less than 90 days prior to initiation of negotiations who thereby do

not qualify for replacement housing benefits. The only exclusion would be persons who move into a property after the property is legally transferred to MaineDOT.

2. A residential owner-occupant must have owned and occupied the displacement dwelling for not less than 90 days immediately prior to the initiation of negotiations to be eligible for a payment up to the \$41,200 maximum.
3. RHPs for residential tenant-occupants will be available to tenants who were renting at least 90 days prior to the initiation of negotiations. On occasion, a payment could be made to a tenant with less than 90 days occupancy in order to avoid a financial hardship under the last resort provisions.
4. There is no RHP eligibility for those residential tenants who take occupancy subsequent to initiation of negotiations unless they are determined to qualify under the last resort provisions for reason of housing not being available within financial means.

6-3.10 Relocation Appeal Process

All displaced persons will be given written notice of their right to appeal as provided below, as well as the procedure for making an appeal. This notification may be provided by the brochure but should also be stated in initial discussion with each displaced person.

When a person indicates dissatisfaction with a determination as to eligibility for a payment or of an amount of payment offered by MaineDOT for any relocation benefit, the Agent or Relocation Specialist will promptly provide the necessary forms and advise the person of the procedures to be followed in making an appeal.

The following points should be covered when discussing a person's right to appeal:

1. The appeal is an informal administrative process. It is not necessary for a displaced person to hire an attorney, but representation is not discouraged.
2. The person appealing will have access to MaineDOT file documents that pertain to the matter being appealed.
3. The appellant will have the opportunity to be heard at a time and place that is convenient.
4. The grounds for appeal must be in writing, but may be handwritten.

Upon receipt of any form of appeal, the Relocation Representative will review and update the Parcel File in preparation for the review.

At any time before the appeal is held, the Agent or Relocation Specialist assigned to the parcel may review the facts and circumstances with the Relocation Manager. If there is a basis for modifying the determination under review, the Relocation Manager may make an appropriate recommendation to the Chief Property Officer. The appellant will be advised of any decision and will have the option of accepting any change or continuing with the appeal process.

If the appeal concerns the following activities, the appeal authority is the State Claims Commission (23 **MRSA** 246-1):

1. Actual reasonable moving expense,
2. Replacement housing allowance,
3. Increased interest cost, and
4. Expenses incident to purchase.

The appeal authority for a MaineDOT decision other than for the actions listed above is the Commissioner of Transportation or an assigned delegate.

The appeal authority will hold an administrative hearing on appeal requests at which the person making the appeal will have an opportunity to be heard. The appellant will receive prompt written notice of the appeal determination. This will include an explanation concerning any amount claimed that has been disallowed. Computations and rationale supporting the determination will be placed in the Parcel File.

Any determination made on appeal to the Commissioner of Transportation or the Commissioner's assigned delegate shall be final and nothing in this section may be construed to give any person a cause of action in the State Claims Commission or the Superior Court. (23 **MRSA** 246-2)

6-4 RELOCATION NOTICES

MaineDOT will provide written notices to displaced persons at critical points in the relocation process. The purpose of the notices is to fully inform each displaced person of the significant actions being taken by MaineDOT and of their eligibility for relocation payments and services. These notices provide the supporting information necessary to claim relocation benefits and enable displaced persons to plan their relocation.

The written notices described in this Section must be furnished to each displaced person.

6-4.01 General Information Notice (RA-16 A or B)

This Notice is provided to all affected persons at the earliest time it is known that relocation may be required. It advises the recipient of the possibility of displacement for a project and summarizes the benefits available from MaineDOT to assist in relocation. This required notice is served by providing a copy of the MaineDOT relocation brochure and the opportunity for the potential displaced person to ask questions of an informed representative.

The general information about relocation is provided at the public hearings and meetings for the project. In addition, notice is provided at the initial interview with each displaced person that is conducted as part of relocation planning; see Section 6-2.03.

The *General Information Notice* is normally delivered in person as indicated above. If personal delivery is not possible, the Notice will be delivered by certified mail with a return receipt requested. Use form RA-16 *Initial Relocation Notice* letter for potential residential displaced persons. Use form RA-16B *Initial Relocation Notice (business)* for potential business, farm and non-profit displaced persons.

Provide the following information as part of the General Information Notice:

1. Inform the person of possible displacement as a result of project acquisition.
2. Describe the relocation program benefits that are relevant to the displaced person's circumstances.
3. Explain eligibility criteria and requirements for relocation benefits. Advise that MaineDOT will help prepare relocation payment claims if requested.
4. Advise the person of the types of relocation advisory services that will be given. These include housing referrals, assistance filing claims and other necessary relocation assistance.
5. Inform the person that he or she will not be required to move unless at least 1 comparable replacement dwelling unit has been made available for occupancy.

6. Inform the person that MaineDOT will provide at least 90-days written notice of the date that they will be required to move.
7. Explain the right to appeal relocation benefits and eligibility determinations.

6-4.02 Notice of Relocation Eligibility

Eligibility for relocation assistance begins on the date of either a) the *Notice of Intent to Acquire Property* letter (form RA-21) being sent, b) the initiation of negotiations to acquire the property, or c) the actual acquisition, whichever occurs first. When this occurs, MaineDOT will promptly notify all occupants of their eligibility for assistance. The Notice of Relocation Eligibility will be in writing and personally delivered if practical. Where it is not practical to deliver the Notice personally, it will be delivered by certified mail with return receipt requested. The type of Notice will depend upon the following:

1. 90-Day Owner. The owner will be provided with a written explanation of the eligibility requirements to receive payments for replacement housing. The explanation will include discussions of increased interest costs, incidental expenses and the option to rent replacement housing. In addition, the displaced person will be provided with an explanation of the relocation services available and where they may be obtained, Form RA-21.
2. Tenant Notice. Within 15 business days of initiation of negotiation for the purchase of the property, each tenant will be furnished, either by certified mail or by personal contact, a written statement that includes:
 - a. The date of initiation of negotiations for the parcel; and
 - b. An explanation of the eligibility requirements to receive a rent supplement payment, and of the option to receive a down payment for the purchase of replacement housing including incidental expenses. The tenant will be provided with an explanation of the relocation services available and where they may be obtained.

The Agent will make a personal contact with each tenant within 30 days of the initiation of negotiations for the parcel to furnish any additional explanations necessary. This contact should be made prior to the 90-day notice to vacate.

6-4.03 Notice of Intent to Acquire

The purpose of a *Notice of Intent to Acquire* letter (form RA-21) is to establish eligibility for relocation assistance before initiation of negotiations for the parcel. This occurs when MaineDOT decides to advance the date of eligibility in order to relieve a hardship circumstance. The hardship

may arise from a change in employment requiring a move, illness or infirmity making it difficult to continue to live in the property, or financial hardship from inability to continue to pay ownership or tenant housing costs.

The *Notice of Intent to Acquire* is a written communication in the form of a letter notifying the person to be displaced of MaineDOT's intent to acquire the property. Use Form RA-21 as a *Notice of Intent to Acquire*. Provide a copy of the relocation brochure with the letter. When a *Notice of Intent to Acquire* is provided to an owner, also provide a Notice within 15 business days to all tenants on the property. When a *Notice of Intent* is provided to a tenant, provide a copy of the Notice to the owner at the same time.

The *Notice* will contain the statement of eligibility and any restrictions thereto, the anticipated date of the initiation of negotiations for acquisition of the property, and contact references to obtain additional information about relocation payments and services.

6-4.04 Statement of Replacement Housing or Rent Supplement Amounts

Displaced persons will be notified of the specific maximum amount of replacement housing and moving benefits at the time of initiation of negotiations, or at a time thereafter when they are actively looking for replacement housing. The notification should identify the available comparable property that was the basis for the maximum purchase price supplement determination. Other comparable properties should also be provided. Use form *RA-23 Comparable Replacement Housing Notice* to inform each displaced person of the amount of the maximum eligible purchase price supplement or maximum rent supplement.

The Statement for tenant-occupants will include a maximum amount of Rent Supplement, monthly rent and utility cost for the comparable on which the Rent Supplement determination is based, and a list of other comparable properties used in the analysis.

Confirm the housing units used to determine the replacement housing amount are available before the listings are used in the replacement housing determination.

Owners typically want to know their total acquisition and relocation amounts early in the process. The total settlement package includes a combination of the fair market value and RHP amounts. Every effort should be made to present the statement of eligibility with the initiation of negotiations.

6-4.05 90/30-Day Notice to Vacate

Residential and business occupants who are displaced are entitled by law to at least 90-days advance notice of the earliest date they will be required to move. The *90-Day Assurance Notice Letter*, Form RA-31 cannot be delivered until MaineDOT has initiated negotiations and informed the residential displaced person of a specific comparable replacement dwelling that is available for occupancy that is within their financial means. The amount of computed maximum purchase

supplement or Rent Supplement must also be provided before the *90-Day Assurance Notice* Letter is delivered. Businesses do not receive a comparable replacement housing notice, purchase supplement or rent supplement notice. They are given the 90-assurance letter at the initiation of negotiation when the offer is given followed by the 30-day notice to vacate or remove all personal property.

MaineDOT uses a 2-phase notification process. The *90-Day Assurance Notice*, Form RA-31, may be delivered any time after the above qualifying criteria are met. It should be further coordinated with the project schedule. The MaineDOT *90-Day Assurance Notice* provides that the recipient will be required to move no earlier than, 90 days from the date of its delivery. The 90-Day Notice further advises that the displaced person will receive a subsequent *30-Day Notice to Vacate* letter that will provide a firm date by which the property must be vacated. The *30-Day Notice*, Form RA-32, will not be given until MaineDOT has legal control of the property and could be given 60 days into the 90-day notice.

The two phase 90/30-Day Notice provides the most effective consideration of displaced persons' need for information about required move date and offers flexibility to MaineDOT in managing delivery of right of way for project construction.

The 90/30-Day Notices are applicable to displaced occupants of businesses, farms and nonprofit organizations. Notices are also applicable to owners who are not displaced, but are required to move personal property that is within a partial taking. However, MaineDOT is not obligated to offer replacement site locations to nonresidential displaced persons. Best efforts in providing relocation advisory services to nonresidential displaced persons are required.

6-5 RESIDENTIAL MOVE COSTS

6-5.01 Purpose

Residential displaced persons are entitled to reimbursement for actual reasonable and necessary costs as determined by MaineDOT, to move personal property from the displacement site to a replacement dwelling. There are several cost elements and reimbursement options available. Also, there are certain requirements to document and support claims. This Section discusses all aspects of residential moving costs.

6-5.02 Basic Eligibility Conditions

Any owner or tenant occupying a residential unit who qualifies as a displaced person (definition in Section 6-1.04) and who moves from a dwelling is eligible to receive payment for moving personal property from the displacement site. The length of occupancy at the acquired property does not determine eligibility for moving expense payment. All displaced persons qualify for residential moving cost reimbursement.

The displaced person has the option of a payment based on the actual, reasonable and necessary moving expenses of the move or a fixed payment that is based on the MaineDOT *Fixed Residential Moving Cost Schedule* (form RA-40).

The following will apply:

1. Single Move. The displaced person is entitled to one move, except where a subsequent move is determined by MaineDOT to be in the public interest. This would be a very unusual circumstance where a displaced person would voluntarily move to temporary housing pending the availability of permanent replacement housing.
2. Reimbursement Limited to 50 Miles. There is no limitation on the distance a displaced person moves either interstate or intrastate. However, the actual cost move claim maximum is limited to the amount that would be charged for a move up to 50 miles (80 km). MaineDOT may extend this limit on determining that the move could not be accomplished within the 50-mile (80-km) distance. This type of exception may only be allowed to the nearest comparable property available.
3. Time Limit for Filing Claim. To receive payment, a displaced persons must file a written claim with MaineDOT on the appropriate MaineDOT form. The claim must be filed within 18 months after the latter of:
 - a. The date the displaced person moves from real property, or moves their personal property from real property, or

- b. The date of acquisition is complete and payment is made to the owner or deposited in court.
4. Payment of Claims. Moving expense payments will be made only after the move is complete unless MaineDOT determines that this would create a hardship. In hardship cases, arrangements can be made for advance payments, or the displaced person and the mover and MaineDOT can arrange in advance for MaineDOT to make a direct payment to the mover.
5. Multiple Occupancy. When 2 or more occupants of a displacement dwelling move to separate replacement dwellings, each occupant is entitled to a reasonable prorated share of any payment that would have been made if the occupants moved together. However, if the occupants have maintained separate households within the same dwelling, the occupants may claim separate moving payments. MaineDOT will make the determination called for in this provision.

To determine separate household, MaineDOT uses several indicators including income capable of supporting separate households, eating meals separately, splitting household expenses, review of tax returns, etc.

6. Owner Retention. When an owner retains the dwelling for removal from the MaineDOT acquired site, the cost of moving the dwelling onto remainder or replacement land is not eligible for reimbursement as a part of the cost of moving personal property. However, if the displaced person chooses to use the dwelling as a means of moving personal property, the cost of moving personal property may be considered eligible for reimbursement. Payment in these cases would be on a fixed schedule basis.

6-5.03 Eligible Moving Costs

A displaced individual or family meeting the basic eligibility conditions above is entitled to receive a payment for moving personal property. This includes the following costs:

1. Cost associated with the preparation of moving bids;
2. Transportation costs not to exceed a distance up to 50 miles;
3. Packing, crating, unpacking and uncrating of personal property, including materials and labor costs;
4. Disconnecting, dismantling, removing, reassembling and reinstalling relocated household appliances and other personal property;
5. Reconnection of utilities, including phone, cable and electric service;

6. Storage of personal property for a period not to exceed 12 months, unless MaineDOT determines that a longer period is necessary;
7. Insurance for the replacement value of the personal property in connection with the move and necessary storage;
8. Replacement value of property lost, stolen or damaged in the process of moving, unless by fault or negligence of the displaced person, agent or employee. This is only applicable where insurance covering the loss is not reasonably available;
9. Reimbursement of actual cost not to exceed \$1,000 for rental replacement dwelling application fees and credit reports required to lease a replacement dwelling.
10. Transportation of the displaced person including any special services (e.g., an ambulance to transport disabled persons to replacement dwelling); for a distance, not to exceed 50 miles unless the MaineDOT determines that relocation beyond 50 miles is justified.
11. Other moving-related expenses that are not listed as ineligible under Section 6-5.04 that the MaineDOT determines to be reasonable and necessary.

6-5.04 Ineligible Moving Costs

The following costs are not eligible for reimbursement:

1. The cost to move any structure or other real property improvement, including swimming pools, large trees and outbuildings that were identified in the appraisal as part of the real estate; or the cost of moving any real property improvement in which the displaced person reserved ownership.
2. Interest on a loan to cover moving expenses;
3. Search costs for a replacement dwelling;
4. Any legal fees or other costs associated with preparing or with reviewing the claim for a relocation payment or for representing the claimant before the MaineDOT or in a relocation appeal before MaineDOT or the State Claims Commission.
5. Personal injury;
6. Cost of storing personal property on real property that is already owned or leased by the displaced person; and

7. Refundable Security and Utility Deposits.

6-5.05 Residential Moving Expenses

A displaced person's actual, reasonable and necessary moving expenses for moving personal property from a dwelling may be determined based on the cost of one, or a combination of the following methods. Self-moves based on the lower of two commercial mover bids or estimates are not eligible for reimbursement under this section.

6-5.05(a) Commercial Move

A commercial mover may perform an actual cost move. The following will apply:

Move Performed by Commercial Mover. If a displaced individual or family desires to have a move performed by a commercial mover, the assigned Relocation Specialist will obtain bids or estimates from two reputable moving companies. MaineDOT will pay the cost of obtaining bids or estimates, if necessary. The Specialist will ensure that all bids or estimates received are based on the same move specifications and personal property inventory. The maximum MaineDOT reimbursement amount will be the lowest responsible bid or estimate.

The displaced person has the right to engage the services of any moving company. MaineDOT will pay the amount of receipted bills, not to exceed the amount of the approved low bid or estimate. Exception may be approved for unanticipated work or conditions during the move that differ from the assumptions in the estimates.

MaineDOT will make a separate payment for costs that are not included in a mover's claim (e.g., reconnection of utilities).

With prior agreement among the parties, the displaced person may present an unpaid mover's bill, along with the moving cost claim form, to MaineDOT for direct payment to the mover.

6-5.05(b) Self-Move

Self-moves are moves that may be performed by the displaced person in one or a combination of the following methods:

Actual Cost Move: A displaced person may perform all or any part of a move with the displaced person's own resources and be reimbursed for the actual cost up to the cost of a commercial mover. The displaced person may rent equipment and purchase moving materials, such as packaging materials and boxes. Equipment rental fees should be based on actual costs and not exceed rates charged by a commercial mover. Move helpers may be hired, or friends and family members may perform the move. Hourly rates should not exceed those charged by a commercial mover. MaineDOT will reimburse

actual costs incurred based on receipted bills. The 49 CFR 24 also allows for a residential self-move payment to be based on the lower of two bids from a commercial mover.

Fixed Residential Moving Cost Schedule: A displaced individual or family is eligible for moving cost reimbursement based on the MaineDOT's form RA-40 *Fixed Residential Moving Cost Schedule*. The schedule amount reflects the number of furnished rooms in the dwelling unit plus basements, attics, garages and outbuildings if these spaces contain sufficient personal property as to constitute a room. The MaineDOT schedule is revised from time to time to reflect current actual costs within the State.

The Relocation Specialist should advise the displaced person of the amount of the fixed schedule payment at the initial relocation visit. The displaced person should also be advised of the number of rooms in the displacement dwelling. This will enable the displaced person to make an informed decision as to the reimbursement option.

If the displaced person elects to accept the fixed cost reimbursement based on schedule, there is no additional payment for items such as utility reconnection because these costs are included in the move cost schedule.

The displaced person does not have to account for how the fixed payment schedule amount is spent. If the actual cost of move is less than the schedule amount, the displaced person may retain the difference. However, there will be no additional reimbursement if the actual move cost exceeds the schedule amount.

The fixed move payment should be encouraged if it clearly would benefit the displaced person. However, a commercial move option should be encouraged when individual circumstances indicate it would benefit the displaced person because of lifestyle, age, disability and other personal circumstance or preference.

This fixed payment option has benefits to MaineDOT. It is administratively simple and there is no need for MaineDOT to secure movers' estimates, confirm actual costs incurred or process multiple claims.

6-5.06 Moves from a Mobile Home

Individuals and families who are displaced from a mobile home used as a dwelling are entitled to be reimbursed for the same eligible moving costs as listed in Section 6-5.03 for other residential moves. A displaced person's actual, reasonable and necessary moving expenses for moving personal property from a mobile home may be determined based on the cost of one, or a combination of the same methods used by other residential moves, that is a commercial move or a self-move that can be one or a combination of an actual cost move or a fixed residential moving

cost payment based on the MaineDOT's moving cost schedule. Self-moves based on the lower of two commercial mover bids or estimates are not eligible for reimbursement under this section. Required documentation is the same as for other residential moves.

Personal property in mobile homes may be moved together with the mobile home as a unit. Payment may be made on the basis of form RA-40 *Fixed Residential Moving Cost Schedule* for these moves.

If an owner-occupied mobile home is moved as personal property and used as the replacement dwelling, then the displaced person is also eligible for the following expenses:

1. The reasonable cost of disassembling, moving and reassembling any appurtenances attached to the mobile home, such as porches, decks, skirting, and awnings which were not acquired, anchoring of the unit and utility "hookup" charges.
2. The reasonable cost of repairs and/or modifications so that the mobile home can be moved and/or made decent, safe, and sanitary.
3. The cost of a nonrefundable mobile home park entrance fee, to the extent it does not exceed the fee at a comparable mobile home park, if the person is displaced from a mobile home park or if the MaineDOT determines that the payment of the fee is necessary to effect relocation.
4. The reimbursement of actual cost not to exceed \$1,000 for rental replacement dwelling application fees and credit reports required to lease a replacement dwelling.

6-6 NON-RESIDENTIAL MOVING COSTS

6-6.01 General

Reimbursement for non-residential moving costs are established by Federal Regulation in 49 CFR Part 24. States have the option of increasing the level of benefits available to displaced persons provided those increases are passed by the state legislature and written into law. The current level of benefits to non-residential displaced persons are as follows:

- The maximum for search reimbursements is 1,000 with no documentation and up to \$5,000 with supporting documentation,
- The maximum for reestablishment expense reimbursements is \$33,200,
- The maximum fixed payment for business or farm displacements is \$100,000.

Relocation assistance and payments provided under the laws of the State that may exceed the requirements of 49 CFR part 24, except for relocation assistance and payments provided to aliens not lawfully present in the United States. 23 CFR 710.203(b)(2)(ii)

It should be noted that while FHWA may participate in these increased limits under 23 CFR 710.203, other federal agencies such as FAA, FTA, and FRA may not have statutory provisions that allow them to participate above the federal limits.

Any business, farm operation or nonprofit organization which qualifies as a displaced person is entitled to receive payment for the following categories of actual moving expenses and related costs associated with moving that the MaineDOT determines to be reasonable and necessary:

1. Moving costs for relocating all personal property including machinery and equipment including disconnect/reconnect costs;
2. Related nonresidential business expenses for:
 - a. connection from available nearby utilities from the right of way to replacement improvements;
 - b. professional services to determine replacement site suitability for the business operation prior to purchase or lease;
 - c. impact fees or one time assessments for heavy utility usage, as determined necessary by the MaineDOT.
3. Search costs for a replacement location not to exceed \$1,000 with no documentation and up to \$5,000 with supporting documentation; and
4. Reestablishment expenses not to exceed \$33,200.

Use MaineDOT's form RA-46 *Moving Expenses of Business, Farm or Non-Profit Organization* for all of the above non-residential moving cost categories. In cases where the displaced entity requests an advance moving expense payment and where the MaineDOT approves the advance

payment use MaineDOT's form RA-46A *Advance Payment of Moving Expense for Business, Farm or Non-Profit Organization*.

All moving expenses must be actual, reasonable and necessary. To ensure this, the assigned Relocation Agent will monitor the process of conducting inventories, developing move specifications, securing commercial moving bids and proposals, and observing the conduct of the move. Emphasis will be directed toward moves that are of a complicated nature or that involve a substantial expenditure.

As an alternative to the actual cost reimbursement as explained above, the displaced business, farm or nonprofit organization that meets certain criteria may choose to receive a fixed payment in lieu of actual moving expenses not less than \$1,000 or more than \$100,000. The specific amount is based on the net income of the displaced business, farm or nonprofit organization.

The reimbursable actual moving expenses and the fixed payment in lieu of moving expenses are explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

6-6.02 Key Terms

See Section 6-1.06 for definitions of business, small business and nonprofit organization. The term "business" in Section 6-6 also applies to farms and nonprofit organizations.

6-6.03 Criteria – Actual, Reasonable, Necessary

Nonresidential moves are reimbursed on the basis of costs incurred in moving. The basic criteria that apply to moving costs are that they be actual, reasonable and necessary. Actual moving and related expenses are factual and documented. MaineDOT determines if costs are reasonable and necessary. These are defined as follows:

1. Actual. True incurred costs as opposed to estimated or potential costs. The actual cost of a move is indicated by a receipt, invoice or canceled check.
2. Reasonable. Not extreme or excessive, not conflicting with reason. This is a judgment determination in response to the question "Would most people agree that something is reasonable given all the facts?"
3. Necessary. Logically unavoidable costs. Are the costs obligatory? Could the move have been conducted in a way that the cost factors would not have been incurred?

The 3-part test and, in particular, the elements of reasonableness and necessity, can be difficult to implement in certain cases. However, they are basic program criteria and Relocation Agents are obligated to apply them to business relocation claims. It is important to apply them consistently and fairly. One way to achieve this is to discuss borderline situations with Property Office management.

6-6.04 Business Moving Process – Contract Move

Business relocations are varied and may be very complex. Business operators are understandably concerned about the security of their livelihood, the welfare of employees, continued service to clientele and whether they will receive adequate payment for relocation costs. In order to meet the challenges of business relocations, the Relocation Agent should follow a standard process in administering relocation benefits. This will ensure fair and equitable treatment of displaced business, confirm the reasonableness of costs claimed and encourage an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence in dealing with displaced business.

The following process is recommended for business moving by means of a contract mover:

1. Advise the Business Operator. Provide complete information to the business about benefits and options. Give the business owner a copy of the relocation brochure marked to indicate relevant sections. Secure information about the business and find out the owner's concerns, priorities and intentions. Provide assistance as the owner desires and needs. Secure help and advice from outside sources as necessary. Advise the displaced business operator on the forms of documentation that are required by MaineDOT to support claims for payment.

The displaced business operator should be advised of the requirements to:

- a. prepare an inventory, see Item No.3,
 - b. notify MaineDOT of the scheduled date of move, and
 - c. permit MaineDOT to monitor the move and inspect the displacement and replacement sites.
2. Make or Confirm Personal/Real Property Determinations. Many businesses have equipment and fixtures that may not be easily classified as real property or personal property. The realty/personalty determination in the Appraisal Report should specify these items and their classification. The Agent should review the status of items with the displaced business operator so there is no misunderstanding as to the items that must be relocated as opposed to items that will be paid and acquired by MaineDOT. Any items that are not clearly classified should be brought to the attention of the Relocation Manager and Senior Property Officer for determination.
3. Perform Inventory. The displaced business operator must provide a certified inventory of personal property to be moved, unless a fixed payment option under Section 6-6.12 is selected. The Relocation Agent should assist in the inventory or monitor or review it to the extent necessary to confirm that it is accurate and complete. If the inventory fluctuates, it should be reconfirmed before the move takes place to ensure that the move claim reflects the facts on the site at date of move.
4. Develop Moving Specifications. Specifications define the manner in which the move is performed. They specify the time span for performing the move and identify items

needing special handling, including disconnection and reinstallation work. Move specifications also identify special trades required (e.g. plumbers and electricians). The development of specifications will ensure that all movers submit proposals (bids or estimates) on the same basis. Also, specifications will avoid misunderstandings about reimbursement or the manner in which the move is performed. The move specifications should reference the property inventory.

Very small business relocations may not require formal written specifications. However, the Relocation Agent should always thoroughly discuss the details of the performance of the move with the business owner before proposals are secured from movers.

5. Secure Moving Proposals. Moving bids or estimates should be secured from at least two qualified commercial movers. The movers should be provided with the inventory and specifications and instructed to determine a price based on the specifications, but they should also identify any options or observed inconsistencies.

The Relocation Agent should be aware that an estimate is not the same as a bid. Most proposals received for relocation are not bids, in that they are not secured under competitive circumstances in which the job is contracted to the low responsible bid. The Agent and the displaced business operator should be alert to the possibility that movers who think they have low probability of securing the work may not provide a reasonably priced proposal. In unusual circumstances of a high-cost move in which it is not feasible to obtain timely or reasonable proposals, MaineDOT may pay a fee for estimates by a qualified mover consultant without expectation that the estimator will perform the move.

6. Monitor the Move. The Relocation Agent is responsible for personally monitoring the performance of the move, other than small low-cost relocations. This means that the Agent will be on site when the move is being performed. The responsibilities include confirming that the move is performed in accordance with agreed specifications and that the inventory moved reasonably conforms to that on which the move cost proposals were secured. The Agent will also confer with the displaced business operator about any concerns or questions involving claims for payment.

On very complex moves where there are significant costs assigned in the specifications to special work (e.g., anchoring machinery, constructing pits and pads, performing a premium time move), the work should actually be performed or be deducted from the claim. Ensure this is clear to the parties before the proposals are secured.

If work develops during the performance of the move that is necessary, but was not anticipated in the specifications, the Relocation Agent can verify the need and reasonableness of the cost for reimbursement. This should occur infrequently on a well-planned relocation.

6-6.05 Business Moving Process – Self Move

A displaced business operator may elect to take full responsibility for the move and be paid an amount not to exceed the lower of two reasonable and responsible bids or estimates. Normally, under this provision, MaineDOT will pay the out-of-pocket costs to the displaced business operator. This will include the following:

1. Cost of packing materials and move equipment;
2. Rental cost of equipment and vehicles;
3. Salary or wages of displaced business employees engaged in move activities;
4. Cost of outside specialists or trades required for the move; and
5. Reinstallation costs for equipment, telephones, computers, etc.

Documentation required for the above items consists of receipted bills and logs showing employee time and cost. Employee overhead may be included in the claim.

The process defined in Section 6-6.04 for contract moves also applies to self-moves.

6-6.06 Eligible Moving Costs

The following items are eligible for reimbursement as moving costs if actually incurred during the moving process and if the MaineDOT determines they are reasonable and necessary:

1. Transportation costs for moving personal property. The transportation charges will normally be reimbursed for up to the first 50 miles of travel. When the move exceeds 50 miles, all estimates will be prepared and claims paid based on a move of 50 miles. Similarly, the mover's bill must be detailed to show transportation costs for the first 50 miles as well as the cost for the remainder of the distance. When MaineDOT determines that the business cannot be relocated within a 50-mile limit, reimbursement will be allowed to the nearest adequate and available site.
2. Packing, crating, unpacking and uncrating the personal property.
3. Disconnecting, dismantling, removing, reassembling and reinstalling relocated machinery, equipment and other personal property including substitute personal property. This includes connections to utilities available within the building. It also includes modification of the personal property necessary to adapt it to the replacement structure including those mandated by governmental law, code or ordinance, the replacement site or the utilities at the replacement site, and modifications necessary to adapt the utilities at the replacement site to the personal property. Expenses for providing utilities from the right of way to the building or improvement are excluded as a move cost but may be eligible as a related nonresidential expense; see Section 6-6.10.

4. Storage costs, including moving property in and out of storage. Storage cost reimbursement is limited to 12 months unless MaineDOT determines that a longer period is necessary. Costs for storage of personal property on a site owned, leased or controlled by the displaced person are not eligible for reimbursement.
5. Insurance for replacement value due to the loss, theft or damage to the personal property in connection with the move and necessary storage. Where insurance is not reasonably available, the replacement value of property lost, stolen or damaged in the process of moving shall be paid unless the loss results from fault or negligence of the displaced business person or their agent or employee.
6. Cost of any license, permit or certification required at the replacement location. The payment will be based on the remaining useful life of the existing permit, license or certification.
7. Professional services, which the MaineDOT determines to be actual, reasonable and necessary, for planning the move and moving and installing personal property at the replacement location. This can include the time of the displaced business operator or employees provided the claim is supported by time logs and MaineDOT monitoring.
8. Actual direct loss of tangible personal property incurred as a result of moving or discontinuing the business or farm operation that is not relocated from the displacement site; See section 6-6.09 for further information on this benefit.
9. Purchase of substitute personal property to replace an item of property that is used as part of a business or farm operation that is not moved but is promptly replaced with a substitute item that performs a comparable function at the replacement site. See section 6-6.09 for further information on this benefit.
10. Cost of re-lettering signs that are made obsolete as a result of the move.
11. Replacement cost of stationery, advertising and promotional items on hand at the time of the move that are made obsolete by the relocation.
12. The reasonable cost incurred in attempting to sell an item that is not to be relocated.
13. *Low value/high bulk.* When the personal property to be moved is of low value and high bulk, and the cost of moving the property would be disproportionate to its value in the judgment of the MaineDOT, the allowable moving cost payment shall not exceed the lesser of: The amount which would be received if the property were sold at the site or the replacement cost of a comparable quantity delivered to the new business location. Examples of personal property covered by this provision include, but are not limited to, stockpiled sand, gravel, minerals, metals and other similar items of personal property as determined by the MaineDOT.

14. Other moving-related expenses that are not listed as ineligible in Section 6-6.07, as MaineDOT determines to be reasonable and necessary.

6-6.07 Ineligible Moving Expenses

The following items are **not eligible** for reimbursement as moving costs:

1. Any additional expense incurred because of operating at a new location except as provided as a business reestablishment expense under 6-6.11, (h), (1-4);
2. Cost of moving structures, improvements or other items of realty retained by the owner;
3. Interest on loans to cover moving expenses;
4. Loss of goodwill;
5. Loss of trained or skilled employees;
6. Loss of business or profits;
7. Personal injury;
8. Any legal fee or other cost for preparing a claim for a relocation payment or for representing the claimant before the MaineDOT ;
9. Physical changes to the real property at the replacement location of a business, farm operation or nonprofit organization, except as provided under section 6-6.06, 3, eligible actual moving expenses and under section 6-6.11,1 eligible reestablishment expenses;
10. Costs for storage of personal property on real property already owned or leased by the displaced business; and
11. Refundable utility and security deposits.

6-6.08 Search Expenses

A displaced business, farm operation or nonprofit organization is entitled to reimbursement for actual expenses and time spent in searching for a replacement location, as the MaineDOT determines to be reasonable. This payment may not exceed \$1,000 with no documentation and up to \$5,000 with supporting documentation. These expenses may include:

1. Transportation. A mileage rate determined by MaineDOT will apply to the use of an automobile.

2. Meals and lodging. away from home will be paid on a per diem basis.
3. Time. Time spent searching will be reimbursed based on actual salary or earnings. In the case of a nonprofit organization, the person performing the search must be a paid employee of the organization.
4. Fees. Fees paid to a real estate agent or broker to locate a replacement site are reimbursable. This does not include fees or commissions related to the purchase of the site.
5. Time spent obtaining permits and attending zoning hearings. and
6. Time spent negotiating the purchase of a replacement site based on a reasonable, actual salary or earnings.

Documentation for a search expense claim will include expense receipts and logs of times, dates and locations related to the search and any receipts or paid invoices for services or travel.

6-6.09 Substitute Personal Property and Direct Loss of Personal Property

A business, farm or nonprofit may suffer an economic loss if the owner elects not to relocate an item of property to the replacement site. This may occur if the item is at the end of its useful life, is obsolete or is so installed so that it cannot be moved economically. In any of these circumstances, it may be practical and feasible not to move the item(s), but to abandon it, or sell it as salvage and replace it with a newly purchased item at the replacement site. Alternatively, the business may decide not to replace the item if it is not critical to continued business operations after relocation.

MaineDOT will pay the displaced business owner for the cost of replacing property that was not moved (substitute personal property) or for loss due to salvage sale or abandonment of the item (direct loss of personal property). The maximum amount reimbursed will be the estimated cost of relocating the item(s) not moved, including detach and reinstall expenses.

The following rules apply to substitute personal property and direct loss of personal property:

1. Substitute Personal Property. If an item of personal property that is used in connection with the business is not moved but is replaced with an item at the new location that serves the same or a similar function, the payment will be the lesser of:
 - a. The replacement cost minus the net proceeds of the sale of the item from the displacement site (trade-in value may be substituted for net proceeds of sale where applicable); or

- b. The estimated cost of moving the item to the replacement site but not to exceed 50 miles.
 2. Direct Loss of Personal Property. If the item is not replaced in the reestablished business, the payment will be the lesser of:
 - a. The difference between the market value of the item in place for continued use at its location prior to displacement, or less its net proceeds of its sale from the displacement site; or
 - b. The estimated cost of moving the item to the replacement site, but not to exceed 50 miles.

If a sale is not completed under Items 1a or 2a above because no offer is received for the property, the property may be abandoned. Payment for the actual direct loss of that item may not be more than the fair market value of the item for continued use at its location prior to displacement or the estimated cost of moving the item 50 miles, whichever is less, plus the cost of the attempted sale, irrespective of the cost to MaineDOT of removing the item.

The owner must attempt to sell the item that was not relocated from the displacement site as a condition of claiming the direct loss or substitute property payment. MaineDOT may exempt a displaced business owner from this requirement if the Department determines that the item has no net market value. In this circumstance, MaineDOT will not charge the displaced business owner for removal from the site for project construction.

It is important to fully support the estimates required for the direct loss or substitute property provisions. It may be necessary to employ a specialty appraiser to determine values for continued use or to estimate detachment and reinstallation costs of large or complex items of equipment.

The direct loss, or substitute property reimbursement, should be fully explained to business operators who may benefit from its provisions. This includes businesses that have older machinery and equipment, custom fixtures (personal property) that would not be appropriate in a replacement site, or equipment that has been rendered obsolete by wear, or by more efficient or cost-effective items on the market.

6-6.10 Related Non-Residential Eligible Expenses

The following expenses in addition to those provided in section 6-6.06 for moving personal property of a displaced business are reimbursable if the MaineDOT determines that they are actual, reasonable and necessary:

1. Connection of available nearby utilities from the right of way to improvements on the replacement site.
2. Professional services performed prior to the purchase or lease of a replacement site to determine its suitability for the displaced business's operation including but not limited to,

soil testing, marketing and feasibility studies (excluding any fees or commissions directly related to the purchase or lease of such site). At MaineDOT's discretion a reasonable pre-approved hourly rate may be established. If a question arises as to what is a "reasonable hourly rate", the MaineDOT should compare the rates of other similar professional providers in the area.

- a. **Reimbursable expenses related to soil testing-** When the displaced business has a written and accepted purchase agreement with an inspection termination clause, field activities, soil sampling and test pitting; lab analysis; and a report are part of due diligence for the displaced business owner is to determine the suitability of site and are reimbursable, if MaineDOT determines that such activities are actual, reasonable and necessary. Soil testing might lead to the decision for additional soil testing in certain cases and MaineDOT's agreement to reimburse for additional soil testing should be undertaken based on information provided to MaineDOT in the initial report and the MaineDOT's determination that the additional testing is reasonable and necessary.
 - b. **Non-reimbursable expenses-** A Voluntary Response Action Plan (VRAP) is an application and document for a scope of work for remedial measures filed with Maine DEP to release the applicant(s) from liability on a contaminated site. The VRAP is prepared after the applicants' environmental consultant has completed the environmental site assessments (ESAs) and the nature and extent of the contamination has been characterized. The VRAP may propose remediation and clean-up of the site and may require Maine DEP to monitor the remediation. These activities go beyond the scope of determining the suitability of the site by the person whose business is displaced. MaineDOT will not reimburse for any of the following-
 1. VRAP coordination by an environmental consultant or others,
 2. Preparation of a VRAP application,
 3. Maine DEP fees, and
 4. Remediation and clean-up costs for the site.
 5. Field activities, soil sampling and test pitting; lab analysis; and a report when displaced business does not have a written and accepted purchase agreement with an inspection termination clause.
3. Impact fees or one-time assessments for anticipated heavy utility usage, as determined necessary by the MaineDOT.

6-6.11 Reestablishment Expenses

A business may be eligible to receive a payment, not to exceed \$33,200, for expenses that are actually incurred in reestablishing operations at a replacement site. The following describes the criteria for reestablishment expenses:

1. Eligible Reestablishment Expenses. Reestablishment expenses must be reasonable and actually incurred and may include the following items:
 - a. Repairs or improvements to the replacement real property as required by Federal, State or local law, code or ordinance (e.g., special wall or floor materials required for a restaurant kitchen);
 - b. Modifications to the replacement property to accommodate the business operation or make replacement structures suitable for conducting the business. This includes most “build out” type costs of modifying interior spaces;
 - c. Construction and installation costs for exterior signing to advertise the business;
 - d. Redecoration or replacement of soiled or worn surfaces at the replacement site (e.g., paint, paneling, carpeting);
 - e. Licenses, fees and permits, when not paid as part of moving expenses;
 - f. Feasibility surveys, soil testing and marketing studies to determine the suitability of a site for the business operation;
 - g. Advertisement of the replacement location;
 - h. Increased costs of operation during the first 2 years at the replacement site for items such as:
 - 1) Lease or rental charges,
 - 2) Personal or real property taxes,
 - 3) Insurance premiums, and/or
 - 4) Utility charges, excluding impact fees;
 - i. Other items that MaineDOT considers essential to the reestablishment of the business.
2. Ineligible Reestablishment Expenses. Following is a non-exclusive listing of reestablishment expenditures that are not eligible for reimbursement as reestablishment expenses:

- a. Purchase of capital assets (e.g., office furniture, filing cabinets, machinery, trade fixtures);
- b. Purchase of manufacturing materials, production supplies, product inventory or other items used in the normal course of the business operation;
- c. Interest on money borrowed to make the move or purchase the replacement property; and
- d. Payment to a part-time business in the home that does not contribute materially to the household income. See Section 6-1.12 (1)(e) for a definition of “contribute materially to income.”

6-6.12 Fixed Payment in Lieu of Moving Expenses

A displaced business may be eligible to choose a fixed payment in lieu of the payments for actual moving and related expenses, search expenses and actual reasonable reestablishment expenses. Except for payment to a non-profit organization it is a lump-sum payment equal to the average annual net earnings before taxes of the displaced business or farm operation, but not less than \$1,000 nor more than \$100,000 maximum.

The fixed payment is an alternative to all other relocation payments for which the displaced business would otherwise be eligible. The recipient of a fixed payment is not eligible for actual moving costs and non-residential related expense, search expense or reestablishment expense reimbursements. The following criteria apply to fixed payments:

1. Eligibility Requirements. For an owner of a displaced business to be entitled to a fixed payment in lieu of actual moving expenses, MaineDOT must determine that:
 - a. The business owns or rents personal property that must be moved, and for which an expense would be incurred in a move, and the business vacates or relocates from its displacement site;
 - b. The business cannot be relocated without a substantial loss of its existing patronage (clientele or net earnings). A business is assumed to meet this test unless MaineDOT determines, for a stated reason, that the business will not suffer a substantial loss of its existing patronage.
 - c. The business is not part of a commercial enterprise having more than three other entities that are not being acquired by MaineDOT, and that are under the same ownership and are engaged in the same or similar business activities. For purposes of this rule, any remaining business facility that did not contribute materially (see Item #1e) to the income of the displaced person during the two taxable years prior to displacement will not be considered “other entity”.

- d. The business is not operated at the displacement dwelling or site solely for the purpose of renting the dwelling or site to others.
 - e. The business contributed materially to the income of the displaced person. Contribute materially means that during the two taxable years prior to the taxable year in which displacement occurs, or during another period as MaineDOT determines to be more equitable, a business.
 - 1) Had average annual gross receipts of at least \$5,000; or
 - 2) Had average annual net earnings of at least \$1,000; or
 - 3) Contributed at least 33 1/3% of the owner or operator's average annual gross income from all sources.
2. Determining the Number of Businesses. In determining whether two or more displaced legal entities constitute a single business, which is entitled to only one fixed payment, all pertinent factors will be considered, including the extent to which:
- a. The same premises and equipment are shared.
 - b. Substantially identical or interrelated business functions are carried out and business and financial affairs are co-mingled.
 - c. The entities are held out to the public and to those customarily dealing with them as one business.
 - d. The same person, or closely related persons, own, control or manage the affairs of the entities.

MaineDOT will make a decision after consideration of all of the relevant indicators and so advise the displaced business owner.

3. Fixed Payment Amount. The fixed payment amount is calculated as the average annual net earnings of the business for the two years preceding the year in which displacement occurs. The term "average annual net earnings" of a business or farm operation means 1/2 of all net earnings before Federal, State and local income taxes, during the two tax years immediately preceding the tax year in which it is displaced.

If the two years immediately preceding displacement are not representative, MaineDOT may use a period that would be more equitable. For instance, proposed construction may have caused a recent outflow of business customers, resulting in a decline in net income for the business.

Average annual net earnings include any compensation that is paid by the business to the owner, the owner's spouse and dependents during the two-year period. In the case of a corporate owner of a business, earnings include any compensation that is paid to the owner of a majority interest in the corporation and the majority owner's

spouse and dependents. For the purpose of determining majority ownership, stock held by all members of the household and their dependents would be treated as a single unit.

If the business was not in operation for the full 2 taxable years prior to displacement, net earnings will be based on the actual period of operation at the displacement site during the 2 taxable years prior to displacement, projected to an annual rate.

4. Fixed Payment – Farm Operation.

A displaced farm operation may choose a fixed payment, in lieu of the payments for actual moving and related expenses and actual reasonable reestablishment expenses in an amount equal to its average annual net earnings computed as described in paragraph 3 above. In the case of a partial acquisition of land that was a farm operation before the acquisition, the fixed payment will be made only if MaineDOT determines that:

- 1) The acquisition of part of the land caused the operator to be displaced from the farm operation on the remaining land; or
- 2) The partial acquisition caused a substantial change in the nature of the farm operation.

5. Fixed Payment - Nonprofit Organizations. For a nonprofit organization, “existing patronage” means membership or clientele. A nonprofit organization is assumed to meet this test, unless MaineDOT determines otherwise. Any payment in excess of \$1,000 must be supported with financial statements for the two 12-month periods prior to the acquisition. The amount to be used for the payment is the average of two years annual gross revenues less administrative expenses. Gross revenues for a nonprofit organization include membership fees, class fees, cash donations, tithes, receipts from sales or other forms of fund collection that enable the nonprofit organization to operate. Administrative expenses are for administrative support (e.g., rent, utilities, salaries, and advertising) and other similar items as well as fundraising expenses. Operating expenses are not included in administrative expenses.

6. Documentation for Fixed Payment Claim. For the owner of a business, farm or nonprofit organization to be entitled to the fixed payment, the owner must provide information to support its net earnings. State or Federal tax returns for the two years before the year of displacement are the best source of this information. Other documentation sources may include financial statements certified by the displaced business owner, the displaced business owner’s accountant or displaced business owner’s attorney may be accepted as supplementary evidence of earnings. The owner’s statement alone would not be sufficient if the amount claimed exceeded the minimum payment of \$1,000. Use MaineDOT form RA-43 *Fixed Payment in Lieu of Actual Non-Residential Expenses* to claim payment for a non-residential fixed payment.

6-7 PERSONAL PROPERTY ONLY MOVE

6-7.01 General Eligibility Conditions-

A person who is required to move personal property from real property, but is not required to move from a dwelling (including a mobile home), business, farm or nonprofit organization is eligible for relocation cost reimbursement. Examples of personal property only moves might be: personal property that is located on the portion of property that is being acquired from a partial acquisition but the business or residence will not be acquired and can still operate after the acquisition, such as a sign or yard light; personal property that is located in a mini-storage facility that will be acquired or relocated; personal property that is stored on vacant land that is to be acquired.

To be eligible for a relocation cost reimbursement, the personal property must be located within the property being acquired. No moving cost can be paid for personal property that is an encroachment partially or entirely within the limits of the existing right of way.

For a non-residential personal property only move, the owner of the personal property has the option of moving the personal property by using a commercial mover or a self-move. If a question arises concerning the reasonableness of the actual of a cost move, MaineDOT may obtain estimates from qualified movers to use as the standard in determining the payment.

For uncomplicated low cost moves of personal property only, MaineDOT may use a move cost determination as the basis for payment to the property owner. The move determination will be prepared by a qualified MaineDOT relocation agent based on previous payments for similar type moves adjusting for the unique circumstances of the immediate case.

6-7.02 Eligible Expenses-

The following expenses are eligible for reimbursement for a personal property only move:

1. Transportation of the personal property. Transportation costs for a distance beyond 50 miles are not eligible, unless the MaineDOT determines that relocation beyond 50 miles is justified.
2. Packing, crating, unpacking and uncrating of the personal property.
3. Disconnecting, dismantling, removing, reassembling and reinstalling relocated household appliances, machinery, equipment and other personal property including substitute personal property. This includes connections to utilities available within the building for businesses. It also includes modification to the personal property including those mandated by governmental law, code or ordinance, necessary to adapt it to the replacement structure, the replacement site or the utilities at the replacement site, and modifications necessary to adapt the utilities at the replacement site to the personal property.

4. Storage costs of the replacement property, including moving property in and out of storage. Storage cost reimbursement is limited to 12 months unless MaineDOT determines that a longer period is necessary. Costs for storage of personal property on a site owned, leased or controlled by the displaced person are not eligible for reimbursement.
5. Insurance for replacement value due to the loss, theft or damage to the personal property in connection with the move and necessary storage. Where insurance is not reasonably available, the replacement value of property lost, stolen or damaged in the process of moving shall be paid unless the loss results from fault or negligence of the displaced person or their agent or employee.
6. Other moving-related expenses that are not listed as ineligible in Section 6-6.07, as MaineDOT determines to be reasonable and necessary.
7. *Low value/high bulk.* When the personal property to be moved is of low value and high bulk, and the cost of moving the property would be disproportionate to its value in the judgment of MaineDOT, the allowable moving cost payment shall not exceed the lesser of either the amount which would be received if the property were sold at the site or the replacement cost of a comparable quantity delivered to the new business location. Examples of personal property covered by this provision include, but are not limited to, stockpiled sand, gravel, minerals, metals and other similar items of personal property as determined by the MaineDOT.

6-7.03 Ineligible Expenses

1. Personal property located entirely or partially within the existing right of way or personal property relocated partially or entirely within the full width of the new right of way and installations and fixtures restricted under 23 MSRA 1401-A which prohibits installation in, upon or near any state or state aid highway, located as follows:
 - a. Within the full width of the right-of-way of any state or state aid highway as laid out by the State, the county or the town;
 - b. Within 33 feet of the center line of any state or state aid highway. This paragraph does not apply to installations or other property in existence on August 6, 1949;
 - c. Within 20 feet from the outside edge of any of the paved portion of any state or state aid highway having more than 2 travel lanes and having a total paved portion in excess of 24 feet in width. This paragraph does not apply to installations or other property in existence on September 1, 1955;
2. Relocation expenses of on premise signs that do not meet the requirements of 23 MRSA §1914 and in particular the location of an on-premise sign that is placed:

- a. Within 33 feet of the center line of any public way if the highway is less than 66 feet in width;
- b. Within 20 feet from the outside edge of the paved portion of any public way with more than 2 travel lanes and a total paved portion in excess of 24 feet in width; or
- c. Within the full width of the right-of-way of any public way.

Paragraphs a and b shall not apply to signs erected before September 1, 1957.

3. Cost of moving structures, improvements or other items of realty retained by the owner;
4. Interest on loans to cover moving expenses;
5. Loss of goodwill;
6. Loss of trained or skilled employees;
7. Loss of business or profits;
8. Personal injury;
9. Any legal fee or other cost for preparing a claim for a relocation payment or for representing the claimant before MaineDOT;
10. Physical changes to the real property at the replacement location of a residence, business, farm operation or nonprofit organization, except as provided under section 6-7.02, 3, as eligible actual moving expenses;
11. Costs for storage of personal property on real property already owned or leased by the displaced person; and
12. Refundable utility and security deposits.

6-7.04 Determination - Personal Property or Real Estate Fixture

Often the determination of whether an improvement is personal property or a real estate fixture is not addressed before the valuation process and is left to the appraiser to make a determination. That can provide less than adequate time for data gathering, owner involvement and coordination with the Property Office. . Ideally, early in the project development process the right of way team member and R/W Supervisor should identify items within the acquisition and construction limits

to determine if an object is personal property or if it is an appurtenance that has become a real estate fixture. Unusual items should be determined in consultation with the Relocation Specialist and Chief Property Officer. As a general rule, if an item would generally be expected to pass with the property when title is transferred, it should be considered as an appurtenance and real estate fixture and not as personal property.

The *Dictionary of Real Estate Appraisal, 6th Edition*, offers the following relevant definitions:

“Personal Property -

1. The interests, benefits, and rights inherent in the ownership of tangible objects that are considered by the public as being personal; also called tangible personal property.
2. Identifiable tangible objects that are considered by the general public as being “personal”—for example, furnishings, artwork, antiques, gems and jewelry, collectibles, machinery and equipment; all tangible property that is not classified as real estate. (USPAP, 2016-2017 ed.)”

“Appurtenance- Something added or appended to a property that then becomes an inherent part of the property (e.g., something physical like building improvements or legal like an easement or right of way); usually passes with the property when title is transferred.”

“Fixture- An article that was once personal property but has since been installed or attached to the land or building in a rather permanent manner so that it is regarded in law as part of the real estate.”

6-7.05 Conditions for Reimbursement Personal Property Only Move

To be eligible for relocation reimbursement personal property must not be an encroachment within the existing right of way and the following conditions must occur:

1. the personal property must be within the acquisition area on the earliest of either the initiation of negotiations or the date a notice of intent to acquire letter is delivered; and
2. the personal property is subsequently removed; and
3. the real property is subsequently acquired.

If the personal property is relocated after a MaineDOT form RA-41a *Personal Property Relocation Eligibility Notification Letter* is delivered, then the owner of personal property is eligible for a payment even though the real property is not subsequently acquired, unless, before the personal property move, a notification that the acquisition will not occur and the personal property need not be removed is delivered to the owner of personal property either by personal delivery or by certified mail.

6-7.06 Personal Property Only Move Process

Typically the project negotiator will act as the relocation agent for personal property only moves, in conjunction with the acquisition of the real property. The negotiator has the responsibility to complete the relocation process for personal property only moves under the guidance of the Property Office regardless of whether the negotiator is the permanent program/team negotiator, a fee contract negotiator or a fill-in MaineDOT employee such as a survey or construction employee. Contractual obligation for fee contract negotiators and assignments for fill-in employees should make this responsibility clear to the assigned negotiator.

As early as possible in the project development process, the project right of way team member and the Senior Property Officer study the plans and address each item within the acquisition area to determine if it is to be treated as personal property or an appurtenance to be appraised with the real estate. A file memo should be generated listing each item as either personal property or real property with a copy to the Appraiser for the project and the Relocation Specialist in the Property Office. Consultation with the Relocation Specialist and Chief Property Officer should be undertaken when there is a question about whether an unusual item is personal property or real property.

Often the determination that an item will be acquired will not be known until late in the process when the right of way plan is complete and the project parcels are ready for valuation. It is still important that the right of way team member and Senior Property Officer address each item as to whether it is personal property or an appurtenance to be appraised with the real estate.

Often individual components must be considered individually. For example a planter and shrub/flower bed are normally to be valued as an improvement within the acquisition and if that planter and shrub/flower bed surrounds an on premise business sign the sign might be considered personal property eligible for relocation while the planter shrub/flower bed should be valued as an improvement to the realty since it is an inherent part of the property that would be expected to pass with title to the property and which cannot be moved without damage to itself or the real estate.

In determining if an item is personal property or real estate, right of way personnel should be sensitive to both the owner's needs and MaineDOT's need to deliver a project in a cost effective manner. For example, a sign from a partial acquisition might be treated as personal property and relocated to remaining land owned or leased by the sign owner, but if the sign has significant depreciation it may be in the owner's and MaineDOT's interest to acquire the sign as an improvement. Often items such as signs, yard lights, canopies and fuel dispensing equipment, etc. are transferred with title to the property in a private sale and in the instance of a total acquisition these same items are best considered as improvements acquired and paid as part of the acquisition rather than as personal property that the owner may not intend to relocate and where the cost of relocation would reasonably be expected to exceed the value in place. Likewise, in the instance of a partial taking which results in a change in the highest and best use of the remaining property, items within the acquisition such as signs, yard lights, canopies and fuel dispensing systems may no longer contribute to the new highest and best use and the owner may not be able to relocate these items to a new location so the best course of action is to pay for

these improvements as part of the acquisition. Also, such items that are part of the remainder, where there is a change of highest and best use, should be considered as an improvement when considering severance damage to the remainder so that the owner is adequately compensated.

1. **Start a relocation contact file.** The negotiator should start a relocation file for each owner of personal property that is eligible for relocation.
2. **Notify owner of: eligibility for relocation of personal property; and process.** Each owner of personal property should be given letter stating the items of personal property eligible for relocation, the stationing of each item and the additional offset that the item needs to be relocated in order to be relocated outside of the acquisition area and be eligible for a relocation payment. The negotiator will use form ***RA-41a Personal Property Relocation Eligibility Notification Letter***. A copy of the letter will be provided to the owner in person whenever possible or by certified mail if it is not possible to meet with the owner in person. With the letter the negotiator should explain the owner's eligibility for benefits, payments that the owner may be entitled to receive, method for application for payments and the appeal process..
3. **Delivery of 90-day assurance notice letter.** The negotiator will prepare MaineDOT form ***RA-31 90-day Assurance Notice Letter*** for each owner of personal property that is required to be relocated from the proposed acquisition. The 90-day notice cannot be delivered prior to the initiation of negotiations or the issuance of a form ***RA-21 Notice of Intent to Acquire Property Letter***. The notice of intent to acquire is only to be issued when the owner indicates that they wish to begin the relocation process before the initiation of negotiations and it is not intended to allow MaineDOT to accelerate the project timetable. Normally the ***RA-31 90-day Assurance Notice Letter*** will be delivered to the owner of personal property at the initiation of negotiations by the negotiator. The 90-day notice is to be delivered in person whenever possible and by certified mail when personal delivery is not possible. When the personal property to be relocated is owned by someone other than the parcel owner, the parcel owner will be given a copy of the 90-day notice that was provided to the personal property owner.
4. **Obtain bids for moving personal property.** Two bids for relocating each item of personal property need to be obtained. Sometimes it is not possible to obtain 2 bids and where only one bid can be reasonably obtained it may suffice. MaineDOT will pay the lesser of either the lowest approved bid price or the actual cost of the work performed. Each owner of personal property should be encouraged provide helpful information to assist in successfully relocating eligible personal property and in obtaining bids for moving personal property. Often, the owner may know of and trusts contractors that have installed the items originally and the owner is more comfortable with the process if fully involved with the process. Where the owner is unable or is unwilling to obtain 2 bids for relocation of personal property, the negotiator is responsible for obtaining bids for relocation.
5. **Approval of bids.** All bids must be reviewed by MaineDOT before approving a low bid for actual work. Once a bid had been approved the owner should be notified. The negotiator will use form ***RA- 41b Personal Property Relocation Bid Amount Approval***

Letter to notify the owner of the approved amount, the name of the contractor and the date by which the work is to be completed. The date of completion of work cannot be sooner than the date specified in form **RA-32 Notice to Vacate Letter**. The owner need not use the contractor submitting the low bid for relocation of the items, but the MaineDOT will not pay more than the approved minimum bid if a different contractor is used or the owner performs the work personally. The owner of personal property may choose to perform the work personally and MaineDOT may pay the owner for the relocation work with proper documentation for actual costs of salary, materials and rental equipment used for the move in an amount not to exceed the approved low bid. A negotiated self-move may be worked out in advance with the owner of non-residential personal property that is based on the lower approved bid less profit and other costs as MaineDOT determines to be appropriate.

6. **30-Day Notice to Vacate.** The negotiator will provide the owner of personal property a completed copy of MaineDOT form **RA-32 Notice to Vacate Letter** in person if possible or by certified mail if personal delivery is not possible. The 30-day notice cannot be delivered to the owner sooner than the date that MaineDOT acquires title to the property on which the personal property is located. The date specified in the letter by which the owner must have the personal property removed should be reasonable given the timetable for a contractor to relocate the personal property and the season. Often relocation of items which involve in-ground work is difficult in cold weather when frozen ground is present. If winter work is necessary the negotiator should be certain that the approved bid amount will cover the additional cost of winter work. *Note: Frequently, when project construction is scheduled for a spring kick-off, it is tempting to delay personal property relocations until spring. This can be a serious miscalculation since relocation of utility poles and installations may occur during winter months and may be delayed by the failure to relocate personal property as early as practicable.
7. **Submittal of claims for payment.** The negotiator will complete a copy of the claim form **RA-47 Moving Expenses for Personal Property Only** which will accompany the bid approval letter with a return envelope addressed to the attention of the negotiator. The negotiator will review the claim form and supporting documentation for completeness and obtain all necessary corrections and supporting documentation before submittal to the Relocation Manager for payment processing. The owner may request that the contractor be paid directly for the work performed when submitting the claim for payment. If the owner does not explicitly request that the contractor be paid directly, the owner will be sent the payment for work performed and is responsible for paying the contractor. It is important that the negotiator and owner understand that the contract for performance of the relocation work is between the owner and the contractor who will perform the work. MaineDOT cannot contract directly for work to relocate personal property owned by a private individual to be relocated on private property no matter if the MaineDOT negotiator acts as an intermediary to obtaining the bids and coordinates the schedule of work with the contractor.
8. **Appeals of Approved Move Expenses.** The negotiator will explain to the owner of personal property that the owner may appeal any MaineDOT decision regarding eligibility

for relocation assistance and the amount of any relocation payment. The negotiator will explain the relocation appeal process to the owner and assist the owner with completing MaineDOT form ***RA-42 Request for Review of Relocation Payment***. If MaineDOT is unable to negotiate any payment for actual, reasonable and necessary moving expenses for personal property at what MaineDOT deems a reasonable amount, either MaineDOT or the displaced person, or both, may apply to the State Claims Commission in writing for a determination and assessment. The proceedings shall be the same as in a condemnation proceeding.

9. **Encroachments.** Personal property which is located within the existing right of way is an encroachment. Encroachments constitute a trespass within the MaineDOT's existing right of way and as such are not eligible for relocation reimbursement. Encroachments are not a relocation issue, but need to be addressed by the project negotiator. Encroachments can represent a safety hazard as a deadly fixed object or may impair safe sight distance. Encroachments in the right of way are automatically within the project work zone of the contractor or state forces and are therefore at risk of damage and represent a potential for injury to construction personnel. If damage to the encroachment occurs the owner has no recourse of a claim against the contractor, since it is an illegal installation. The negotiator should provide the owner of the encroachment a letter by personal delivery or certified mail identifying the encroachment, its stationing and the new distance it needs to be setback so that it is located outside of the new right of way. The letter should state a specific date by which the encroachment needs to be removed from right of way. This letter should not be confused with MaineDOT form ***RA-32 Notice to Vacate Letter*** since there is no guarantee of a specific time duration before removal is required. It is suggested that 45 days be allowed when project scheduling permits to avoid confusion with relocation 90-day and 30-day notices.

6-8 REPLACEMENT HOUSING PAYMENTS FOR RESIDENTIAL OWNER-OCCUPANTS

6-8.01 Owner-Occupants of 90 Days or more

6-8.01(a) Eligibility

A residential displaced person is eligible for a replacement housing payment for a 90-day homeowner-occupant if the person:

1. Has owned and occupied the displacement dwelling as that person's primary residence for at least 90 days immediately prior to the initiation of negotiations; and
2. Purchases and occupies a decent, safe and sanitary replacement dwelling within one year of the latter of the following dates (except the MaineDOT may extend such one year period for good cause at its discretion):
 - a. The date the homeowner-occupant receives final payment for the displacement dwelling; or
 - b. The date that the homeowner-occupant moves from displacement dwelling.

6-8.01(b) Amount of Payment

The replacement housing payment for an eligible 90-day homeowner-occupant may not exceed \$41,200, (for exception see Housing of Last Resort section). This payment is limited to the amount necessary to relocate to a comparable replacement dwelling within one year from the date payment is made to the homeowner-occupant for the displacement dwelling or the date a comparable replacement dwelling is made available, whichever is later. The payment will be the sum of:

1. A purchase price differential payment to compensate for the increased cost, if any, in the amount that the replacement dwelling exceeds the acquisition cost of the displacement dwelling, as determined **in accordance with section 6-8.02**. This is called a *purchase price supplement*.
2. The increased interest costs and other debt service costs which are incurred **in connection with the mortgage on the replacement dwelling, as determined with section 6-8.03**. This is called a **mortgage differential payment**;
3. **The sum of the reasonable incidental (closing) expenses associated with the purchase of the replacement dwelling, as determined in section 6-8.04**. This is called a *reimbursable incidental expense payment*.

6-8.01(c) Purchase

The homeowner-occupant “purchases” a replacement dwelling when:

1. An existing DS&S dwelling is acquired. The dwelling may be a conventional house, a condominium or co-op unit, a life estate in a dwelling, a mobile home or, a boat or motor home designed to provide living accommodations that is purchased and occupied as the primary place of residence and is located on a leased or purchased site and connected to all necessary utilities for functioning as a housing unit that meets a governmental requirements for a decent, safe and sanitary dwelling.
2. A life estate in a retirement home is purchased. The actual cost will be entrance fee plus any other monetary commitments to the home, except periodic service charges may not be considered. The RHP is limited to the reasonable cost of purchasing a comparable replacement dwelling less the acquisition cost of the acquired dwelling.
3. A dwelling previously owned or acquired is relocated and/or rehabilitated. The basis for determining the Purchase Supplement will be the current value of the dwelling at the time of relocation.
4. Construction is completed or contracts have been executed for the construction of a new dwelling on a site that is owned or acquired. The actual cost provision limits the reimbursable construction cost to only those costs necessary to construct a dwelling that is comparable to the one acquired. The costs of adding new features that clearly exceed comparable features in the displacement dwelling are not eligible for reimbursement. Eligible costs of the site will be limited to the current residential fair market value of the replacement site rather than what the displaced person actually paid for it.
5. Any displaced homeowner-occupant who has obtained legal ownership of a replacement dwelling or land, on which the replacement dwelling is located, constructed or relocated to, is eligible for a RHP if the replacement dwelling meets DS&S standards. The current fair market value of land and dwelling will constitute the “actual cost” in the replacement housing determination. The requirement to use the current fair market value of the replacement dwelling for residential use does not mean that the MaineDOT must have the property appraised. Any reasonable method of arriving at a supportable market value may be used by the MaineDOT.

6-8.01(d) Occupancy of Replacement Dwelling

The displaced homeowner-occupant will be considered to have occupancy of a replacement dwelling on the date the displaced homeowner-occupant takes title to the dwelling intending it to be a permanent place of residence.

6-8.01(e) Decent, Safe and Sanitary (DS&S) Standards

The displaced person is not required to purchase and occupy comparable housing. To qualify for a RHP, the displaced homeowner-occupant must purchase and occupy a dwelling meeting DS&S standards as defined in Section 6-1.07.

MaineDOT will inspect the replacement dwelling before purchase by the displaced person and verify that it meets DS&S criteria. The Relocation Agent will advise the displaced person to promptly notify MaineDOT when a contract to purchase is signed. The Agent will also advise the displaced person to write the following condition in any purchase contract:

“This contract is conditioned on inspection of the property by MaineDOT representative by (date 10 days forward) and certification that it meets decent safe and sanitary standards.”

A qualified MaineDOT employee, a local code inspector or a private contractor hired by MaineDOT, may perform the inspection and certification. If it is not practical to perform the inspection because the displaced person has moved out of State, a request may be made to the Department Of Transportation in that State to perform the inspection as a reciprocal service courtesy. If an inspection is not practical, a self-certification from the displaced person that DS&S housing is occupied may be accepted.

The DS&S inspection is exclusively for the purpose of qualifying for payment of a relocation claim. It does not provide certification for any other purpose, and MaineDOT does not guarantee the condition or performance of the dwelling or its systems.

DS&S deficiencies must be corrected before a RHP claim is paid. However, a RHP may be made, provided that there is a holdback from the total purchase price supplement pending correction of the deficiencies and a MaineDOT final inspection. The cost to the displaced person of correcting a deficiency may be added to the cost of the replacement dwelling for the purpose of determining the claim amount, but may not be reimbursed at a rate exceeding the maximum eligible purchase price supplement based on an existing DS&S listing.

When available comparable replacement properties are limited a RHP can be computed based upon an available property having minor DS&S deficiencies, provided the deficiencies can be corrected for a reasonable amount. Use of non-DS&S properties with minor deficiencies should be limited to situations where a windfall or excessive expenditure can be avoided and/or where housing of last resort is needed to relocate the displaced homeowner-occupant to comparable housing. The payment computation **must** reflect the cost to correct the deficiencies. If the housing is used to meet the “make available” requirement, the housing must be available and be DS&S at the time of the move.

6-8.01(f) Persons not Lawfully Present in the United States (49 CFR 24.208)

The **Uniform Act** provides that persons who are not legally present in the United States are not eligible for relocation payments and assistance. To implement this provision, MaineDOT may

require that each person or head of household applying for payment or assistance certify that the individual or, in case of a family, each family member, is either a citizen or a national of the United States, or an alien who is legally present in the United States. No payment will be made to a person or household that does not so certify. The certification may be included as part of the claim for relocation payments when filed with MaineDOT.

In the case of a family, the certification may be made by the head of household on behalf of other family members. In the case of an unincorporated business, farm or non-profit organization, certification that each owner is either a citizen or a national of the United States, or an alien who is legally present in the United States, may be made by the principle owner, manager, or operating officer on behalf of other persons with an ownership interest. In the case of an incorporated business, farm or non-profit organization, certification that the corporation is authorized to conduct business in the United States may be made by the principle owner or operating officer on behalf of the corporation.

In computing relocation payments, if any member of a household or owner of an unincorporated business, farm or non-profit organization is (are) determined to be ineligible because of a failure to be legally present in the United States, no relocation payment or assistance may be made to that person. Any payment for which such a household, unincorporated business, farm or non-profit organization would otherwise be eligible will be recomputed for the household based on the number of eligible household members and for the unincorporated business, farm or non-profit organization, based on the ratio of ownership between eligible and ineligible owners.

MaineDOT shall consider the certifications provided by each individual, family, unincorporated business, farm or non-profit organization and corporation to be valid, unless MaineDOT determines that the certification is invalid based on a review of the alien's documentation or other information that MaineDOT considers to be reliable and appropriate. If upon review of documentation or other credible evidence, MaineDOT has reason to believe that a person's certification is invalid (for example a document reviewed does not on its face reasonably appear genuine), and that as a result, such person may be an alien not lawfully present in the United States, MaineDOT will obtain the following information before making a final determination:

1. If MaineDOT has reason to believe that the certification is invalid of a person who has certified that they are an alien lawfully present in the United States, the MaineDOT shall obtain verification of the person's status by using the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program administered by USCIS to verify immigration status.
2. If MaineDOT has reason to believe that the certification is invalid of a person who has certified that they are a citizen or national, the MaineDOT will request evidence of United States citizenship or nationality from that person and, if considered necessary, verify the accuracy of such evidence with the issuer.

The focus of the eligibility restriction is the administration of the relocation program, not enforcement of immigration law. MaineDOT representatives will not seek out illegal aliens. Personal information secured by MaineDOT representatives during the relocation process should not be disclosed to any outside party unless ordered by a court and as authorized by MaineDOT management. MaineDOT representatives should check the current status of State law and executive orders as pertains to collecting alien status information before doing so on any project.

MaineDOT may exempt persons from denial of relocation assistance, if MaineDOT determines that the denial would result in an exceptional or extremely unusual hardship to the person's spouse, child or parent who is a citizen of the United States or is an alien legally admitted for permanent residence in the United States. "Exceptional and extremely unusual hardship" means that the denial of relocation payments and advisory assistance to such person will directly result in:

1. A significant and demonstrable adverse impact on the health or safety of that person;
2. A significant and demonstrable adverse impact on the continued existence of the family unit of that person;
3. Any other impact that MaineDOT determines will have a significant and demonstrable adverse impact on that person.

At the earliest time that a Relocation Agent becomes aware that a relocation case may involve persons who are not legally present in the United States, the Agent will present all relevant facts and circumstance to the attention of the Property Office. The Property Office will determine the course of action in each case.

6-8.01(g) Payments – "Spend to Get" Requirement

Replacement Housing Payments are reimbursement for actual costs incurred in the purchase of replacement housing. The displaced person must "spend to get" the amount determined as the maximum eligible Purchase Supplement. The purchase price of the DS&S replacement dwelling must equal or exceed the amount MaineDOT determined as the estimated cost of comparable dwelling, or the claim will be reduced to the amount actually paid. In addition, the full amount of the payment must be applied to the cost of housing. This may be ensured by the RHP check being made available for disbursement at closing on the replacement dwelling, or payment of the amount into an escrow account. MaineDOT forms ***RA-55 Application for Replacement Housing Escrow Payment*** and ***RA-56 Escrow Agreement*** will be used for this purpose.

6-8.02 Determination of Price Differential

The upper limit of a purchase price supplement will be based on the cost of a comparable replacement dwelling. The purchase price supplement or price differential to be paid is the amount which must be added to the acquisition cost of the displacement dwelling and site to provide a total amount equal to the lesser of:

1. The reasonable cost that is necessary to purchase a comparable replacement dwelling as determined by MaineDOT, or
2. The purchase price actually paid to purchase and occupy a DS&S replacement dwelling by the displaced homeowner-occupant.

6-8.02(a) Method

If available at least 3 comparable replacement dwellings that are available on the open market will be examined and the purchase price supplement computed on the basis of the available dwelling most nearly representative of, and equal to, or better than, the displacement dwelling. The selection of the most representative comparable replacement dwellings will be made by careful consideration of all factors in the dwellings being considered and the needs of the displaced person with reference to the elements in the definition of comparable replacement housing. To the extent feasible, comparable replacement dwellings will be selected from the neighborhood in which the displacement dwelling was located or, if that is not possible, in nearby or similar neighborhoods where housing costs are generally the same or higher. Less than 3 comparables may be used for this determination when fewer comparable dwellings are available. The Relocation Agent performing the determination must provide a full explanation supporting the determination, including a discussion of efforts to locate more than 1 comparable. Use MaineDOT form ***RA-29 Comparable Dwelling Grid*** and ***RA-23 Comparable Replacement Housing Notice*** to determine the Purchase Price Supplement

To file a claim for a purchase price supplement payment for actual cost the Relocation Specialist should complete MaineDOT form ***RA-48 REPLACEMENT HOUSING PAYMENT NOTICE/APPLICATION*** for the homeowner-occupant's signature. The completed application for payment must be accompanied by all necessary documentation such as: a fully executed Purchase and Sales Agreement; a closing statement for the replacement property purchased; or a market valuation for the replacement property already owned by the displaced homeowner-occupant.

The asking price for the comparable replacement dwellings are not adjusted to reflect an indicated selling price, giving the displaced person the benefit of the doubt. If a displaced person elects to purchase the comparable property but cannot acquire the property for the asking price because of competitive bidding, the MaineDOT will determine the RHP based on other available comparables. When a dwelling is obviously overpriced in relation to other comparables, it may not be used in the replacement housing computation.

6-8.02(b) Method – Major Exterior Attributes

The site of the comparable replacement dwelling selected in computing the Purchase Price Supplement may be comparable except it lacks one or more major exterior attributes present at the displacement property (such as a significantly smaller site or lacks a garage, outbuilding, or a swimming pool). The appraised value of these items will be deducted from the acquisition cost of the acquired dwelling for purposes of computing the Purchase Price Supplement. It is not appropriate to add the value of the exterior attribute to the comparable.

The cost of actually building an exterior attribute at the replacement property occupied may be added to the acquisition cost provided that the attribute built has the same function as the one at the displacement property.

Figure 6-1 provides an example of determining a Purchase Supplement where there is a major exterior attribute.

The Appraiser assigned \$4,000 contributory value for the garage and a total property value of \$100,000 for the acquired property. A comparable house not having a garage is listed for sale at \$106,000. The Purchase Supplement amount is computed below:

Comparable dwelling		\$106,000
Displacement property value	\$100,000	
Less: Value of the garage	<u>\$ 4,000</u>	
LESS: Adjusted displacement property value		<u>\$ 96,000</u>
Purchase Price Supplement amount		\$10,000

FIGURE 6-1 — Example of a Major Exterior Attribute (Garage)

6-8.02(c) Highest and Best Use Other Than Residential

When the acquired dwelling is located on a site where the fair market value is established on a highest and best use generating a greater value than residential, the Purchase Supplement maximum amount will be determined by deducting the acquisition price of the acquired dwelling plus the acquisition price of that portion of the acquired land that represents a tract typical in size for the area from the probable selling price of the most comparable listing. See Figure 6-2.

The acquired house (whole take) is on a 6-acre site that is zoned commercial. The typical residential lot in the area is 1 acre. The land is appraised at \$120,000/acre and the dwelling is valued at \$20,000 (interim use value). A comparable house on a residentially zoned lot is available for \$150,000. The maximum Purchase Supplement amount is determined below:

Comparable property	\$ 150,000.
LESS: Value of the house acquired on 1 acre	<u>\$ (140,000)</u>
Maximum Purchase Supplement amount.....	\$ 10,000.

FIGURE 6-2 — Example of Acquired Dwelling on a Commercial Zoned Site

6-8.02(d) Mixed-Use Property

When the acquired dwelling is a unit in a structure that also includes space used for nonresidential purposes, the amount of the Purchase Supplement offer will be determined by using only that portion of the fair market value that is attributable to the residential use of the acquired property. See Figure 6-3.

A grocery store owner lives in a 1-bedroom, 1-bath apartment above the store. The residential unit has 1,000 ft² of habitable living space. The property is appraised at \$150,000. The Appraiser allocated 35% of total property value to the residence. There are several 1-bedroom, 1-bath units available for sale. They are: (a) a duplex with 2 identical units for \$125,000; (b) a single-family house for \$75,000; and (c) a condo unit in a 6-plex for \$50,000.

Most comparable property: (a) duplex unit value	\$62,500 (\$125,000 ÷ 2)
LESS: Displacement dwelling value	<u>\$52,500</u> (35% X \$150,000)
Maximum Purchase Supplement amount	\$10,000

FIGURE 6-3 — Mixed Use (Example 1) Displacement Property in Residential and Commercial Use

When the replacement property is a structure that includes space used for nonresidential purposes, only that part of the total cost that relates to the value of the owner's living unit will be used to determine the Purchase Supplement.

When the replacement property contains buildings other than the residence that are used for nonresidential purposes, the value of these buildings must be carved out of the entire purchase price of the replacement property in order to determine the residential use value. The residential use value will represent the amount paid for replacement housing when determining the Purchase Supplement payment amount. See Figure 6-4.

A family who is displaced from a single-family house with an acquisition value of \$90,000 and a Purchase Supplement of \$15,000 contracts to purchase an operating chicken farm for \$250,000. They will live in the farmhouse, which has an estimated value separate from the farm of \$100,000. The displaced family submits a claim for the full \$15,000 maximum Purchase Supplement amount.

The family is eligible to receive \$10,000, not \$15,000, as a Purchase Supplement payment. Before processing the claim for payment, the Relocation Agent must determine the value of the farmhouse on a normal lot for residential use in the area. This will determine the payment ceiling. The part of the purchase price attributable to the farm operation (\$150,000) will not be considered in the claim. This should be explained to the displaced family before they searched for replacement property.

FIGURE 6-4 — Mixed Use Property (Example 2)
Displaced person **Purchases Mixed Use Replacement Property**

When the acquired homeowner-occupant dwelling is part of a multi-family structure, the amount of the estimated maximum Purchase Supplement will be the difference between the value of a single unit of a multi-family comparable and the value of the portion of the acquired property devoted to homeowner-occupied, residential-use. When the replacement property is a multi-family structure, only the value of the displaced homeowner-occupant's living unit can be used to determine the Purchase Supplement payment, not the entire purchase price. The actual Purchase Supplement amount will be the price of a single unit of the selected multi-family comparable or the price of the homeowner-occupants replacement unit of the multi-family replacement, whichever is less, minus the homeowner-occupant's residential use portion of the acquired property. See Figure 6-5.

The acquired dwelling is a condominium unit in a building containing 3 stores and 6 residential units. The appraised value of the building is \$1.1 million. The value of the displaced person's unit is \$130,000.

The Purchase Supplement is the cost of a comparable condo unit in a similarly configured building having residential and commercial units, less the \$130,000 attributed to the displacement unit. There may not be a condominium unit on the market in a mixed use, 6-residential unit building. Look for units in buildings having 5, 4, 3 or 2 units. Use the "most comparable" unit considering the ownership form and configuration of units, as well as other factors.

**FIGURE 6-5 — Mixed Use Property (Example 3)
Owner Displaced From Condominium Unit**

6-8.02(e) Partial Acquisition of a Typical Residential Site

The following criteria will apply to partial acquisitions of typical residential sites:

1. **Remaining Buildable Site.** If the acquisition of a portion of a typical residential property causes the displacement of the homeowner-occupant from the dwelling and the remainder is a buildable residential site, MaineDOT may offer to purchase the entire property. If the homeowner-occupant refuses to sell the buildable remainder site to MaineDOT, the fair market value of the remainder will be added to the acquisition cost of the acquired property for the purposes of computing the maximum Purchase Supplement payment.

Example: The site is a 1.5 acre parcel with a homeowner-occupied single family dwelling. After the partial acquisition the remainder will be a desirable buildable lot of 0.90 acre. A comparable replacement dwelling has been found that is offered for sale for \$210,000.

Value Before the Acquisition -----	
\$190,000	Value Remainder After Acquisition -----
-----\$ 35,000	Value of Acquisition -----
-----	\$155,000

If the MaineDOT makes an offer to purchase the remaining buildable lot and the displaced homeowner-occupant refuses to sell, the value of the lot (\$35,000) may be added to the acquisition price for the purpose of the purchase price differential computation (\$155,000 + \$35,000). Consequently, instead of the computation being based on a \$155,000 acquisition price, the calculation can be based on a \$190,000 acquisition price, thus lowering the price differential by \$35,000.

.....	Instead of this:	You would have this:
Cost of Comparable	\$210,000	\$210,000
Value of Acquisition	<u>\$155,000</u>	<u>\$190,000</u>
Price Differential	\$ 55,000	\$ 20,000

FIGURE 6-6 – Example of a Partial Acquisition having a Buildable Remainder

2. Remaining Uneconomic Remnant. If the acquisition of a portion of a typical residential property causes the displacement of the homeowner-occupant from the dwelling and the remainder site is an uneconomic remnant, MaineDOT will offer to purchase the entire property. If the owner declines to sell the remainder that is an uneconomic remnant to MaineDOT, the value of the part acquired and damages to the remainder will be used in computing the RHP. The fair market value of the remainder site that is an uneconomic remnant is not used in computing the RHP.

Example: The site is a 1.5 acre parcel with a homeowner-occupied single family dwelling. After the partial acquisition, the remainder is an uneconomic remnant. The value before the acquisition is \$190,000. The value of the remainder after the acquisition is \$5,000. Hence, the value of the part acquired and damages if any is \$185,000. A comparable dwelling has been found with a listing price of \$210,000.

<u>Owner Wishes to Sell</u>	
Cost of Comparable	\$210,000
Less: Payment for Acquired Property	\$185,000
Less: Value of Uneconomic Remnant	<u>\$ 5,000</u>
Equals: Price Differential	\$ 20,000
<u>Owner Does Not Wish to Sell</u>	
Cost of Comparable	\$210,000
Less: Payment for Acquired Property	<u>\$185,000</u>
Equals: Price Differential	\$ 25,000

FIGURE 6-7 Example of a Partial Acquisition with an Uneconomic Remnant

3. Larger Tract than Normal. If the acquisition of a portion of a residential property causes the displacement of the homeowner-occupant from the dwelling on a

significantly larger site than is typical for residential use in the area, the maximum estimated RHP is the asking price of a comparable replacement dwelling on a tract that is typical in size for residential use, less the acquisition price of the acquired dwelling and the portion of the acquisition site that represents a typical size residential lot in the area, but excluding the value of that portion of the acquisition that is in excess of the typical residential site in the area . See Figure 6-8 for an example.

FIGURE 6-8 — Example of Partial Acquisition from Larger than Typical Residential Site

The displacement dwelling is on a 4-acre site. One-acre lots are typical in the area. The house and 3 acres are being acquired. The appraised value is \$125,000 (no remainder damage). The Appraiser valued the land at \$6,000/acre. A comparable house on 1 acre is available and listed for sale for \$125,000.

Comparable property	\$ 125,000
Value of Acquisition	\$125,000
Less Value of 2 acres in excess of typical residential site (\$6,000/acre).....	<u>\$ 12,000</u>
LESS: Displacement property	<u>\$ 113,000</u>
Maximum Purchase Supplement.....	\$ 12,000

* \$12,000 value of 2 acres of acquisition area excess to typical lot has been deducted. The \$6,000 value of the remainder is not added to the displacement property value since it is part of the original lot in excess of the size of a typical residential lot in the area.

6-8.02(f) Payment to Occupant with a Partial Ownership

When a displacement dwelling is owned by several persons and occupied by only 1 of the co-owners, the RHP will be the lesser of:

1. The difference between the owner-occupants' share of the acquisition cost of the acquired dwelling and the actual cost of the replacement, or
2. The difference between the total acquisition cost of the acquired dwelling and the amount determined by MaineDOT as necessary to purchase a comparable dwelling.

Generally, the circumstance of partial homeowner-occupants arises when the ownership comes from a family inheritance, where 1 or more but not all of the heirs occupy the property. See Figure 6-9.

Ms. Jones occupies the house. She shares ownership with her 2 sons who live elsewhere. MaineDOT acquires the property for \$120,000. A comparable house is available for \$130,000. Ms. Jones relocates to a condo unit costing \$60,000.

Ms. Jones' share of the proceeds from the sale to MaineDOT is \$40,000. Applying the 2-part rule in Items #1. and 2., the applicable Purchase Supplement is \$10,000 (Rule #2.).

FIGURE 6-9 — Example of a Homeowner-Owner Occupant having a Partial Interest

The homeowner-occupants with a partial ownership interest must spend their share of the acquisition payment plus the computed supplemental payment in order to receive the maximum payment.

If unusual circumstances would create an unintended hardship on homeowner-occupants with a partial ownership, MaineDOT may apply an alternative method.

6-8.02(g) Homeowner-Occupant Retains Displacement Dwelling

The displaced homeowner may retain the dwelling and move and reoccupy it on a relocation site. The Purchase Supplement in an owner-retention situation will be determined as the lesser of the sum of the four items below, or the amount determined using the comparable method:

1. The cost of moving and restoring the dwelling to a condition comparable to that prior to the move;
2. The cost of curing any DS&S deficiencies (i.e., no payment may be made unless the replacement dwelling meets DS&S standards); and
3. The current fair market value for residential use of the replacement dwelling site, unless the displaced homeowner-occupant rented the displacement site and there is reasonable opportunity to rent a suitable replacement site; and
4. The retention value of the dwelling, if the retention value was reflected in the MaineDOT acquisition cost used when computing the replacement housing payment.

MaineDOT will develop the Replacement Housing Payment based on the comparable method and make the offer to the displaced homeowner-occupant. This serves as the estimated maximum replacement housing amount. If an owner salvages and relocates the displacement dwelling, MaineDOT will determine the actual RHP as above.

6-8.02(h) Revisions to Purchase Supplement Amount

Replacement housing must be available to the displaced person at a price that is not higher than the selected comparable dwelling. If the original comparable dwelling is no longer available, the MaineDOT must assure itself that equally comparable dwellings are still available in the same price range. Where comparable housing is no longer available within the amount initially established, MaineDOT will review the housing market and establish a revised replacement housing amount. However, a Purchase Supplement amount previously offered will not be reduced as a result of this review, unless the displaced homeowner-occupant has made little or no effort to acquire a replacement dwelling, after a reasonable period of time, it would be permissible to reduce the offer if a less-expensive, comparable dwelling becomes available. If the MaineDOT elects to lower a payment offer, it will document the files with the rationale and make every effort to avoid acting in a coercive manner.

6-8.03 Mortgage Interest Differential (MID)

Compensation for increased interest payments are provided to compensate a displaced homeowner-occupant for higher increased interest costs required for financing a replacement dwelling. The increased interest payment will be allowed only when the dwelling acquired by MaineDOT was encumbered by a bona fide mortgage that has a valid lien on the dwelling for not less than 180 days before the established eligibility date, usually the initiation of negotiations date.

6-8.03(a) General

All valid mortgages on the dwelling that is acquired by MaineDOT will be used to compute the increased interest portion of the RHP. Home equity loans are valid mortgages on residential real property regardless of how the proceeds from the loans are used. Therefore, they must be included in the computation. In the case of a home equity loan, the unpaid balance will be that balance that existed 90 days prior to the initiation of negotiations or the balance on the date of acquisition, whichever is less. When the property is secured with an adjustable rate mortgage, the mortgage interest rate that is current on the property as of the date of acquisition will be used in the computation. When dealing with a reverse mortgage MaineDOT will follow the regulations as outlined in 49 CFR 24.401(e) Reverse mortgages.

The displaced person will be advised of the approximate amount of the MID as soon as the facts relevant to the current mortgages are known. The payment will be made at or near the time of closing on the replacement dwelling so that the new mortgage can be reduced.

6-8.03(b) MID Payment Computation

The payment for increased mortgage interest costs will be the amount that will reduce the mortgage balance on a new mortgage for the replacement dwelling to an amount that could be amortized with the same monthly payment for principal and interest as that for the mortgage(s)

on the displacement dwelling. The amount of the increased interest payment will be computed using MaineDOT Form **RA-52 Increased Interest Payment Application**, which is based on:

1. The unpaid mortgage balances on the displacement dwelling. However, in the event the person obtains a smaller mortgage than the mortgage balance computed in the buy down determination, the payment will be prorated and reduced accordingly;
2. The remaining term of the mortgage(s) on the displacement dwelling or the term of the new mortgage, whichever is shorter;
3. The nominal interest rates on the existing mortgages and the new mortgage. The nominal interest rate for the new mortgage cannot exceed the prevailing fixed interest rate for conventional mortgages currently charged by mortgage lending institutions in the area in which the replacement dwelling is located; and
4. Purchaser's points and loan origination or assumption fees, but not seller's points that may be added as reimbursable to the displaced person if they are typically charged, actually paid and are not reimbursed as incidental expenses. Reimbursement is limited to charges that would apply to the outstanding balance of the mortgage on the displacement dwelling, less the amount determined for the reduction of the mortgage balance under this section.

Figure 6-10 provides an example of the determination of increased interest cost.

GIVEN:		
1.	Outstanding balance –acquired dwelling mortgage	\$43,210
2.	Outstanding balance – replacement	\$47,000
3.	Remaining term, in months, acquired dwelling mortgage.....	212
4.	Term, in months, replacement dwelling mortgage.....	360
5.	Interest rate – acquired dwelling mortgage.....	7.5%
6.	Interest rate – replacement mortgage	8.0%
7.	Points -	3
DETERMINATION:		
A.	Monthly payment required to amortize a loan of \$43,210 in 212 months at an annual rate of 7.5%	\$ 368.38
B.	Amount of reduced loan having a monthly payment of \$368.38 for 212 months at interest rate of 8%	\$41,749.00
C.	Increased Mortgage Interest Costs: \$43,210 - \$41,749	\$ 1,462.00
D.	3 Points on \$41,749 =	<u>\$1,252.47</u>
E.	Total Buydown: \$1,462.00 + \$1,252.47	<u>\$2,714.47</u>

FIGURE 6-10 — Example of Increased Mortgage Interest Payment

6-8.03(c) To Whom Payment is Made

The increased interest amount will be paid to the mortgagee at the date of closing, if all required information is provided sufficiently in advance. However, if the homeowner-occupant provides evidence of payment or evidence of a replacement mortgage that would qualify for a MID payment, MaineDOT may reimburse that person directly. Upon specific request, MaineDOT can make an advance payment into escrow prior to the homeowner-occupant moving.

6-8.03(d) Partial Acquisition

When the displacement or the replacement dwelling is located on a tract that is larger than normal for residential use in the area, the interest payment will be reduced to the percentage ratio that the respective acquisition price bears to the value of the part of the property that is normal for residential use property, except the reduction will not apply when the mortgagee requires the entire mortgage balance to be paid because of the acquisition and it is necessary to refinance.

Where a dwelling is located on a tract that is larger than normal for residential use in the area, the total mortgage balance will be reduced to the percentage ratio that the value of the residential portion bears to the before value for computational purposes. This reduction will apply whether or not it is required that the entire mortgage balance be paid.

6-8.03(e) Multi-Use Properties

The interest payment on the multi-use properties will be reduced to the percentage ratio that the residential value of the multi-use property bears to the before value.

6-8.03(f) Highest and Best Use Other than Residential

If the dwelling is located on a tract where the fair market value is established on a highest and best use other than residential, and if the mortgage is based on residential value, the interest payment will be computed as provided in the appropriate Section above. However, if the mortgage is obviously based on the higher use, the interest payment will be reduced to the percentage ratio that the estimated residential value of the parcel has to the before value.

6-8.04 Incidental Expenses**6-8.04(a) Reimbursable Expenses**

Incidental expenses, also called closing costs, are those reasonable expenses that are actually incurred by the displaced homeowner-occupant related to the purchase of a replacement dwelling. MaineDOT form *RA-53 INCIDENTAL EXPENSES PAYMENT APPLICATION* will be used. The following are types of expenses that are reimbursable to the homeowner-occupant:

1. Legal, closing and related costs, including those for title search and mortgage insurance, preparing conveyance instruments, notary fees, preparing surveys and plats, and recording fees;
2. Lender, FHA or VA appraisal fees;
3. Lender, FHA or VA application fees;
4. Professional home inspection, certification of structural soundness, and pest inspections;
5. Credit report;
6. Owner's and mortgagee's evidence of title (e.g., title insurance) not to exceed the cost for the comparable replacement dwelling;
7. Escrow agent's fee;
8. State and local revenue or documentary stamps, sales or transfer taxes charged to record the deed (not to exceed the costs for a comparable replacement dwelling);
9. Loan origination or assumption fees that do not represent prepaid interest;

10. Purchaser's points, but not seller's points, normal to similar real estate transactions; and
11. Other costs that MaineDOT determines to be incidental to the purchase.

6-8.04(b) Un-reimbursable Expenses

There are important limitations on payment for incidental costs. The following are not reimbursable:

1. No fee or expense is reimbursable as an incidental expense when it is determined to be part of the debt service or finance charge under the ***Truth in Lending Act***.
2. Expenses of ownership that are typically prepaid at closing are not reimbursable. This includes fire and liability insurance, real estate taxes placed in escrow and fuel oil that is on site at closing. Note that in Maine, many lenders require real estate taxes and insurance to be paid 6 months in advance. These are not eligible costs.
3. Expenses that are on the above list of eligible expenses but that are not typically paid by the purchaser in the county in which the transaction takes place are not reimbursable.
4. Title insurance is limited to the actual cost or cost based on the number 1 comparable, whichever is less. Any payment in excess of this is not eligible for reimbursement.
5. Documentary stamps and transfer taxes are limited to actual costs, or the costs based on the number 1 comparable, whichever is less. Any payment in excess of this amount is not an eligible cost.
6. Purchaser points and loan origination fees cannot exceed normal rates and are only paid if the displaced person had an outstanding mortgage. The maximum payment is based on the lesser of the outstanding balance of the original loan or the amount of the new loan. These charges may not be reimbursed as an incidental cost if they were paid as part of the MID.

6-8.05 Homeowner-Occupant of 90 Days or More Who Rents

A homeowner-occupant who is eligible for an RHP under this Section who elects to rent a replacement dwelling is eligible for a Rental Assistance Payment (RAP). The amount of a rental assistance payment is the difference in the monthly market rent of a comparable replacement dwelling available on the market minus the monthly market rent of the acquired dwelling; times 42 months, but not more than the amount the displaced family would have received had they purchased replacement housing. The method of determining the Rent Supplement is addressed

in Section 6-8. MaineDOT forms *RA-25 RENTAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENT ESTIMATE* and *RA-29 COMPARABLE DWELLING GRID* will be used.

A displaced homeowner-occupant retains eligibility for an RHP if a replacement unit is purchased within 1 year after the later of the date of final payment for the displacement dwelling or the date the owner was notified by MaineDOT of the availability of replacement housing. Further, eligibility to submit a claim for relocation benefits extends for 18 months from the later of the date of displacement or the date of final payment of the acquisition value of the acquired property. A homeowner who initially rents replacement housing may later purchase and qualify for an RHP. The total amount of the Rent and the Purchase Supplements, however, will not exceed the amount that would have been received if the homeowner had initially purchased and occupied replacement housing.

If the homeowner-occupant has previously received a rental assistance payment, the amount of this payment will be deducted from the amount to which the homeowner-occupant is entitled under this Section.

6-8.06 Special Provisions

6-8.06(a) Payment After Death

An RHP is personal to the displaced homeowner-occupants. Upon death of a displaced person, the undisbursed portion of any payment will not be paid to the heirs or assignees, except:

1. The amount attributable to the displaced person's period of actual occupancy of the replacement housing will be paid.
2. The full payment will be disbursed in any case in which a member of a displaced family dies and the other family members continue to occupy the replacement dwelling.
3. Any portion of an RHP necessary to satisfy the legal obligation of an estate in connection with the selection of a replacement dwelling by or on behalf of a deceased person will be disbursed to the estate.

6-8.06(b) Advance RHPs in Condemnation Cases

Displaced homeowner-occupants should receive the earliest possible payment of the RHP to which they are rightfully due. An advance RHP can be computed and paid to on an unsettled parcel if the determination of just compensation will be delayed pending the outcome of a State Claims Commission or Superior Court proceeding. If the amount of the RHP cannot be finally determined due to the pending proceedings, a provisional RHP may be based on acquisition price.

A provisional payment may be made upon the owner-occupant's agreement that the RHP will be recomputed using the acquisition price determined by the Commission or Court as compared to

the actual price paid or the amount determined by MaineDOT as necessary to acquire a comparable DS&S dwelling. The relocation specialist will use MaineDOT form *RA-48A ADVANCE REPLACEMENT HOUSING PAYMENT APPLICATION* for advance replacement housing payments for unsettled acquisitions.

If the amount awarded as the fair market value of the property acquired plus the amount of the provisional RHP exceeds the lesser of the price paid for a replacement dwelling or the MaineDOT's determined cost of a comparable dwelling, the displaced person will refund to MaineDOT from the judgment or award, the amount of the excess. However, the homeowner-occupant will not be required to refund more than the amount of the RHP advanced.

MaineDOT Office of Legal Services will inform the State Claims Commission of the provisional replacement housing payment amount, and that MaineDOT will pay the difference, if any, between the determined cost of replacement housing and the State Claims Commission award. The final RHP will be deferred until the case is finally adjudicated (either by the State Claims Commission or the Superior Court). The final RHP amount will be computed using the just compensation award as the acquisition price.

6-9 REPLACEMENT HOUSING PAYMENTS FOR 90-DAY RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANTS

6-9.01 General

A residential tenant who is in occupancy at the displacement dwelling for 90 days or more before the initiation of negotiations for the property, is eligible for a Rental Assistance Payment (RAP) to enable relocation to comparable replacement rental housing.

Alternatively, a tenant as described above may elect to receive a Down Payment Supplement (DPS) amount that can be applied toward a down payment and incidental expenses for the purchase of a Decent, Safe and Sanitary (DS&S) replacement dwelling.

The payment amount for either a RAP or a DPS is limited to a maximum of \$9,570. This limitation does not apply, however, if the relocation comes under the criteria for last resort housing as discussed in Section 6-11.

6-9.02 Rental Assistance Payment - Computation

6-9.02(a) General

The rental assistance payment is 42 times the amount obtained by subtracting the base monthly rental for the displacement dwelling from the lesser of:

1. The monthly rent and estimated average monthly cost of utilities (that is heat, electricity, water and sewer) for a comparable replacement dwelling, or
2. The monthly rent and estimated average monthly cost of utilities for the DS&S replacement dwelling actually occupied by the displaced person.

6-9.02(b) Base Monthly Rental – Defined

The base monthly rental of the displacement dwelling is the lesser of:

1. The average monthly cost for rent and utilities (e.g., heat, electricity, water, sewer) at the displacement dwelling for a reasonable period prior to displacement as determined by MaineDOT (for a homeowner-occupant, use the fair market rent for the displacement dwelling. For a tenant who pays little or no rent for the displacement dwelling, use the fair market rent, unless its use would result in a hardship because of the person's income or other circumstances); or
2. Thirty (30) percent of the displaced person's average monthly gross household income if the amount is classified as "low income" by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Annual Survey of Income Limits for the Public Housing and Section 8 Programs. The base monthly rent will be established solely on the criteria in paragraph 6-9.02 (b) (1) of this section for persons with income exceeding the

survey's "low income" limits, for persons refusing to provide appropriate evidence of income, and for persons who are dependents. A full time student or resident of an institution may be assumed to be a dependent, unless the person demonstrates otherwise; or,

3. The total of the amounts designated for shelter and utilities if the displaced person is receiving a welfare assistance payment from a program that designates the amounts for shelter and utilities.

Housing must be made available within a displaced person's financial means.

6-9.02(c) Determination of Base Monthly Rent for the Displacement Dwelling.

The following rules will apply to determination of the base monthly displacement rent for residential occupants in the circumstances indicated:

1. Utilities included in base monthly rent are heat, electricity, water and sewer only. Preferred documentation is copies of utility bills over a 1-year period. Other acceptable documentation is billing history for the property provided by utility company or billing statements covering less than 1-year. Any other form, including a statement from the residential occupant, will require secondary support. This could be the informed judgment of the Relocation Manager and Chief Property Officer of typical charges for a unit of a given size and type.
2. The Relocation Agent will secure income, rental and utility information from the residential occupant. If the occupant refuses to provide income information or reasonable verification, the base monthly rental will be based on Item #1 in Section 6-9.02(b).
3. For a residential occupant who pays little or no rent for the displacement dwelling, the fair market rent will be substituted in the RAP calculation, unless this would cause a hardship. Questions as to what constitutes "little or no rent" in specific cases will be referred to the Relocation Manager for a decision.
4. For a displaced homeowner-occupant who elects to rent replacement housing, see Section 6-8.05, the economic rent of the displacement dwelling plus utilities will be used.
5. For a displaced tenant receiving welfare assistance from a program that designates amounts for shelter and utilities, the base monthly rent will be the total of the amounts designated for shelter and utilities.

6-9.02(d) Rent Supplement – Method

The Relocation Agent will determine the rental rates of comparable housing by use of the three comparable method. MaineDOT's forms *RA-25 RENTAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENT ESTIMATE*, and *RA-*

29 COMPARABLE DWELLING GRID will be used to determine the RAP. There will not be adjustment of the asking rent for available comparable rental dwellings.

If available, the Relocation Agent will use at least three comparable replacement rental dwellings to determine the RAP. The RAP will be computed on the basis of the dwelling most nearly representative of, and equal to, or better than, the displacement dwelling. If fewer than three comparables are available, the Relocation Agent may determine the payment from one or two comparables, and will document the file as to efforts made to locate 3 comparables. All rental properties must meet DS&S standards and must be comparable to the displacement dwelling in essential characteristics.

Utility costs of heat, electricity, water and sewer must be included in both the displacement and the selected comparable rent. Reasonable efforts should be made to secure accurate information. The residential occupant's utility bills or a statement from the utility company is best. If actual costs are not available, a reasonable estimate should be made based on size and type of unit and other factors. The basis for the utility estimate should be documented in the Project File.

The comparables will be recorded and evaluated on Form *RA-29 COMPARABLE DWELLING GRID*. The focus of the evaluation will be the elements of comparable replacement housing. The most comparable rental will be selected as the basis of the determination. The Relocation Agent will record an explanation of the selection.

The residential occupant must be advised of the availability and location of the comparable property on which the RAP amount is based and provided with a copy of MaineDOT form *RA-25 RENTAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENT ESTIMATE*. The Relocation Agent should confirm the continued availability before providing the RAP information to the residential occupant. The residential occupant should be provided current listings of other comparable rental dwellings by supplying a copy of form *RA-29 COMPARABLE DWELLING GRID*.

If the comparable dwelling on which the Rent Supplement is based ceases to be available after an offer is made to a residential occupant, a re-determination is not required as long as there are comparable dwellings available on the market that are within the financial means of the displaced person, including the amount of the computed RAP. If market conditions change to remove availability within the range of the computed RAP, a re-determination based on current available market data is required.

Example 1 Non-Low Income Rent Exceeds 30 % of Income.

Joe High lives in Penobscot County and has a gross income of \$4,000/month. Penobscot County low income limit for a 1 person household is \$27,250/year. Sam's monthly rent and utilities are \$1,500 per month. An available comp is \$1,700/month.

Sam's rent supplement is \$1,700 minus \$1,500 = \$200 X 42 = **\$8,400.**

(Under the old Rule, the calculation would have been 30% of gross income is \$1,200; \$1,700 minus \$1,200 = \$500 X 42 = \$21,000.)

Example 2 Low Income Rent Exceeds 30 % of Income

Jim Lowe lives in Penobscot County and has an income of \$2,000/month. Penobscot County's low income limit for a 1 person household is \$27,250/year. Her monthly rent and utilities are \$650/month.

A comparable rental is available at \$700/month.

30% of her monthly income is \$600/month ($\$2,000 \times 0.30$). Since this is less than her actual rent, it becomes the basis for the rent subsidy calculation.

Thus, \$700 minus \$600 = \$100 X 42 = **\$4200**.

Example 3 Low Income Rent is Less Than 30% of Income

Bob Beelow also lives in Penobscot County with a low income limit of \$27,250. Bob's gross monthly income is \$2,000 and his monthly rent and utilities total \$500.00.

An available comp has been found for \$700/month.

30 % of Bob's monthly income is \$600/month ($\$2,000 \times 0.30$), and since this is more than the \$500/month he is currently paying, the actual rent and utility payments are used in the RAP calculation. Thus $\$700 - \$500 = \$200 \times 42 = \mathbf{\$8,400}$.

6-9.02(e) Publicly Owned Housing

For a tenant who is not receiving assistance under a government housing program before displacement, comparable housing is private housing that is currently available. A publicly owned housing unit may be comparable housing only for a person who is displaced from a public housing unit. A privately owned but publicly rent subsidized unit will qualify as a comparable dwelling only

for a person who is displaced from a similarly subsidized dwelling. However, a displaced tenant may voluntarily choose to occupy publicly owned or rent subsidized housing.

6-9.02(f) Section 8 Housing Assistance Program

Section 8 is a rent subsidy program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to enable low-income families to rent privately owned DS&S housing. Section 8 is administered by local housing agencies. Landlords receive a subsidy representing the difference between 30% of an eligible tenant's adjusted gross household income and reasonable housing rent as determined under program rules. Section 8 benefits are normally portable, meaning the benefit moves with the recipient.

Section 8 assistance has a feature that is superior to the relocation rental assistance payment in that it is not limited to 42 months but continues as long as the recipient household is income eligible. The Relocation Agent should make every effort to relocate existing Section 8 recipients to units in which their Section 8 benefits will continue. If a normal relocation RAP is paid, the local housing agency may consider this income and disqualify the displaced household from eligibility for Section 8. It may be difficult to reenter the program, as there is usually a long waiting list.

In order to transfer Section 8 benefits, the recipient must relocate to a DS&S unit in which the owner agrees to participate in this program. Local housing agencies generally maintain current lists of participating owners and properties.

A tenant cannot be required to accept a Section 8 rent subsidy in lieu of a Rent Supplement payment under the relocation program.

6-9.02(g) Eligibility and Disbursement of Rent Supplement

The displaced residential occupant must relocate to a DS&S replacement dwelling to qualify for RAP payment. To qualify for full RAP, the replacement dwelling rent and utilities must at least equal the determined comparable rent.

The amount of the rental assistance payment will be paid in a lump sum unless MaineDOT determines that it is in the public interest to make periodic payments over the 42-month term of the benefit. However, the full amount of the rental assistance payment vests immediately whether or not there is any later change in the person's income or rent, or in the condition or location of the person's housing, except as limited by special provisions after death which are the same as those found in section 6-8.06(a) "Payment After Death."

On request of the residential occupant, the RAP amount may be assigned to direct payment to a landlord over the term of the benefit.

6-9.02(h) \$9,570 Benefit Limit

A RAP payment offer is limited to \$9,570 under normal program authority. MaineDOT has an overriding responsibility to enable residential occupants to rent replacement housing within their financial means. If the payment computation exceeds \$9,570, the special authority under last resort housing provisions is applicable. See Section 6-10 for information on last resort housing.

6-9.02(i) Change of Occupancy

If a residential occupant, after moving to a DS&S dwelling, relocates within the 1-year period of continued eligibility to a higher cost rental unit, another claim may be presented for the amount in excess of that amount that was originally claimed, but not to exceed the total RAP originally computed.

6-9.03 Down Payment Benefit – 90-Day Residential Occupants

A displaced residential occupant eligible for a RAP, who elects to purchase a replacement dwelling in lieu of accepting a rental assistance payment, may elect to apply the entire computed payment to the purchase of a replacement dwelling and allowable incidental expenses.

As a matter of MaineDOT policy, a down payment assistance payment that is less than \$9,570 will be increased to \$9,570 provided the entire amount is applied to incidental expenses and the purchase price of a DS&S replacement dwelling. The MaineDOT will follow this policy in a uniform and consistent manner so that eligible displaced persons in like circumstances are treated equally. However, the payment to a displaced homeowner shall not exceed the amount the owner would receive under section 6-8.01(a) if the owner meets the 90-day occupancy requirement.

MaineDOT has a responsibility to enable a residential occupant to relocate to housing of the same tenancy or ownership status as was occupied before displacement. Efforts will be made through advisory assistance and the down payment benefit to assist a tenant to move to ownership, but the achievement of ownership by tenants is not a program requirement.

6-9.04 Occupants Who Do Not Meet Length of Occupancy Criteria

Displaced residential occupants who began occupancy at the displacement property fewer than 90 days before MaineDOT initiated negotiations for the property but before MaineDOT acquired the property are eligible for the following relocation benefits:

1. Advisory services as described in Section 6-3 to assist in locating adequate replacement housing;
2. Moving expenses as described in Section 6-5; and

3. Last resort housing provisions, but only if comparable rental housing is not available at rental rates within thirty (30) percent of the displaced person's average monthly gross household income if the amount is classified as "low income" by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Annual Survey of Income Limits for the Public Housing and Section 8 Programs. Current low income limits for Maine can be found at:
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/real_estate/policy_guidance/low_income_calculations/index.cfm (financial means test).

The provisions of this paragraph are applicable only to persons who occupy a dwelling at the date MaineDOT acquires the property.

6-10 RELOCATION ASSISTANCE AND PAYMENTS – MOBILE HOMES

6-10.01 General

Mobile home occupants are entitled to the same relocation benefits as those that apply to residential occupants from conventional housing. Eligible moving expenses for owners and displaced occupants of mobile homes are described in section 6-5.03 *Eligible Moving Costs* and section 6-5.06 *Moves from a Mobile Home*. However, mobile homes have unique legal and physical characteristics that require separate consideration in methods of determining replacement housing benefits. These special characteristics relate to the potential for the mobile home unit to be either realty or personalty, and the potential for the occupant to have owned the dwelling unit and rented the site or vice versa. This Section provides guidance in determining replacement housing and moving cost benefits that are applicable to mobile home occupancy.

6-10.02 Personalty vs. Realty

MaineDOT must determine if mobile home occupants are displaced from their mobile home for a project, applying the following considerations. This determination should be made uniformly to ensure an orderly and equitable relocation of all displaced residents. A mobile home may have legal status as either real estate or personalty depending on the following factors:

1. The permanency of its fixture to the ground,
2. Its condition,
3. The intention of the owner in placing the mobile home on its present location, and
4. Custom and practice in the community where it is located.

In determining the status of a mobile home, MaineDOT references the definition in 36 MRSA Section 551, which states that mobile homes, except stock in trade, shall be considered real estate for the purposes of taxation. It is MaineDOT's policy, to treat the acquisition of mobile homes as real estate. Exception approvals to this policy will be the responsibility of the Chief Property Officer and will be well documented.

If the mobile home is assessed as real estate by the municipality in which it is located and is not currently licensed as a recreational vehicle, it will normally be considered real estate. In the community in which a mobile home is located, if mobile homes are typically bought and sold by deed with the conveyance of the land on which the mobile home is located, it will normally be considered real estate. If the mobile home is permanently fixed to the site (e.g., on a concrete foundation with basement), it will normally be considered real estate. In some cases, the distinction is not clear and a legal determination is necessary. The personalty/realty decision will be completed before the property appraisal is ordered. The Relocation Agent may provide input in this process for questions that involve the feasibility of relocating the mobile home unit, the availability of replacement sites, or the consistency with decisions made on similar situations encountered in the past or anticipated on the same project or in the local area.

If the displacement mobile home unit is personally and not acquired, it will be moved to a replacement site and all costs will be reimbursed as moving expense. The occupants will be eligible for replacement housing benefits pertaining to the purchase or rental of a replacement site only and temporary housing costs during the move and until the mobile home is put in like condition and is made DS&S at the new site.

Whether or not displaced from the mobile home itself, the owner-occupant or the tenant-occupant of the acquired mobile home site is eligible for a replacement housing payment for the purchase or lease of a comparable replacement home site.

6-10.03 Replacement Housing Payments (RHP) – Owner/Tenancy Status of Mobile Home and Site

A characteristic that is unique to mobile home occupancy is that there may be divided ownership of the dwelling unit and its site. A mobile home occupant may own the dwelling but rent the site. Conversely, an occupant may own the site and rent the dwelling unit.

The status of the displaced person with regard to the mobile home unit and the site must be separately considered when determining replacement housing benefits, both in the displacement and in the replacement dwellings. There may be a replacement housing benefit for the mobile home unit and for the site, as presented in the following rules:

Maximum Payment Eligibility (\$41,200 or \$9,570). The ownership or rental status of the displaced person with regard to the mobile home dwelling unit, not the site, determines the maximum payment amount that is applicable. If the displaced person owned the mobile home unit at the displacement site for 90 days prior to the initiation of negotiations, the maximum eligibility is \$41,200 for the unit and site. If the displaced person rented the displacement dwelling unit for at least 90 days before the initiation of negotiations, the maximum eligibility is \$9,570 for the unit and site.

Displaced person Owns Mobile Home Unit – Rents Site. If the displaced person owns the displacement mobile home unit but rents the site, there is eligibility for a Purchase Supplement to acquire ownership of a replacement mobile home unit. There is also eligibility for a Rent Supplement (maximum \$9,570) to enable the displaced person to rent a replacement site. The maximum total for the two components is \$41,200.

Displaced person Rents Mobile Home – Owns Site. If the displaced person rents the displacement mobile home but owns the site, there is eligibility for a Rent Supplement to enable renting a mobile home unit and a Purchase Supplement to enable purchase of a replacement site. The maximum total for the two components is \$9,570 (see Item #1 above).

Displaced person Owns Both Mobile Home and Site. If the displaced person owns both the displacement mobile home unit and the site, there is eligibility for a Purchase Supplement

(maximum \$41,200) to enable purchase of a unit and site. This situation is the same as a Purchase Supplement on acquisition of a conventional dwelling.

Displaced person Rents Both Mobile Home and Site. If the displaced person rents both the displacement unit and the site, the eligibility is for a Rent Supplement (maximum \$9,570) to enable rental of a replacement unit and site. This situation is the same as for a tenant-occupant of a conventional dwelling.

All Program Eligibility Rules Apply. In each of the ownership/rental status situations above, the normal term of occupancy (90 days) applies, with the clarification that the term of occupancy pertains to occupancy of the mobile home on the site that is acquired by MaineDOT. The other eligibility criteria, including replacement housing DS&S standards and legal residence in the United States, apply to mobile home displaced person.

6-10.04 Comparable Housing Availability

If a comparable replacement mobile home is unavailable, the Purchase Supplement or Rent Supplement amount may be based on the reasonable cost of a conventional comparable replacement dwelling.

6-10.05 Owner Declines to Sell Mobile Home to MaineDOT

If MaineDOT determines that the mobile home is personal property and that it would be practical to relocate the mobile home to a comparable replacement site, but the owner-occupant declines to do so, the MaineDOT will appraise and acquire the mobile home as real estate and provide the owner the relocation assistance benefits for which they are eligible as home owners.

6-10.06 Moving and Related Expenses

Displaced persons who move the mobile home units are entitled to payment of the actual, necessary costs of moving the mobile home unit and its contents to a replacement site. This may include the following items:

1. Dismantling and disconnecting utilities, removing tie downs and skirting, reconnections at the replacement site, and reassembling any appurtenances (e.g., porches, decks, skirting, awnings);
2. Reasonable, customary and nonrefundable mobile home park entrance fees;
3. Moving of personal property contents of the separately from the mobile home on an actual cost or a schedule reimbursement basis. The contents may also be moved in the mobile home unit and the occupants reimbursed on the basis of the move cost schedule; and/or

4. Transportation and temporary lodging for the occupants, if MaineDOT determines that this is necessary for the mobile home unit to be relocated and set up for occupancy. Transportation costs may be reimbursed up to 50 miles unless this limitation is extended by MaineDOT in advance for good reason.

6-10.07 Additional Rules Applicable to Mobile Home Displacements

6-10.07(a) Repairs to Mobile Home Unit

Repairs necessary to move the mobile home, cure DS&S deficiencies or qualify the mobile home for mobile home park acceptance criteria may be reimbursed as move cost expenses as MaineDOT determines is reasonable.

6-10.07(b) Person Moves Mobile Home

A displaced person who is reimbursed for moving the mobile home unit is not eligible to receive a Purchase Supplement or Rent Supplement for the purchase or rental of a replacement unit, but may be eligible for a payment to assist in the purchase or rental of a comparable mobile home site.

6-10.07(c) Partial Acquisition of a Mobile Home Park

The acquisition of a portion of a mobile home park may leave a remaining part of the property that is not adequate to continue the operation of the park. MaineDOT may determine that a mobile home located on the remaining part of the property must be moved as a direct result of the project. The occupants of the mobile home will be considered displaced persons eligible for full relocation benefits.

6-10.07(d) Last Resort Housing (LRH)

Displaced persons from mobile homes are eligible for consideration under provisions of last resort housing. See Section 6-11, on the same basis as displaced person from conventional housing.

6-11 REPLACEMENT HOUSING OF LAST RESORT

6-11.01 General

A displaced person will not be required to move until a comparable replacement dwelling is made available that is within the financial means of the household. Comparable replacement housing may not be available because of any of the following circumstances:

1. Available housing is not Decent, Safe and Sanitary.
2. A competing demand for housing causes temporary unavailability, which would delay timely advancement of the highway construction schedule.
3. Displaced persons have special needs relating to the definition of comparable replacement housing that is not met by the available housing stock.
4. Housing is available but its cost exceeds the financial means of displaced persons after application of maximum replacement housing benefit amounts (\$41,200 and \$9,570).
5. A displaced person has not met the length of occupancy requirements for normal relocation benefits (e.g., occupant for 90 days prior to initiation of negotiations). Benefits for low income tenants will still be calculated using the 30% of income rule. For others, the calculation will be rent to rent. See Section 6-8 for guidance.

If any of the above circumstances apply, MaineDOT is authorized to a broad range of measures to make housing available. These measures, which are outside normal relocation benefit limits, are called collectively last resort housing.

6-11.02 Replacement Housing Standard

MaineDOT is committed to enabling persons, who are displaced as a result of acquisition for transportation projects, to relocate to comparable replacement housing that is within their financial means. When this cannot be accomplished within the limits of normal relocation program benefits, last resort housing program provisions are used.

Comparable replacement housing is by definition, (see Section 6-1), functionally equivalent to the displacement dwelling. It performs the same function, provides the same utility and is capable of contributing to the same style of living as the displacement dwelling. Consistent with this definition, housing may be provided that does not possess every feature of the displacement dwelling and differs in certain space and physical characteristics. For example, housing may be provided that is smaller but is upgraded in qualitative respects to adequately accommodate persons who have been displaced from substandard or functionally obsolescent housing.

MaineDOT will offer to provide housing that is the same ownership or tenancy status as that which the person had before displacement. There is no requirement to enable a displaced person to

change status by use of last resort housing. However, MaineDOT may cooperate in a displaced person's desire to change status when it is less costly for the Department to do so. For example, MaineDOT may provide down payment assistance that is less than a determined Rent Supplement under last resort housing.

6-11.03 Last Resort Housing Methods

Last resort housing authority allows a broad range of methods to be considered for providing housing of the type and on terms needed by project displaced person. Select a method that provides comparable housing at the most reasonable cost within the time constraints of highway project scheduling and the urgency of the displaced person's need.

Methods include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. A Replacement Housing Payment (RHP) greater than \$41,200 for a displaced owner or \$9,570 for a displaced tenant;
2. Rehabilitation, modification or addition to an existing replacement dwelling to accommodate the displaced person's needs;
3. Construction of a new replacement dwelling;
4. Relocation and, if necessary, rehabilitation of an existing non-DS&S dwelling;
5. Purchase of land and/or a replacement dwelling and subsequent sale, lease to or exchange with a displaced person;
6. Acting as a mortgagee in financing a displaced person's purchase of housing; and/or
7. Provision of features including entrance ramps, wide doors, etc., that will make a dwelling accessible to a person who is disabled.

6-11.04 Justification for Use

Any decision to provide last resort housing must be adequately justified either: (1) on a case-by-case basis for good cause, or (2) by a determination that there is little if any comparable replacement housing available to displaced persons within the project area and therefore last resort housing is needed for the area as a whole.

In making the above determinations, give consideration to:

1. The availability of comparable housing in the project area,
2. The resources available to provide comparable housing, and
3. The individual circumstances of the displaced person.

Or by a determination that:

1. There is little, if any, comparable replacement housing available within the entire project area.
2. The project cannot be advanced to completion in a timely manner without last resort housing assistance.
3. The method selected is cost effective, considering all elements that contribute to the total program or project cost. For example, will a project delay justify waiting for less expensive comparable replacement housing to come on the private market?

Place the detailed justification for use of last resort housing in the Project and Parcel Files.

6-11.05 Cooperative Agreements

MaineDOT may enter into agreements with any Federal, State or local agency or contract with any individual, firm, corporation or nonprofit association for services in connection with these activities. MaineDOT may, if practicable, use the services of Federal, State or local housing agencies or other agencies having experience in the administration or conduct of similar housing assistance activities.

6-11.06 Consequential Displacement

Any person, who is displaced because of the acquisition of real property for a last resort housing project under MaineDOT's power of eminent domain, including amicable agreements under the threat of such power, is entitled to all eligible benefits under the relocation assistance provision. This provision is not applicable to an owner-occupant who voluntarily acts to sell the property to the State of Maine for last resort housing and the owner certifies the same in a statement that will be retained in MaineDOT files.

6-11.07 Last Resort Housing Disbursements

Rental assistance payments made to displaced persons who rent replacement housing under this section will, at MaineDOT's discretion, be paid either in a lump sum or in annual installments directly to the displaced person or to the provider of housing. Other payment options will be arranged if MaineDOT determines that a direct payment or annual payments to a displaced person would not be prudent and in the public interest. Whenever special payment options are invoked, provide documentation in the file with the reasons.

A displaced person may not be required to accept last resort housing in place of a Rent Supplement or a Purchase Supplement for which they may be eligible under normal program provisions. A displaced person may choose to accept a conventional Purchase or Rent

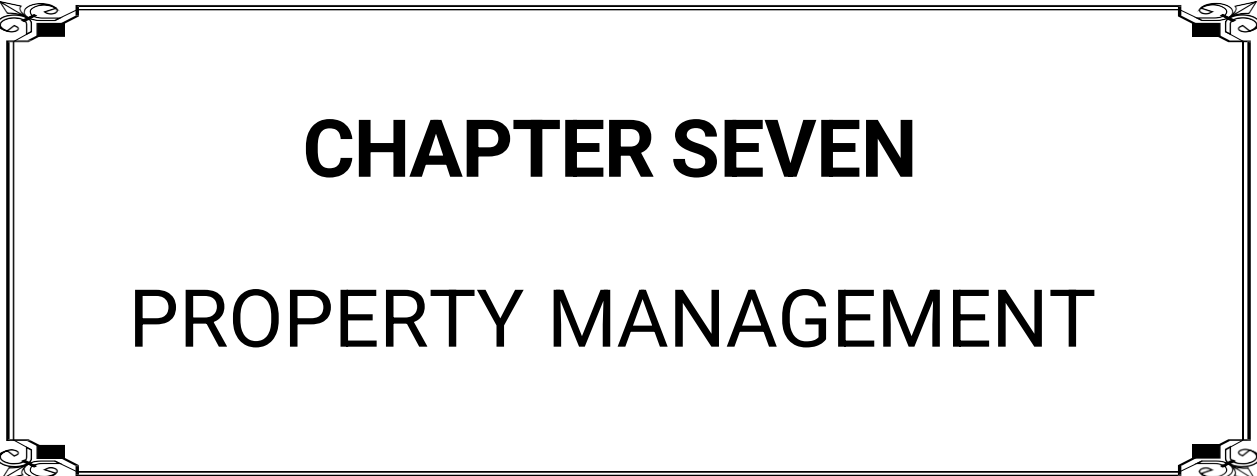
Supplement in lieu of a last resort housing solution. This is on the condition that all eligibility criteria are met, including rental or purchase and occupancy of a DS&S dwelling.

A displaced person who receives a housing or financial payment under last resort housing will be required to certify that the displaced person accepts the housing or benefit in lieu of the Rent Supplement or Purchase Supplement for which they would otherwise be eligible.

6-11.08 Compliance With Other Statutes

The development and implementation of last resort housing projects will comply with the applicable provisions of the following, including the amendments and regulations issued pursuant thereto:

1. Section 1 of the ***Civil Rights Act of 1966*** (42 ***UCS*** 1982 et. seq.);
2. Title VI of the ***Civil Rights Act of 1964*** (42 ***UCS*** 2000d et. seq.);
3. Title VIII of the ***Civil Rights Act of 1968*** (42 ***UCS*** 3601 et. seq.);
4. The ***National Environmental Policy Act of 1968 (NEPA)*** (42 ***UCS*** 4321-4347);
5. Executive Order 11063 (Equal Opportunity in Housing) 3 ***CFR*** Comp. 1959-1963, page 652;
6. Executive Order 11246 (Equal Employment Opportunity) 3 ***CFR*** Comp. 1964-1965, Page 339 or Federal Laws, Regulations and Materials Relating to the Federal Highway Administration, Page IV-41; and
7. Executive Order 11625 (Minority Business Enterprise) 3 ***CFR*** Comp. 1971, Page 213.



CHAPTER SEVEN

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

CHAPTER SEVEN

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

7-1 PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND ADMINISTRATION

The property management function is the responsibility of the Property Office and it is staffed by a Property Manager and other support staff as may be assigned. Support staff may include qualified professional consultants who can provide a 24-7 response to emergencies occurring at occupied MaineDOT owned properties, acquired as part of MaineDOT transportation projects. These emergencies typically involve heating, plumbing or electrical issues, but can include a broader range of problems. Project level property management activities are performed by MaineDOT personnel assigned to project teams or MaineDOT Region Offices.

Property management supports project development by actively managing the occupancy of property during the preconstruction period and by removing improvements in an orderly, cost-effective manner to conform to the project schedule. The function also rents or sells property that is excess to transportation needs thus, returning property to an economic use and generating income. Property management also maintains property outside the operating right of way to minimize hazards and risks to the public.

7-1.01 Objectives

The property management function is responsible for the following program objectives:

1. Exercise prudent stewardship over acquired property.
2. Secure acquired property, including buildings and other improvements, to minimize risk and injury.
3. Remove structures in an orderly, timely and cost-effective manner.
4. Receive revenue from sale or rental of property that is not otherwise needed for transportation purposes.
5. Maintain effective coordination with other right of way functions and with MaineDOT Region offices.
6. Maintain an inventory of Department owned excess property.

7-1.02 Scope of Property Management Activities

Personnel assigned to property management will advance the above objectives by performing the following activities. Each item is discussed in detail later in this Chapter:

1. Perform inspections of acquired property to determine if all items acquired are in possession of MaineDOT and to ensure that property is safe and secure.
2. Ensure that property is adequately secured from unauthorized entry.
3. Arrange removal or correction of hazardous conditions (e.g., trash accumulations, contamination and infestations).
4. Manage rental of property, when appropriate, for the short term before needed for highway construction.
5. Dispose of structures and improvements on acquired right of way to clear the site for construction.
6. Rent or sell property that is excess to transportation needs.
7. Cooperate with MaineDOT Region offices in proposals to use highway right of way, modify access control and implement MaineDOT's access management program.

7-1.03 Organization and Responsibilities

The Property Manager, a member of the Property Office staff, is responsible for general implementation of the property management program. The Property Manager will, under the direction of the Chief Property Officer, perform the following responsibilities:

1. Advise field project personnel on property management policy and practices, laws and regulations.
2. Interpret property management policy as it applies to unique or complex cases.
3. Review and recommend action on proposals for property rental or disposal of property or use of air rights.
4. Maintain a statewide inventory of property that is not in use as highway right of way as such properties become known.
5. Exercise quality assurance measures that ensure that property management activities are performed in a timely, efficient and cost-effective manner.
6. Coordinate effectively with Project Managers, MaineDOT Legal Services Office, MaineDOT Region Managers and project right of way personnel on property management matters involving these units.

7-1.04 Laws and Regulations

The following legal authorities control the property management function within MaineDOT:

1. Title 23 Chapter 1 Subchapter 3 ***Maine Revised Statutes Annotated (MSRA)***:
 - a. Section 61 Vacation, Sale or Lease of Acquired Land,
 - b. Section 154-D Notice to Vacate, and
 - c. Section 160 Property Management.

2. Title 23 ***US Code of Federal Regulations***:
 - a. Section 156 Proceeds from the sale or lease of real property,
 - b. Section 710.401 General,
 - c. Section 710.403 Management,
 - d. Section 710.405 ROW use agreements,
 - e. Section 710.409 Disposal of excess real property.
 - f. Section 620 Subpart B Relinquishment of Highway Facilities

3. Title 2, Part 200 ***US Code of Federal Regulations***:

7-1.05 Quality Assurance

The goal of Quality Assurance/Quality Control in property management is to consistently achieve the objectives presented in Section 7-1.01. The Property Manager's responsibilities for Quality Assurance (QA) include maintenance of policies that comply with laws and regulations, policies that are effective and current, and policies that use best practices in the field of property management. In addition, QA includes advice and guidance to project and field staff that will enhance their knowledge and skill in performing the elements of property management for which they are responsible.

Quality is a shared responsibility of all who are involved in the property management function, including field staff involved on an intermittent basis. The Property Manager will emphasize commitment to quality by providing specific advice and instruction to field personnel on standards of performance in areas such as building inspection and security, building disposals and property rental.

Responsibilities of the Property Manager for Quality Control(QC) include the formal and informal review of the performance of property management activities at the MaineDOT Region Office and project level, including work by staff and by private contractors. The purpose of the reviews is to ensure compliance with laws, regulations, policies and professional standards, and to identify

opportunities to improve performance. The form and frequency of reviews will be determined in consultation with the Director of the Property Office as set forth in Chapter 10.

7-2 ACQUIRED PROPERTY — SECURITY

MaineDOT staff will act to ensure the protection of acquired property from damage or theft during the period before it is needed for construction. Assigned staff will also take reasonable measures to protect the public safety and welfare from risks associated with the condition of, or access to, acquired property. Also, staff will ensure that MaineDOT takes possession of all fixtures and improvements acquired by MaineDOT as part of the real estate acquisition.

7-2.01 Inspection of Property

The R/W Supervisor will notify the Property Manager by email, copying the Chief Property Officer, of improved property to be acquired at an early stage in the project. This email will include a PDF of the property to be acquired. The Property Manager creates a file for each parcel which identifies buildings, structures or other improvements to be acquired. The file is made available to the assigned right of way staff member on the project team for use in the inspection after acquisition and subsequent property management activities.

An assigned project staff member will perform a physical inspection of each improved property as soon as feasible after title vests with the State and after the building is vacant. The inspection will be performed with the approved appraisal in hand as a reference to what should be present on the site and its condition. The inspection will include the following determinations:

1. Presence and condition of all improvements included in the acquisition;
2. Public safety risk factors (e.g., swimming pools, open basements, trash accumulation);
3. Presence of hazardous contamination (see section 7-2.02);
4. Suitability of the improvements for sale or rental;
5. Personal property on site belonging to others;
6. Occupancy status of property; and
7. Need for rodent control measures.

The inspector will coordinate with other MaineDOT staff as necessary to resolve conditions noted in the inspection that require action. This may include safety and security issues, relocation status of occupants, rental agreements and recovery or accounting for property items improperly removed from the site. The Property Manager will advise the Project Manager or Construction Resident in handling unusual or sensitive issues that arise from the inspection. The inspector will record the inspection, significant findings and actions taken in a report or memorandum to the file.

The inspector will arrange for the transfer of keys and the final utility readings and turnoffs when the property is vacated.

7-2.02 Safety and Security

MaineDOT is responsible for reasonable measures to protect the public safety and secure acquired property to minimize potential damage or theft. MaineDOT will act as indicated in the following sections for conditions noted in the post-acquisition inspection.

7-2.02(a) Protection of Buildings

Window openings on the basement, first and second levels of vacant buildings will be boarded unless a determination is made that this measure is not necessary. Reasons for not boarding openings include imminent demolition, sale for removal, rental, adequate property fencing, or property is in a highly visible area. Building security performance may be by MaineDOT maintenance staff or by private contract.

7-2.02(b) Protection of Site

Accumulations of trash will be removed from acquired sites. Mowing or vegetation removal will be performed as necessary to prevent visual blight and conform to community standards. Priority will be assigned to the removal of potential hazards to children. This includes the removal of swimming pools or abandoned equipment, filling excavations, etc. MaineDOT staff will consider the imminence of highway construction in selecting the actions to protect sites. Properties will be posted against trespass if this is effective, although it may be ineffective in some areas, or if requested by adjacent owners or local officials.

7-2.02(c) Coordination with Community

MaineDOT staff will consult as necessary with adjacent property owners, community organizations and public safety officials to coordinate its security actions, hear concerns and request assistance. Police and fire departments may be requested to provide more frequent patrols to vacant parcels. The Property Manager will provide the name and phone number of a MaineDOT staff member or property management consultant for contact in case of emergency.

7-2.02(d) Hazardous Materials and Substances (Wastes)

Upon the initial inspection of the premises and after it has been vacated by the former owner/tenant, there may be hazardous materials/substances found on the premises or property in the form of paints, cleaners, fertilizers, etc. Oil drums, cans, etc. may also be on the premises. In the event these substances are found, contact the MaineDOT Environmental Office to arrange for removal.

7-2.02(e) Rodent Control

It is important to identify rodent infestations or conditions which support infestations (e.g., garbage, trash, debris) at physical inspection or earlier. Rodents will migrate to adjacent property if their food source or habitat is disturbed. It is important to remove infestations as soon as they are identified; do not defer until buildings are demolished. The Property Manager should be advised of the discovery or need for rodent control measures.

Rodent control will normally be performed by contract with local licensed professional exterminators. If contractors are not available or cannot perform the service promptly, MaineDOT Maintenance staff will perform the rodent control.

MaineDOT staff assigned to rodent control will consult with local health, housing inspection or public safety authorities concerning methods, products and precautions that must be used in rodent control. Also, the lead person will consult with the Property Manager before beginning rodent control activities.

If MaineDOT staff performs rodent control, the sites will be re-inspected periodically to remove carcasses, reset control measures and evaluate effectiveness. If the work is performed under contract, MaineDOT staff will perform inspections to ensure the effectiveness of the contractor's actions.

7-3 PRECONSTRUCTION OCCUPANCY OF ACQUIRED PROPERTY

7-3.01 Occupancy by Previous Owner or Tenant

Residential owner occupants and tenants in occupancy at date of MaineDOT acquisition are entitled to **at least** 90 days advance written notice of the date that they will be required to move. It is very important that the staff responsible for managing property on a project consult with the Relocation Specialist concerning control dates for issuance of notices to vacate for residential occupants.

Persons in occupancy of property at acquisition may be permitted to continue in possession under terms defined in the Occupancy Agreement (Form PM-1). This provides for the occupants' acceptance of all risks and expenses arising from occupancy as compensation to MaineDOT during the possession period. The occupant may apply for an extension beyond the period. MaineDOT, at its discretion, may charge an additional amount as short-term rent during the extension period. The Property Manager may waive rent for residential occupants on recommendation of the Relocation Specialist. The normal reason for waiver will be a finding of financial hardship that will prevent occupant displaced person from occupying comparable replacement housing. If financial hardship is determined, housing of last resort is triggered and greater efforts should be made to relocate the displaced persons.

If rent is charged to the original occupants during the period immediately following acquisition, the amount is subject to appeal to the State Claims Commission. Rent charged after the initial period is not subject to State Claims Commission appeal.

Rent owed to MaineDOT by the original occupants of property when they vacate the property may not be deducted from claims for relocation benefit payments.

7-3.02 Rental of Acquired Property

On notification that the original occupant has vacated an improved property, the Property Manager, R/W Supervisor and Project Manager will decide the disposition of the improvements. The usual decision will be to clear the improvement from the right of way by sale for removal or by demolition. Rental of property will be considered only if there is an extended time before the property is needed for construction, and the physical inspection (see Section 7-2.01) confirms that the property is suitable for continued use and occupancy.

When the decision is to rent property subsequent to acquisition, the Property Manager or qualified project staff assigned by the Property Manager will perform the following activities:

1. Secure prospective occupants by the most cost-effective means, including classified advertisement, bulletin board posting, and contacts with real estate agents, etc.
2. Determine fair rental in consultation with the Project Appraiser or Review Appraiser. The rent rate must be no more than would normally be charged for short-term

occupancy in the area in which the property is located. The basis for the determined rent will be documented in the parcel file.

3. Determine any special conditions and limitations that will be placed in the rental agreement. This will include responsibility for maintenance and for structural repairs, allowed modifications to property and limitations on permitted uses.
4. Determine the reasonable rent security deposit.
5. Determine the liability insurance required of the occupant to hold the State safe from liability from property and casualty risks.
6. Prepare license agreement (P/M-2) and present to the prospective occupant for execution.

The lease will specify that the occupant will be required to vacate the property on 30 days notice and will not receive relocation payments or services of any kind.

The lease will normally provide that the occupant is responsible for utilities, maintenance and repairs. If the occupant performs repairs that are significantly beyond routine maintenance, are unforeseen and are necessary to continued occupancy, the rent may be reduced. The Property Manager will decide on rent reduction requests based on the equities of the situation and the overall interest of the State.

The lease will be effective when the Property Office Director or designee signs it.

The Property Manager will monitor project advertising schedules and issue a 30-day notice to vacate to occupants at least 60 days before the construction project is advertised. The security deposit held by MaineDOT will be returned after a final physical inspection of the site, final reading of utilities and surrender of keys. The security deposit returned will be reduced by any amount owed to the State or owed to third parties who file a lien against the property.

Rent delinquency of 60 days will be referred to the MaineDOT Legal Services Office for collection. If the Legal Services Office concurs, delinquent rental accounts may be placed with a private collection agency.

7-4 DISPOSAL OF STRUCTURES

The Property Manager will perform planning and oversight required for the clearance of structures and improvements from the right of way in preparation for construction. Qualified Region Office or project personnel may be assigned to perform specific tasks in this process.

MaineDOT normally clears right of way by contract with private demolition firms. Clearance can also be performed by State forces or by the transfer of structure disposal to the highway construction contract.

7-4.01 Pre-Disposal Inspection

Pre-Disposal inspection is a continuation of the process outlined in Section 7-2.02(d) and is an ongoing process between the MaineDOT personnel and the asbestos inspector. The inspector will prepare a memorandum that documents the inspection and presents conclusions. The memorandum will address the following points as applicable:

1. Presence, extent and type of asbestos;
2. Recommended remediation before disposal; and
3. Protective or remediative measures for the site.

The inspection report (memorandum) will be circulated to offices or persons who have an interest or who share responsibility for the project or the property. This includes the MaineDOT Environmental Office, Bureau of Maintenance and Operations, the Project Manager and the Project Resident. The report will be available to prospective bidders for structures and to demolition contractors.

7-4.02 Contract for Demolition or Removal

Contract for sale and removal or demolition is the normal means of disposal of structures. Demolition by MaineDOT forces or inclusion in the highway construction project may also be utilized if determined to be cost effective. MaineDOT may also dispose of the structures by other means described in 7-5.04.

The following steps will be followed in contracting for removal or demolition:

1. Prepare detailed descriptions and specifications for removal. The pre-disposal report may be referenced in the specifications and provided as a bid document.
2. Determine the amount of bid deposit by certified funds that will be required.
3. Develop performance period and provision for liquidated damages.
4. Prepare bill of sale for structures and improvements to be removed.

5. Advertise for a minimum 2-week period on the State of Maine Website for demolition contracts. Other cost-effective advertisement methods may be used in addition, particularly if they provide exposure to minority or women-owned businesses or individuals.

The advertisement will be published in accordance with applicable MaineDOT rules pertaining to sale by bid. In addition, the following provisions will be included in the advertisement:

1. MaineDOT reserves the right to reject bids for any reason.
2. Bid deposit will be by certified funds (no personal checks).
3. Acceptance of successful bid is subject to approval of the Commissioner of Transportation.
4. Time is of the essence in meeting performance dates.
5. Successful bidder is responsible for compliance with all environmental regulations.

All certified checks for performance deposits or sale of structures will be payable to the Treasurer-State of Maine. Proceeds of sale will be routed to the MaineDOT Bureau of Finance and Administration. The revenue from sale of structures will be applied to reduce the net cost of the project. No Federal Highway Administration approvals or credits to Federal funds are required.

The Project Resident or the Property Manager will inspect the sites to verify the completion of demolition or removal and will release the performance guarantee if the work has been completed in conformance with the contract.

7-4.03 Demolition in Highway Contract

Demolition performed by the highway construction contractor will be approved if deemed cost effective. Also, buildings may be removed under the project contract if no responsible and reasonable bids were received in response to the advertisement for removal or demolition.

The Property Manager will advise the Project Manager at the earliest possible time if the need for demolition by the project contractor is anticipated. Early notification is necessary to include demolition in the bid documents, rather than as a potentially higher cost change order after the contract is advertised.

Jurisdiction over structures will be transferred to the contractor by contract or work order, and the keys will be provided through the Program Resident Engineer.

The responsible MaineDOT Project Engineer will perform the inspection for completion of demolition.

7-4.04 Sale of Buildings for Removal

The Property Manager will approve the sale of individual buildings for removal from the right of way if the buildings are determined to have a value for continued use. This can arise from the following circumstances:

1. The structures have a positive value after cost of their removal from the right of way.
2. Buildings are determined to have historic significance by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission and can be removed for preservation or for salvage of architectural parts.
3. The buildings can be relocated or salvaged to meet a demonstrated community need.

If buildings have a positive net value after removal, they will be advertised in the manner described in Section 7-4.02. A provision will be placed in the advertisement that only positive amount bids will be accepted.

MaineDOT may transfer ownership of buildings having historic significance or community value to responsible governmental or non-profit organizations at no cost. Approval of the Commissioner of Transportation is required. The Property Manager will secure advice and recommendations of the MaineDOT Environmental Office concerning proposals for these transfers. MaineDOT will condition transfers on the same criteria that are applicable to demolition contracts as to completion dates, environmental compliance and site restoration.

7-4.05 Building Removal by MaineDOT Forces

State Forces can remove buildings or improvements under certain circumstances including the following:

1. Fast response is necessary to protect public safety. If a building is threatening collapse, or if there are open pits, standing water, rubble from fire or storm, or other dangerous conditions, particularly if they attract children.
2. Work cannot be performed economically under contract and State personnel are otherwise available.

If the demolition by State forces is anticipated, the Property Manager will confer with representatives of the Bureau of Maintenance and Operations to review work specifications, work schedule and environmental hazards. If the need for demolition arises from emergency circumstances, the responsible manager will respond in the manner required to protect public safety. MaineDOT will document why the use of force account is in the public interest.

7-5 EXCESS PROPERTY

7-5.01 Excess Property — General

Excess property is real estate under the jurisdiction of MaineDOT, which is determined as not needed for transportation use. Excess property may originate from the following actions:

1. Purchase of total takes where a part is required for right of way, leaving uneconomic remainders;
2. Changes in highway design plans after right of way acquisition;
3. Reconstruction of roads where portions of the existing right of way are not needed;
4. Removal of MaineDOT facilities such as maintenance yards, storage yards, rest areas and materials sites; and
5. Purchase of right of way that ultimately is not needed because of location or design changes or abandonment of project (see Section 7-5.02). May require payback of participating funds if acquired with Federal funding.

Standalone buildable parcels are normally marketed for sale once they are determined to be excess after completion of a project. Sale or rental of excess property that is not buildable usually originates from an inquiry by an abutter. All inquiries are recorded on Form PM-4, which also contains a checklist for review by MaineDOT.

MaineDOT reserves the right to require payment of an administrative fee from a party that requests to purchase or lease excess property. This will compensate MaineDOT for the expense and resources in processing the request, including research, appraisal, survey, etc. The administrative fee may be applied to the purchase or rental. The administrative fee may be returned if the request is refused by MaineDOT after review or if the excess property is disposed of or leased to another party.

Property subject to the Abandonment of Purpose provision discussed in Section 7-5.02 is considered for disposal as excess property only after the described process is completed and the offer of first refusal to repurchase is rejected.

7-5.02 Abandonment of Purpose (1 *MRSA* 815)

In some cases, property that MaineDOT has acquired through eminent domain must be offered for sale to the condemnee or heirs on a first-refusal basis if it has not been used for the purpose acquired within eight years from the date of condemnation. This provision of 1 *MRSA* 815 contains broad exemptions. This provision does not apply in cases where:

1. The property was taken in whole or in part using Federal funds or the eminent domain authority to take the property was derived from Federal law.

2. The property acquired does not meet state or municipal lot size or frontage requirements.
3. The property was taken to expand existing corridors used for transportation or utility purposes including highways, bridges, railroad lines.
4. The property was acquired before October 1, 2001.
5. The property was acquired by voluntary transfer.

In cases where this legislation does apply, the following rules will apply in implementing Section 815:

1. Property is used for the purpose acquired if construction has begun within 8 years of the date of vesting.
2. The Statute provides for a reaffirmation of public purpose that will extend the 8-year period for an additional 3 years. Subsequent reaffirmations are permitted under the Statute.
3. The provisions of Section 815 apply without regard to relocation payments and services that the owners received during the period of State ownership.
4. The 8-year period need not expire for MaineDOT to make a finding of abandonment of public purpose. The objective of the Statute is best served if the determination is made earlier than the 8 years allowed in the Statute.

The following process will be followed in an offer of first refusal pursuant to abandonment of purpose:

1. The Property Office will establish a Section 815 control date for each new right of way project.
2. The Property Manager will review Section 815 control dates yearly.
3. The Property Manager will maintain a log of project control dates. The control date will be 8 years after the vesting of the first property acquired for the project. The Property Manager will request a determination from the Program Managers upon expiration of each control date for projects that have not proceeded to construction. Determination alternatives include:
 - a. Project has been abandoned.
 - b. Project is deferred but is not abandoned.

The Program Managers will be asked to provide supplemental information necessary for the following steps in this process.

4. If the project has not been abandoned, the Property Manager will initiate a Reaffirmation of Public Purpose. This will conform to the requirements of Paragraph 1 in the Statute.
5. If the project has been abandoned, the Property Manager will notify, in writing, all property owners or their heirs of their right of first refusal to repurchase in the manner specified in Paragraph 2 of the Statute.
6. The repurchase will be offered at a price equal to compensation paid by MaineDOT plus an additional amount representing the monetary inflation based on the Consumer Price Index as defined in 36 **MRSA**, Section 5402(1) over the period the property has been in State ownership.
7. Property purchased under Abandonment of Purpose will be conveyed by Deed of Vacation.

If the notified owner or heirs refuse the right to repurchase, the property may be considered for disposal as excess property in accordance with Sections 7-5.03 and 7-5.04. Failure to respond within 90 days of delivery of notification will be considered refusal.

7-5.03 Excess Property Determination

The following applies:

1. The Property Manager in conjunction with the Region Managers and Bureau/Office Directors will determine that the property proposed for disposal is not needed for present or foreseen transportation use. This determination will have been completed for property subject to the Abandonment-of-Purpose provision described in Section 7-5.02 above. In addition, the Property Manager will decide priorities for transfer if there is an indicated alternative public use or if there is an interest from an adjacent property owner.
2. The Property Manager in conjunction with the Program Managers decides alternatives and priorities for transfer after circulating a memorandum to interested MaineDOT departments and agencies inviting comments. The memorandum will describe the property and its proposed disposition and state a reasonable period in which responses will be considered (14 days is suggested). The circulation will include the following MaineDOT Offices and Agencies asked to comment, but it may be extended to include other potentially interested parties:

Internal Clearances:

- a. MaineDOT Environmental Office;
- b. MaineDOT Property Office;
- c. MaineDOT Bureau of Planning

- d. MaineDOT Bureau of Maintenance and Operations, including Traffic Engineering;
- e. MaineDOT Safety and Compliance Division; and/or
- f. Project Development Program Managers.

External Clearances:

- a. Maine State Housing Authority, if property is suitable for residential use;
 - b. Federal Highway Administration, if acquired with federal title 23 funds **and** part of the Interstate **or** conveying for less than fair market value
 - c. Federal, State, and local agencies shall be afforded the opportunity to acquire real property interests considered for disposal when such real property interests have potential use for parks, conservation, recreation, or related purposes
3. The Property Manager, after considering all information, will record the excess property decision in a memorandum and will also specify conditions, rights to be reserved and manner of disposal.

7-5.04 Process for Disposal of Excess Property

The steps presented below define the process of disposing of excess property. The checklist on Form PM-4 will be used to record the date actions in the process are completed:

- 1. Excess property may be offered to a municipality, state agency, federal agency, or non-profit for a public use at less than market value or at no cost. Applicable situations that are in the public interest where this may be allowed includes (but not limited to) the following:
 - a. Public works facility
 - b. Municipal building
 - c. Museum
 - d. Library
 - e. Park or recreational area
 - f. Parking

The Governor's Deed (see Section 7-5.05) will contain a reversionary clause that will prevent the subsequent private sale of the property unless the party pays fair market value at that time.

- 2. An excess property may be disposed to a former owner at its current value, except that owners having refused offers to purchase under Section 7-5.02 will have the same status to purchase as the general public.

3. MaineDOT, at its discretion, may offer excess property, that is not buildable, to adjacent owners at a minimum of current fair market value. In most cases, all abutters will be contacted to see if they have an interest in the property.
4. FHWA approval is required for disposal of real property acquired for the Interstate highway system. The form, content and time of concurrence requests will be determined in consultation with the FHWA Division Office.
5. FHWA approval is required for exceptions to charging less than fair market value for disposed property if the property was acquired with federal funds. The MaineDOT approval request will demonstrate that the exception is in the overall public interest based on the specifically referenced social, environmental or economic purposes, nonproprietary public use (see Item #1. above) or public transportation.
6. In determining the need for FHWA approval, fair market value will be either the approved appraisal or price estimate, the highest acceptable bid or the price negotiated under Item No.11 below.
7. In the event excess property, has been deemed marketable and to be publicly sold, the subject property will have "For Sale" signs installed for a minimum of two weeks prior to consideration of any offers.
8. The value of excess property to be disposed of by public bid will be determined by valuation methods determined by the Chief Property Officer. The provisions of Chapters 3 and 4 of this *Manual* can be applied to excess property valuations. Waivers of appraisal provisions apply where the value is considered to be less than the appraisal waiver threshold. The Chief Property Officer may determine an opinion of value or a broker's market analysis is appropriate for certain disposals. Properties of nominal value may be offered for an administrative fee.
9. The excess property not disposed of in accordance with Items #1. or #2. above may be offered for sale at public bid, offered for sale with a licensed real estate broker, or advertised for sale by MaineDOT. Bid deposits may be required at the discretion of MaineDOT. All parties who had previously expressed an interest in purchasing the property will be provided a print or electronic copy of the advertisement. Normally the advertisement will specify a minimum amount as an acceptable bid.
10. The Property Manager will recommend acceptance or rejection of the high bid or rejection of all bids. The reasons for rejection of bids will be recorded in the file. If the high bid is accepted, the successful bidder is notified and forwarded a purchase and sales agreement, if appropriate. Unsuccessful bidders will be notified and their deposits returned.
11. If no bids are received, or if the successful bidder fails to return the executed purchase and sales agreement within a stipulated time, MaineDOT may negotiate for sale with

any interested party. If bids are rejected, MaineDOT will wait 7 days before negotiating with interested parties to allow the opportunity for appeal of rejected bids.

12. If the property is listed for sale with a real estate broker or advertised for sale by MaineDOT, the listing will state “as is” condition. The term of listing and the commission rate will be negotiated based on what is reasonable and typical in the local area.
13. The Property Manager will ensure that any conveyances or sales of excess property are not in violation of 17 M.R.S.A § 3104 *Conflicts of Interest; Purchases by the State*

7-5.05 Conveyance of Excess Property

Conveyance of excess real property will be either by Deed of Vacation or by Governor’s Deed. The Deed of Vacation is used to release property to the previous owner or the owner’s heirs or assigns. The Governor’s Deed is used to convey fee simple interest to any party other than from whom the property was obtained.

The Commissioner of Transportation signs the Deed of Vacation. The Governor signs the Governor’s Deed. The Property Manager initiates request in the Title Office for the preparation of the deed and, after proofreading, the documents are transmitted to MaineDOT Legal Services Office. After Legal Services Office approval, the Property Manager routes the documents through appropriate organizational levels to the Commissioner or the Governor for signature, as follows:

For Deed of Vacation:

1. Bureau of Project Development Director;
2. Chief Engineer;
3. Commissioner, for execution.

And if a Governor’s Deed:

1. State Budget Office;
2. Governor’s Office;
3. Secretary of State Office.

Personal property will be conveyed by Bill of Sale at the approval by the Property Office Director. This applies to the sale of fixtures or improvements (e.g., as portable storage sheds) that are sold for removal from the site.

7-5.06 Revenues

MaineDOT may require payment for property purchase in certified form. The proceeds from the sale of real estate will be routed to the Bureau of Finance and Administration and any applicable Federal pro-rata to be placed in a dedicated account.

There will be no credit to federal funds for disposed excess property from any system if the proceeds representing the federal share are dedicated to use for projects eligible for Federal funding under Title 23 of the ***US Code***.

7-6 RIGHT OF WAY USE AGREEMENTS

MaineDOT may rent real property not needed for highway right of way. MaineDOT may also rent highway right of way for uses that do not interfere with the safe operation and maintenance of the highway. The rental is subject to the process and restrictions set forth in the following paragraphs.

7-6.01 Rental of Property - Not Highway Right of Way

Property not included in the highway right of way may be rented for a specific term if the Property Manager determines that the property will not be needed for transportation purposes for an extended period, normally one year. This determination will be made only after consulting with the appropriate MaineDOT personnel.

MaineDOT may grant a municipality or a public agency a permit to use property for a non-proprietary public purpose at no rent or less than market rent.

The permitted uses and any special limitations will be specified in the rental agreements. The Property Manager will consult with affected or interested parties to determine relevant lease provisions and use limitations.

The Property Manager may authorize rental of property not included in the right of way. A private real estate property management firm may be utilized to administer the rental.

FHWA approval is required for exceptions to charging fair market rent for property if the property was acquired with Federal funds. The MaineDOT approval request will demonstrate that the exception is in the overall public interest based on specifically referenced social, environmental or economic benefits, non-proprietary public use or public transportation (see 7-5.04(1) for criteria).

Except as above, the process for rental will be the same as presented in Section 7-3.02 for preconstruction rental of property acquired for right of way.

7-6.02 Lease or Use of Highway Right of Way

This section applies to all highways as defined in 23 U.S.C. 101(a) that received title 23, United States Code, financial assistance in any way.

MaineDOT will consider proposals for the temporary or permanent use of highway right of way that do not interfere with the safe operation and maintenance of the highway facility nor expose users to other hazards and otherwise are determined to be in the public interest.

A right of way use agreement for the non-highway use of real property interests may be executed with a public entity or private party in accordance with §710.403. Except for Interstate Highways,

where MaineDOT controls the real property interest, the FHWA assigns its determination and approval responsibilities to the MaineDOT in their current Stewardship/Oversight Agreement. The most current version can be found on the FHWA website at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/federalaid/stewardship/agreements/me.pdf>.

The proposed use of highway right of way should be reviewed in close coordination and cooperation with the Traffic Engineering Division, Bureau of Project Development, Bureau of Maintenance and Operations and the Environmental Office. In addition, municipalities and local development and planning agencies should be informed and consulted.

This section does **not** apply to the following:

- (i) Uses by railroads and public utilities which cross or otherwise occupy federal-aid highway right of way and that are governed by other sections of this title;
- (ii) Relocations of railroads or utilities for which reimbursement is claimed under 23 CFR part 140, subparts E and H, 23 CFR part 645, or 23 CFR part 646, subpart B; and
- (iii) Bikeways and pedestrian walkways as covered in 23 CFR part 652.

7-6.02(a) Use Agreements for Interstate Right of Way

Any non-highway alternative use of real property interests requires approval by FHWA, including a determination by FHWA that such occupancy, use, or reservation is in the public interest; is consistent with the continued use, operations, maintenance, and safety of the facility; and such use does not impair the highway or interfere with the free and safe flow of traffic as described in §710.403(b). A Right of Way Use Agreements (Use Agreement) is for a time-limited occupancy or use of real property interests may be approved if MaineDOT has acquired sufficient legal right, title, and interest in the right of way of a federally assisted highway to permit the non-highway use. The Use Agreement requiring FHWA approval must contain provisions that address the following items:

- (1) Ensure the safety and integrity of the federally assisted facility;
- (2) Define the term of the Use Agreement;
- (3) Identify the design and location of the non-highway use;
- (4) Establish terms for revocation of the Use Agreement and removal of improvements at no cost to the FHWA;
- (5) Provide for adequate insurance to hold the grantee and the FHWA harmless;
- (6) Require compliance with nondiscrimination requirements;

(7) Require grantee and FHWA approval, if not assigned to MaineDOT, and MaineDOT approval if the Use Agreement affects a Federal-aid highway and MaineDOT is not the grantee, for any significant revision in the design, construction, or operation of the non-highway use; and

(8) Grant access to the non-highway use by the grantee and FHWA, and MaineDOT if the Use Agreement affects a federal-aid highway and MaineDOT is not the grantee, for inspection, maintenance, and for activities needed for reconstruction of the highway facility.

Where a proposed use requires changes in the existing highway, such changes shall be provided without cost to federal funds unless otherwise specifically agreed to by MaineDOT and FHWA.

Proposed uses of real property interests shall conform to the current design standards and safety criteria of FHWA for the functional classification of the highway facility in which the property is located.

An individual, company, organization, or public agency desiring to use real property interests shall submit a written request to the grantee, together with an application supporting the proposal. If FHWA is the approving authority, the grantee shall forward the request, application, and the MaineDOT's recommendation if the proposal affects a Federal-aid highway, and the proposed Use Agreement, together with its recommendation and any necessary supplemental information, to FHWA. The submission shall affirmatively provide for adherence to all requirements contained in this subpart and must include the following information:

- (1) Identification of the party responsible for developing and operating the proposed use;
- (2) A general statement of the proposed use;
- (3) A description of why the proposed use would be in the public interest;
- (4) Information demonstrating the proposed use would not impair the highway or interfere with the free and safe flow of traffic;
- (5) The proposed design for the use of the space, including any facilities to be constructed;
- (6) Maps, plans, or sketches to adequately demonstrate the relationship of the proposed project to the highway facility;
- (7) Provision for vertical and horizontal access for maintenance purposes;
- (8) A description of other general provisions such as the term of use, insurance requirements, design limitations, safety mandates, accessibility, and maintenance as outlined further in this section; and
- (9) An adequately detailed three-dimensional presentation of the space to be used and the facility to be constructed if required by FHWA or the grantor. Maps and plans may

not be required if the available real property interest is to be used for leisure activities (such as walking or biking), beautification, parking of motor vehicles, public mass transit facilities, and similar uses. In such cases, an acceptable metes and bounds description of the surface area, and appropriate plans or cross sections clearly defining the vertical use limits, may be furnished in lieu of a three-dimensional description.

7-7 PROPERTY MANAGEMENT FOR PROGRAMMATIC GOALS

7-7.01 Access Management

The MaineDOT Traffic Engineering Division has issued driveway and entrance permit rules to regulate vehicular access to State highways under 23 **MRSA** 704. The purpose of the rules is to protect public safety, preserve the traffic-carrying capacity of highways, and avoid the long-term cost of constructing new highway capacity. The rules control the number, spacing and placement of new entrances and driveways.

MaineDOT's Access Management Program regulates access by adjacent property owners while protecting the right of reasonable access to the public highway system. The regulation of driveways and entrances is generally a police power activity, and there is no taking of private property rights under eminent domain authority.

MaineDOT right of way personnel at all levels will support the access management program and contribute to the efficient administration of MaineDOT's rules by being sufficiently familiar with them to explain their purpose and intent to affected property owners. Technical questions should be referred to the Traffic Engineering Division.

MaineDOT Traffic Engineering personnel in the Region Offices may be called to participate at on-site meetings or to contact property owners concerning compliance or violations or to encourage shared entrances. This work will be performed under the guidance of the Traffic Engineering Division.

7-7.02 Access Control Modifications

The Maine Legislature enacted 23 MRSA Section 704 to regulate entrances to highways and thereby ensure cost effective and safe highways in the state. This law provides that the Department of Transportation and the municipalities shall deny ingress to and egress from property abutting the highway when MaineDOT has acquired access rights, except that the Commissioner of Transportation may allow access for the development of State and State-aid highways.

The Commissioner may "also allow access upon determination that such access will not adversely affect public safety and will not have a significant negative impact on the mobility of through-travelers."

The safety and mobility of the corridor needs to be analyzed in order for the Commissioner to make an initial decision as to whether the proposed break may be allowable. The Chief Engineer, using the platform of the Engineering Council and the resources it provides, will make a formal recommendation to the Commissioner.

This process will consist of a two stage review. The first stage determines whether the applicant meets the minimal requirements set forth by 23 MRSA Sec. 704. If those conditions are not met the applicant is notified as such. The request will be denied if it is for a break in Control of Access

(COA) on a roadway that is within the original design life of the facility (normally 20 years). If the review finds that requirements of the statute are met, a second stage review is required to meet all the requirements that creating a break in COA entails.

Stage 1 Review

1. Requests for breaks in Control of Access are directed through the Region Engineers to bring to the Engineering Council.
2. Chief Engineer and Engineering Council will review request to determine whether or not request meets the requirement of statute and/or if it is prudent.
3. At this time, in order to determine the impact on public safety and mobility of the corridor, a traffic study may be requested from the applicant showing the usage of the proposed break.
4. Applicant notified either that:
 - a. the proposed break does not meet merits of statute and request is denied
 - b. the proposed break does meet the merits of statute and the request will proceed to stage 2 of the review process.

Stage 2 Review

1. Applicant required to submit traffic study to MaineDOT showing the traffic impacts on the roadway system. The study will be as required as described in MaineDOT Chapter 305 Rules and Regulations pertaining to the traffic movement permit. The applicant is responsible for any mitigation needed to maintain proper level of service.
2. Applicant required to provide a “before and after” appraisal on the parcel(s) that will be receiving the break in COA. MaineDOT will review and comment on this appraisal.
3. Applicant will pay MaineDOT the current fair market value of the difference as identified by the appraisal provided in (2).
4. Payment received by applicant will be put toward projects eligible under Title 23 U.S.C.
5. Administrative fee will be charged for staff time at the applicable rate at the time of application.

Upon formal approval of the proposed break (inclusive of payment) in COA, a commission record item is presented by the Chief Engineer. Once signed by the Commissioner, a modified right of way plan showing the break will be formally recorded

7-7.03 Real Property Inventory

The Property Manager, along with the Bureau of Planning, Safety and Compliance Division, M&O, and Legal Services Division maintains a current and continuing inventory of property that is not presently in highway right of way use. The inventory, located in the Property Office, contains property that is used for transportation services (park-and-ride lots) and for environmental

protection and enhancement (wetlands) in addition to property that is under lease and available for lease or sale. The following designated categories are inventoried by the responsible program area:

Category 1.....	Licenses
Category 2.....	Leases
Category 3.....	Park-and-Ride (Bureau of Planning)
Category 4.....	Wetlands (Environmental Office)
Category 5.....	Uneconomic Remnant/Sell to Abutter
Category 6.....	Hold for Future Highway Purposes
Category 7.....	Available for Sale
Category 8.....	Landlocked/Uneconomic Remnants
Category 9.....	Permits (M&O)
Category 10.....	Mitigation/Scenic Easements (Environmental Office)

The inventory is maintained by the Property Manager and is updated every six months.

7-7.04 Public and Recreational Access at Water Crossings

MaineDOT is a party to the interagency Memorandum of Agreement Providing for Public and Recreational Access at Water Crossings and Properties Adjacent to Water. This April 1999 Agreement dedicates the efforts of the Departments of Transportation, Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, Conservation, and Marine Resources to act in committee (Public Recreational Access Committee) to facilitate public access to waterways and property adjacent to waterways.

MaineDOT staff responsible for property management will cooperate fully in advancing the objectives of the Memorandum of Agreement. In particular, the authority of MaineDOT to convey rights or interests to other State agencies will be transferred via a financial order which gives maintenance and supervisory authority of the property to the receiving agency.

7-7.05 Special Use Entrances

Special use entrances are limited use entrances on control of access segments of highways. The responsibility for review of the special use entrances on an annual basis to ensure that their use restrictions are not violated is a Bureau of Maintenance and Operations function. The Property Office will coordinate with the respective MaineDOT Region Office to remove the source of any violations that are found and will notify the MaineDOT Legal Services Office, if necessary.

7.7-06 Relinquishments

A relinquishment is the conveyance of a portion of highway right of way or facility by MaineDOT to a local government for continued highway use. MaineDOT generally relinquishes property when the facility no longer is on the State highway system and can be maintained and controlled more efficiently by a local jurisdiction. The conveyance is by Governor's deed at no cost to the local government. The deed contains a reversionary clause that returns the property to State ownership if it ceases to be used for public highway purpose.

When federal funds participated in the cost of right of way or the construction of the highway facility the provisions of 23 CFR 620 Subpart B apply to a relinquishment. The following facilities may be relinquished only with advance approval of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA):

1. Frontage roads outside access control lines that serve as ramp connectors or connectors with the local street system.
2. Ramps that serve as connections for interchange of traffic between the Federal aid project and local streets.
3. Property located within the access control lines of any federally assisted project, or property that includes access control rights.

MaineDOT will advise the FHWA Maine Division Office of the location of any contemplated relinquishment subject to federal oversight, allowing sufficient time for the FHWA to make office and field reviews. A description of the reason for the relinquishment, the jurisdictions involved and copies of conveyance documents will be provided to FHWA.

Upon completing a relinquishment subject to federal oversight MaineDOT will send FHWA, for record purposes, a map identifying the location and federal project number of facilities and real property relinquished.

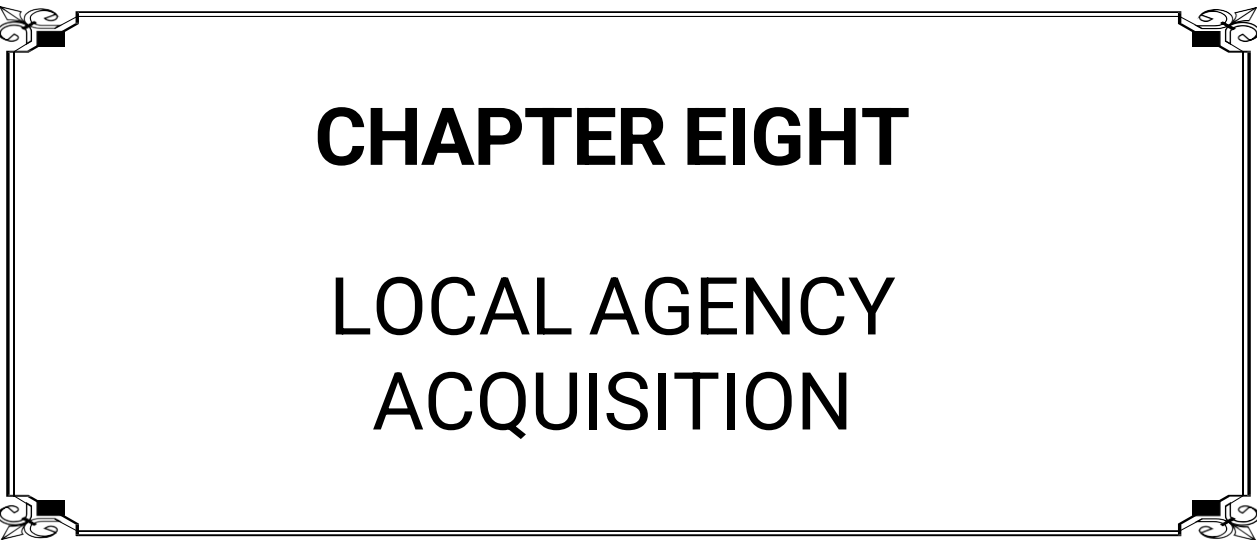
The Legal Services Office prepares an agreement with the municipality. The Property Office Mapping and Research Unit adds the agreement and/or Governor's Deed to the original acquisition document in its Deed File and notes it on MaineDOT's right of way plans.

Since relinquishments are made to advance the public interest MaineDOT does not require payment from the local jurisdiction for the value of property transferred.

7-7.07 Encroachments

Federal Regulations, 23 CFR 1.23 (b) and 23 MRSA Section 1401A require that the State highway department shall be responsible for preserving the right of way free of all public and private installations, facilities and encroachments except those of permitted public utilities.

Encroachments within the right of way should be identified early in the project development process as part of the development of the existing conditions plans. All signs shall conform to restrictions set forth by 23 MRSA Section 1914.



CHAPTER EIGHT

LOCAL AGENCY ACQUISITION

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

CHAPTER EIGHT

LOCAL AGENCY ACQUISITION

8-1 LOCAL AGENCY ACQUISITION POLICY

8-1.01 Partnering with Municipalities

Citizens of the State and the community benefit when local officials acquire right of way under agreement with the Maine Department of Transportation. Local officials know the needs and concerns of citizens. Property owners in the path of highway development are more likely to amicably settle property acquisition claims on the basis of fair market value when they are approached by officials they know, who share the same community interests. This enables highway projects to be completed expeditiously and at reasonable cost. It also results in a high degree of citizen satisfaction with the right of way process and the completed project.

Private ownership of property is a basic American right that is protected by the United States and the Maine Constitutions. The taking of property is constitutionally conditioned on public necessity and on payment of Just Compensation for property that is acquired for a public need. Federal and State legislative enactments provide additional citizen protection and rights. These control the process by which property is acquired and are intended to ensure that property owners who are affected by acquisition are not disproportionately injured by projects that are intended to benefit the public as a whole.

The Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT) assists municipalities to acquire real property that is needed for highway projects in compliance with Federal and Maine law. This Chapter sets forth the basic requirements of law and State policy. It describes and explains the critical steps in the property acquisition process. The objective is to enable local officials to proceed with confidence that they are conforming to all requirements of the law, reducing the amount of time devoted to the research and study of procedures and rules.

This Chapter is intended to serve as a concise breakdown of the Right of Way acquisition process in regards to Local Projects. Local agencies are still required to follow the relevant chapters of this Manual for the portions of the acquisition process that they undertake as part of their respective projects. This Chapter does not address unique or complex situations. Right of way acquisition is a human endeavor. Circumstances will arise that are not addressed by this brief coverage and that may be outside the experience of officials charged with this function. To address this situation, MaineDOT assigns a liaison representative to advise and consult on project right of way issues and problems. The assigned MaineDOT staff will have varied statewide experience and will provide practical advice that conforms to applicable law and regulations. In addition, the MaineDOT representative will strive for program consistency so that citizens are treated fairly and equitably, without regard to the part of the State they live in or the nature of their occupancy or type of acquisition.

8-1.02 Administration

Local Agency projects are administered in the Bureau of Project Development Multimodal Program. Projects that will be developed and delivered locally are identified early in the work plan development process. MaineDOT support and guidance will be provided by the Multimodal Program. A Project Manager (PM) is assigned to oversee a locally administered project and will arrange for resources within the Department to assist in this oversight. This PM will engage the Senior Property Officer in the Program to assist the Local Agency in their Right of Way needs.

8-1.03 MaineDOT Services

MaineDOT will perform the following activities with regard to locally administered right of way acquisition projects:

1. Ensure that the project is in the MaineDOT Capital Work Plan and that Federal funding is committed, if applicable. The Multimodal Program will assure that proper R/W authorizations are in place.
2. Consult with local officials to identify the scope, schedule and cost of right of way acquisition. Generally, if the acquired property will become State owned, MaineDOT will be responsible for the acquisition. If the property becomes municipally owned, the local agency will be responsible for the acquisition with guidance from MaineDOT.
3. Prepare an agreement in consultation with local officials defining the State/local project responsibilities.
4. Provide current and continuing advice on the application of State and Federal laws and regulations concerning right of way acquisition to specific project and parcel problems and situations.
5. Provide revisions and updates to regulations, policies, procedures and guidance material.
6. Provide training to local staff that are or will be engaged in right of way acquisition. Training is normally delivered through an agreement with professional organizations including the National Highway Institute, the International Right of Way Association or the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials as well as MaineDOT's Local Project Administration Training.
7. Monitor the performance of right of way activity in conformity with MaineDOT's Quality Assurance/Quality Control Program. See Chapter 10 for further detail.
8. Provide referrals of qualified and experienced private service providers in right of way functions, including appraisal, negotiations, relocation, legal services and title work.
9. Provide reimbursement for eligible costs based on supported claims that are submitted by the local jurisdiction.

The MaineDOT Senior Property Officer or Project Manager will perform many of the above services. The municipality shall maintain continuing contact with the representative through the property acquisition phase of the project. Normally, the Senior Property Officer will meet with the responsible municipal officials at an early stage in the project to review policy questions and the project schedule and to discuss any critical or complex cases.

For all property acquired, whether acquired by the Municipality or MaineDOT, it is MaineDOT's ultimate responsibility to ensure that the acquisition is being accomplished in accordance with all applicable State and Federal laws, regulations, and policy. Coordination between MaineDOT and the local agency can be an essential element in providing that assurance. The Senior Property Officer will closely monitor the acquisition activities of the agency on a regular and ongoing basis.

8-1.04 MaineDOT/Municipality Agreement

A formal agreement defining the roles and responsibilities of the municipality and MaineDOT will be executed for every project on which a municipality will assume responsibility. This is a comprehensive agreement covering all phases of work, including right of way. The agreement will normally provide for complete assumption by the municipality of all right of way acquisition responsibility as stated previously in Subsection 8-1.03. However, specific activities may be reserved for MaineDOT performance. This may include the relocation of residents who will be displaced as a result of acquisition. Any municipality opting to acquire right of way as part of project administration shall follow the requirements of the Uniform Act and the procedures outlined in this Manual.

The agreement will state that the standard of performance for right of way work will meet the requirements of the ***Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*** (as amended)(***Uniform Act***). This Chapter sets forth the basic and minimum requirements of the ***Uniform Act*** for the acquisition of property where no relocation is involved.

The MaineDOT/Municipality Agreement is intended to address the circumstances of specific projects. MaineDOT staff will consult with local officials in advance concerning the scope and content of the agreement so that it is relevant to the project and meets the needs of both parties.

8-1.05 Applicable Laws and Regulations

The local agency performing property acquisition is subject to the same laws and regulations as if MaineDOT were the acquiring agency. Following is a brief summary of the legal authorities that control the acquisition of real property for right of way:

1. U.S. and Maine Constitutions. Both require public necessity and payment of Just Compensation for the taking of private property. Additionally, the U.S. Constitution requires due process when States acquire privately owned property.
2. ***The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970*** (as amended). The ***Uniform Act*** is landmark Federal legislation that applies

to all property acquisition for Federal or Federally-funded projects. States, including Maine, have enacted legislation that enables compliance with the Federal law. Maine, through State law, has extended its provisions to State-funded projects.

The ***Uniform Act*** extends a system of rights and protections to property owners, with corresponding obligations for acquiring agencies. It sets forth a process for establishing value (Just Compensation) and negotiating with owners to encourage amicable settlements, thereby minimizing having to resort to the courts for condemnation. An important part of the ***Uniform Act*** provides a system of protections and benefits to persons who are displaced as a result of public projects.

The procedural provisions described in this Chapter arise from the requirements of the ***Uniform Act***.

3. 23 ***CFR*** 710. The ***Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)*** provides interpretive detail to Federal law and carries the full force and effect of Federal law. The above regulatory reference pertains to real property acquisition policy for highways.
4. 49 ***CFR*** 24. This is the Federal regulation that sets forth policy in implementing the relocation provisions of the ***Uniform Act***.
5. Title 23 ***MRSA*** Part 1. State Highway law contains provisions at Sections 61, 63, 73 through 246, 652 and 653 pertaining to the acquisition of real property and the relocation of displaced persons. Municipalities acquire property under authority of Title 23 Part 3, Chapter 304 (see below). However, this Chapter refers back to Sections 154 through 154E in Part I for purposes of determining damages to real property.
6. Title 23 ***MRSA*** Part 3 Chapter 304. This is the Maine Revised Statute pertaining to local highway law. Chapter 304 defines the acquisition of property for highway purposes.

The Maine Statutes referenced above conform to the detailed provisions of the ***Uniform Act*** and the implementing regulations in 23 ***CFR*** 710 and 49 ***CFR*** 24.

8-1.06 Transfer of Title to the State of Maine

Generally, if a municipality acquires fee title and/or easements on a State or State-aid road, title to the facility will be transferred to the State of Maine when the project is complete. The process for the transfer will be determined in consultation with the Property Office.

8-1.07 Quality Assurance

MaineDOT is committed to continuously improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of its programs and services. In partnering with MaineDOT, a municipality or local agency assumes a role in quality assurance. MaineDOT's concept of quality is based on the premise that every person involved in the process at any level has a responsibility for advancing quality. Quality advancement is a responsibility of each employee. It is not exclusively a management,

supervisory or audit function. The following activities are appropriate quality advancement measures that can be undertaken by the municipality performing real property acquisition:

1. Perform a second-party internal review of all documents before they are delivered to the property owner. This includes appraisals, agreements, and instruments of conveyance, and offer letters, etc.
2. Provide relevant training to agency personnel who are engaged in specialized right of way activity (e.g., appraisal, negotiations, titles, relocation).
3. Perform quality spot checks of completed work concurrent with any ongoing project acquisition activity.
4. Perform peer reviews of work activity when there is more than 1 staff person involved in property acquisition for right of way.
5. Conduct phone or mail surveys of property owners following acquisition.
6. Develop internal procedures or policy to apply to specific recurring situations or circumstances in order to ensure consistency and equitable treatment.
7. Perform joint project reviews between MaineDOT and local agency management staff.

The above are suggested examples, but not an exhaustive list, of quality assurance actions. Other measures may be appropriate and effective depending on agency staffing, organization and the project. Specific quality assurance measures may be suggested by MaineDOT and incorporated into the MaineDOT/Municipality Agreement.

The agency quality assurance activities do not replace audits and reviews that are performed by State, Federal or local audit authorities. MaineDOT has responsibility under 23 **CFR** 710.201 to monitor property acquisition activities conducted by political subdivisions to ascertain that right of way is acquired in accordance with the provisions of State and Federal laws and as required by Federal Highway Administration directives.

8-2 ACQUISITION PROCESS REQUIREMENTS

The procedural items discussed in this Section are basic requirements of the ***Uniform Act*** in the process of acquiring real property for highway right of way. They are presented with minimum detail in order to afford flexibility to municipalities to adapt their process to their organizational structure and the nature of the project. Additional information can be secured from the other chapters of this *Manual* that pertain to individual acquisition functions. Also, information and advice will be available from the Senior Property Officers and Property Office.

8-2.01 Title Investigation and Certification

Title investigations and certifications may be performed by the municipality's legal staff or may be contracted to private attorneys.

Municipalities will follow the standards established by the Maine State Bar Association for title examinations, including treatment of defects in title. Exceptions to these standards will be acceptable only upon approval of the MaineDOT Legal Services Office.

As soon as the right of way acquisition needs are identified for a project, title work will be prepared for all properties from which property rights will be acquired. The title work will assist with plotting property lines and provide ownership information on right of way plans.

Detailed guidance on title examinations for highway acquisition, including length of title search history for different types of takings is provided in Chapter 2. Section 2-4.03 provides guidelines for handling clearance of mortgages and other liens on property. On property acquired by deed, liens will be extinguished by securing releases, or the lien holder will be named as payee on the check for settlement in accordance with criteria for different types of acquisitions defined in Section 2-4.03.

A final rundown of title will be performed on all acquisitions immediately prior to the recording of the acquisition documents. The municipality will obtain an attorney's verification that the municipality has secured the required necessary rights to construct the project as designed. Based upon this verification, the highest-ranking municipal official will certify that all applicable Federal and State requirements governing these acquisitions have been satisfied. A final project certification will be made using the format of the MaineDOT Certification statement referenced in Chapter 1, Section 2.02(b).

8-2.02 Right of Way Mapping

The function of right of way mapping includes gathering and managing real property information and highway system information, and preparing the right of way plans and acquisition documents necessary to acquire property for highway projects. This section provides a brief overview of the mapping function. Detailed requirements for mapping are contained in Chapter 2.

The initial step in mapping is gathering data on ownership and improvements on each parcel of land the project is likely to affect. Mapping personnel then determine property rights underlying

the existing or proposed transportation facility. Mappers will translate the information into preliminary right of way maps that show the existing limit of the right of way or other public ownership. Mappers later prepare final right of way plans that document the new right of way limits of the project, basic design features including entrances and slopes, and the areas and types of acquisitions needed for the project. The final right of way plan serves as the basis for the parcel descriptions included in the property acquisition documents. A municipality will need to provide right of way plans for the condemnation cases.

Municipalities may contract for performance of mapping functions. Guidance for the mapping process is contained in Chapter 2. The MaineDOT Property Office unit can provide detailed advice on mapping specifications or questions on specific project situations.

Notice to Owner must be provided to owner of the real property and the basic protections provided to the owner by law prior to the start of the valuation phase.

8-2.03 Determination of Just Compensation

Just Compensation is the measurement of damages resulting from a taking under the power of eminent domain. The agency's estimate of Just Compensation is determined by means of real estate appraisals, which are independently reviewed by a qualified review appraiser, or by means of the MaineDOT approved waiver valuation procedure.

The Just Compensation determination must be made by an authorized official within the acquiring agency. MaineDOT recommends that on municipal acquisitions the official determining Just Compensation be the highest-ranking administrative officer in the municipality, typically the Town/City Manager or First Selectperson.

Independent contract appraisers in Maine are certified or licensed by the Maine Department of Professional and Financial Regulation. MaineDOT maintains an Appraisal Register, which is a current listing of consultant appraisers who are properly licensed or certified and are otherwise qualified by experience and performance to appraise property to be acquired for highway right of way. MaineDOT requires that a municipality contract with an appraiser on the Appraisal Register in accordance with Local Project Administration certification when not using qualified municipal staff.

When using an independent appraiser, consider the following:

1. Information Provided to the Appraiser. It is critical that the appraiser be provided with sufficient information to value the property rights to be acquired. The following should be provided:
 - a. Name, address and phone numbers of the owner(s);
 - b. Preliminary title information indicating current ownership and recent sales;
 - c. Description of the property rights to be appraised; and scope of work.

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- d. Plan sheet indicating property lines and taking, including grade changes and mitigation measures (e.g., driveway restorations or landscaping).
2. Provide Owner the Opportunity to Accompany Appraiser. The appraiser must provide an opportunity to the property owner to accompany the appraiser in an inspection of the property. This is a basic requirement of the **Uniform Act** and state law and cannot be waived. The appraiser should document efforts to contact the owner as well as provide the owner's response to the offer to accompany the appraiser.
 3. Appraisal Format and Number of Appraisals. When developing the appraisal, consider the following:
 - a. MaineDOT uses a Short Format Appraisal to value property when there are no damages or special benefits to the remainder and the highest and best use of the remaining property is not changed. This is discussed in Section 4-2.04.
 - b. MaineDOT may waive a formal appraisal of uncomplicated acquisitions where the value of the taking does not exceed \$15,000. In this instance, Just Compensation is determined by a qualified person, not necessarily an appraiser, through a simplified valuation process based on direct comparison with available market sales information. In order for an assessor to be deemed qualified, they must be either a Certified Maine Assessor or a Certified Assessment Technician. This process is fully described in Chapter 3. It should be noted that the administrative acquisition process is used only when settlement can be reached on this basis after explaining the process to the owner.
 - c. Some acquisitions will require more than one appraisal to be performed. Circumstances for a second appraisal include the property or the acquisition being of high value or uncertainty existing about the highest and best use of the property either before or after the acquisition.
 - d. Prior to acquisition, the Senior Property Officer will review the expected property acquisitions with local officials and jointly agree as to the proper appraisal format to be used and acquisitions in which more than one appraisal is appropriate.
 4. Appraisal Review to Determine Value. The offer that will be presented to the property owner as Just Compensation is determined by a formal review of the appraisal(s) secured for the property. The appraisal review function may be performed by a qualified agency representative or by a licensed or certified contract appraiser. The appraisal review will include a check of the factual information and computations in the appraisal. It will also conclude a fair market value for the acquisition based on an evaluation of support and reasonableness of the appraisal value conclusion. The review appraiser is responsible to secure any needed appraisal corrections or additional documentation. The appraisal review process is discussed in Section 4-5.

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5. Approval of the Appraisal. After the review is completed, for projects on MaineDOT's system, the appraisals will be approved at the MaineDOT by the Senior Property Officer overseeing the right of way phase of the project.
 6. Written Statement of and Basis for Amount Established as Just Compensation. A written offer of Just Compensation must be prepared for presentation to the owner, accompanied by a summary statement of the basis for the amount the agency has established as Just Compensation. The summary must provide the following information to enable the owner to make a reasonable judgment concerning the amount of the offer:
 - a. A description and location identification of the real property and the interest in the real property being acquired;
 - b. Identification of buildings, structures and other improvements, including removable building equipment and trade fixtures, considered to be part of the real property to be acquired; and
 - c. The amount established as Just Compensation. In the case of a partial acquisition, the compensation for the real property to be acquired and for damages to the remaining property must be stated separately.

8-2.04 Negotiations with the Owner

Agencies that acquire private property for public projects are aware of the need to be sensitive to property owner concerns as well as their rights under the Maine and the U.S. Constitution and laws. Therefore, it is important to negotiate for acquisition with a high degree of preparation, knowledge about the public need (i.e., the project) and professionalism in contacts with owners. Before negotiations can begin, the municipality **must ensure that the NEPA process is complete** and that the appropriate documentations are in place. Failure to complete this step and initiating negotiations prior to NEPA complete will jeopardize all federal participation in the project. The Municipality must check with the MaineDOT's Senior Property Officer or Project Manager to ensure NEPA is complete before making offers. All offers must be made in writing.

The agency representative should present the written offer of Just Compensation in person, explain the project and the need for acquisition, and address any owner questions about the offer and the valuation process. In addition, the representative should discuss the project schedule and any effects of the acquisition or the project on remaining property. Sufficient time should be provided for the owner to consider the offer and to consult with others concerning the acquisition and the reasonableness of the offer, which shall be at least four weeks in the event condemnation is needed. This may require follow-up contacts. The agency has a responsibility to make every effort to acquire property expeditiously by negotiations.

The agency determined Just Compensation is the basis for negotiations, but the offer cannot be considered a "take it or leave it" alternative. Information provided by the owner may be cause to revise the offer, for instance, if an important element of value was omitted from the appraisal or

the acquisition was not properly described in the appraisal. Also, the agency has authority to administratively increase the offer amount if this would promote a settlement that would be in the overall public interest. Reasons for administrative settlement need not be based on valuation, but might consider other factors including condemnation costs, need for expeditious settlement or the risk of a court award that is significantly greater than the agency determination of value.

Any administrative settlement offer amount that is above the established Just Compensation must be fully explained in the file by the authorizing official, with an explanation as to how the offer is in the public interest. All negotiation contacts with owners should be documented on a diary log that states the date of contact, the parties contacted and a summary of the discussion.

Chapter 5 provides a more detailed discussion of the negotiation process.

8-2.05 Tenant-Owned Improvements

The property acquired may include buildings, structures or other real property improvements that are owned by a tenant rather than the landowner. The tenant may have a lease that specifies that improvements be removed at termination of the lease. Tenant-owned improvements are more likely to be encountered on commercial use property. Examples include trade fixtures in a retail store or a panelized walk-in cooler for a restaurant. A tenant-owned improvement on a residential property might be an outbuilding (e.g., a storage shed) or a swimming pool.

Property that would be considered real property if it is owned by the landowner is also considered real property for acquisition purposes. The agency must acquire interest in tenant-owned improvements that are located on property that is acquired for the project. A separate offer of the value of the improvements must be made to the tenant owner, but only if the landowner first disclaims any interest in the improvements. If the landowner refuses to disclaim interest, the tenant is advised of this fact. The acquisition payment to the landowner will include the value of the improvements. Disputed ownership will then be a matter to be resolved between the landowner and the tenant.

The value of tenant-owned improvements will be determined as the greater of the amount that the improvement contributes to the fair market value of the whole property, or the value for removal, which is the same as salvage value.

8-2.06 Uneconomic Remnants

An uneconomic remnant is a remainder property after acquisition that the acquiring agency determines has little or no utility or value to the owner. The ***Uniform Act*** requires that the agency offer to purchase uneconomic remnants. This requirement is based on the reasoning that an owner should not be burdened by having to maintain and incur taxes and other costs for a property remnant that is created by the public taking that is of no value or use to the owner. The decision to sell the uneconomic remnant is voluntary on the part of the owner.

8-2.07 Donations

Once they have provided a Notice of Interest to Acquire to the owner, the acquiring agency may accept donation of the property or any part of the compensation that would be due to the owner for the acquisition and must inform the owner of the right to have the agency appraise the property and be offered Just Compensation. In accepting a donation, the agency must receive owner acknowledgement in writing that they understand their rights to an appraisal and Just Compensation and they release the acquiring agency from its obligation to provide an appraisal. If the motivation for donation is a tax deduction, the owner should be advised that the Internal Revenue Service requires an independent third-party appraisal to support any deduction from taxes. The agency may, at its election, reimburse the owner's cost for an appraisal. The selection of an appraiser and compliance with tax law requirements is the property owner's responsibility.

It is important that the agency not take any action that could be perceived as coercive of the owner to donate property. An example of a coercive act would be to tell an owner: "All your neighbors have agreed to donate. They are going to be unhappy to know this project is delayed because of your refusal to donate". Donations negotiated for the project but prior to signing a project agreement, are still subject to Uniform Act acquisition requirements on Federally funded projects.

8-2.08 Exercise of Eminent Domain

The municipality acquiring real property should make every reasonable effort to settle amicably by negotiations as described above. If municipal officials determine after sufficient contacts that settlement based on negotiations is not feasible, and the project schedule requires immediate taking of property interests, title should be acquired by filing a condemnation order in the manner specified in 23 **MRSA** Chapter 304, Section 3023. The municipality will issue a check in the full amount of determined damages, fair market value, for delivery with the service of record copy of the condemnation order. Service on any one of multiple owners will be considered service on all owners. Title will pass to the municipality on service of the order of condemnation and check, or recordation of the deed or certificate as specified in 23 **MRSA** Section 3024, whichever occurs first.

A property owner who is not satisfied with the determination of damages that are awarded in the process of eminent domain as described above may appeal to the Superior Court in the county where the property lies. The owner's appeal to the Superior Court must be made within 60 days after the day of taking as specified in 23 **MRSA** Section 3029.

8-2.09 Payment for Property Before Being Required to Surrender Possession

The **Uniform Act** requires that no owner be required to surrender possession of real property before the acquiring agency pays the agreed purchase price. This requirement is met in condemnation by the process described in Section 8-2.08. In a negotiated settlement, the municipality will deliver a payment check to the owner in the full amount of the agreed settlement before the agency takes physical possession of the property or requires the owner to vacate the property.

8-2.10 Payment for Expenses Incidental to the Transfer of Title

The acquiring municipality will pay actual and reasonable costs of transferring the title to the acquired property, including:

1. Recording fees, transfer taxes and similar expenses, if any, that are incidental to conveying the property to the municipality;
2. Penalty costs, inclusive of lien releases, for prepayment of any preexisting recorded mortgage encumbering the real property; and
3. The pro rata share of real property taxes paid by the owner for the period after the date of vesting title or the effective date of possession of the property, whichever is earlier.

8-2.11 Written Advance Notice to Vacate Occupied Property

No person who is lawfully occupying real property will be required to move from a dwelling or to move a business or farm operation without at least 90 days' written notice from the acquiring agency of the earliest date by which the move is required. The occupant should have a reasonable length of time to find other adequate facilities (e.g., housing or replacement business site) and to effect an orderly relocation.

The timing, content and delivery of a notice to vacate are determined by the Relocation Program procedures described in Section 6.04. If issuance of a formal notice to vacate is required, the municipality should consult with the MaineDOT Senior Property Officer to ensure that the notice complies with all regulatory requirements.

Less than 90 days' advance written notice is permitted, with FHWA approval, if continued occupancy of the property would constitute a danger to the person's health or safety. The determination and circumstances must be included in the project files.

8-2.12 Relocation of Residents or Businesses

The municipality may pay for the relocation of minor personal property items from the acquisition area to remaining property as a direct reimbursement claim based on the owner's actual and reasonable cost.

The relocation of residences, businesses or farms must be undertaken in strict compliance with Subparts C, D, E, and F of the **Uniform Act** and Chapter 6 of this *Manual*. Relocation is a highly specialized activity. MaineDOT recommends that the municipality consult with the assigned Senior Property Officer at the earliest time that a possible residential or business displacement is identified. The circumstances will be reviewed and determination made as to whether the relocation function will be performed by the municipality, contracted to a qualified private party or performed by MaineDOT staff.

It is important to know that property acquisitions that involve relocation will require significantly greater lead time than those acquisitions involving land only. There is an absolute requirement to make comparable replacement housing available to each displaced person or household and to provide at least 90 days' notice after a displaced person is advised of the availability of replacement housing. The agency must schedule the project to accommodate the relocation time requirements.

Relocation costs must be actual, reasonable and necessary.

8-3 PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

The municipality is responsible for maintenance, security and management of acquired land improvements after acquisition. This includes the following items:

1. Rodent Control. Properties should be inspected after acquisition for rodents and other hazardous conditions. If rodent infestations are found, the municipality must take removal actions to preclude migration to nearby properties. This should be performed before the demolition of any improvements.
2. Hazardous Substances. Buildings containing asbestos or other hazardous materials must be demolished in compliance with State and Federal criteria for these conditions. See Chapter 7 for further information.
3. Security and Safety. The municipality is responsible to maintain safe conditions at acquired sites. This includes preventing blighting influences to adjacent property by removing accumulations of trash and taking measures to control vandalism and dumping. Buildings should be secured appropriately, including boarding or fencing if necessary. Particular attention must be given to removing conditions that could attract and be hazardous to children.
4. Demolition or Removal of Structures. Structures may be sold for removal from the site or be demolished. If structures are sold, the municipality must use a fair and open process for selecting a buyer, require a cash security deposit or bond to guarantee performance, and require insurance to indemnify the municipality and the State from any liability.

The municipality may demolish structures with its own forces or contract for demolition prior to construction, or removal may be included as a work item in the highway construction contract.

The owner of acquired land may retain ownership of structures for removal to remaining property. This should be arranged during the negotiations for the property, with appropriate adjustment to the fair market value to reflect the retention value of the structures.

5. Rental of Acquired Property. Normally, the construction schedule will preclude the rental of acquired property prior to project construction. If the project is delayed or property is acquired significantly in advance of project need, the municipality may allow occupancy for public or private use. If rented, the amount charged may not exceed what is appropriate for short-term occupancy in the area. The rental or use and occupancy agreement should specify that occupancy after agency acquisition does not create any right or obligation by the municipality or MaineDOT for relocation benefits of any kind.

Any revenues that are generated from the rental of property or the sale of improvements will be applied to reduce the net cost of the project.

8-4 PARCEL AND PROJECT RECORDS AND REPORTS

8-4.01 Parcel and Project Files

The acquiring agency will keep a separate file for each real property acquisition and a file for the right of way project as a whole. The records will be sufficient to demonstrate compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The following will be included in the parcel and project files:

1. Right of way map or plan showing the right of way acquired, including parcel numbers, property lines, area acquired and structure improvements and fences;
2. Project plans and property plats, sketches, descriptions, or photos;
3. Property ownership information, including title reports;
4. Appraisal Reports and related assignment and contract documents;
5. Statement of determination of fair market value;
6. Offer letters to property owners;
7. Negotiations logs or contact sheets;
8. Correspondence with property owners and MaineDOT;
9. Settlement agreements and contracts and justifications for administrative settlements;
10. Condemnation documents and filings;
11. Credits for sale or rental of property; and
12. Documents relating to property management or the rental or sale of property and structures.

8-4.02 Project Summary Records

Project summary data should be maintained as agreed in consultation with MaineDOT for each project. This may include a summary sheet showing key dates for each parcel, indicating the following:

1. Appraisal assignment,
2. Date the appraisal was received,
3. Date and amount of the fair market value that was established,
4. Date a written offer was presented to the owner and negotiations were initiated,

5. Date and amount of the settlement,
6. Date condemnation was filed,
7. Date the title was transferred,
8. Costs of excess land and any uneconomic remnants acquired,
9. Incidental expenses by parcel, and
10. Cost of construction items performed for mitigation of damages.

The specific project summary data will vary with the type of project and character of work to be performed. Projects with relocation may require a different data set.

MaineDOT and the municipality are subject to audit by State authorities, the FHWA and the U.S. Department of Transportation. Beyond the information noted above, sufficient documentation should be retained in files to track the origin and basis for any costs that are charged to the project as specified in 2 **CFR** Part 200.

MaineDOT provides summary information on acquisition and relocation annually to the FHWA in order to carry out national program reporting responsibilities. The municipality will provide contributing information on projects under its responsibility.

8-4.03 Acquisition Policy Resources

The following Right of Way Program information resources will be provided to the municipality on initial assignment of responsibility for right of way project acquisition:

1. The MaineDOT *Right of Way Manual*;
2. The FHWA ***Real Estate Acquisition Guide for Public Agencies***;
3. ***Maine Revised Statutes*** Annotated, ***MRSA*** Title 23;
4. U.S. ***Code of Federal Regulations***, 23 **CFR** 710, and 49 **CFR** 24; and
5. Policy memoranda and guidance issued by MaineDOT and the FHWA.

8-4.04 Confidentiality and Retention of Records

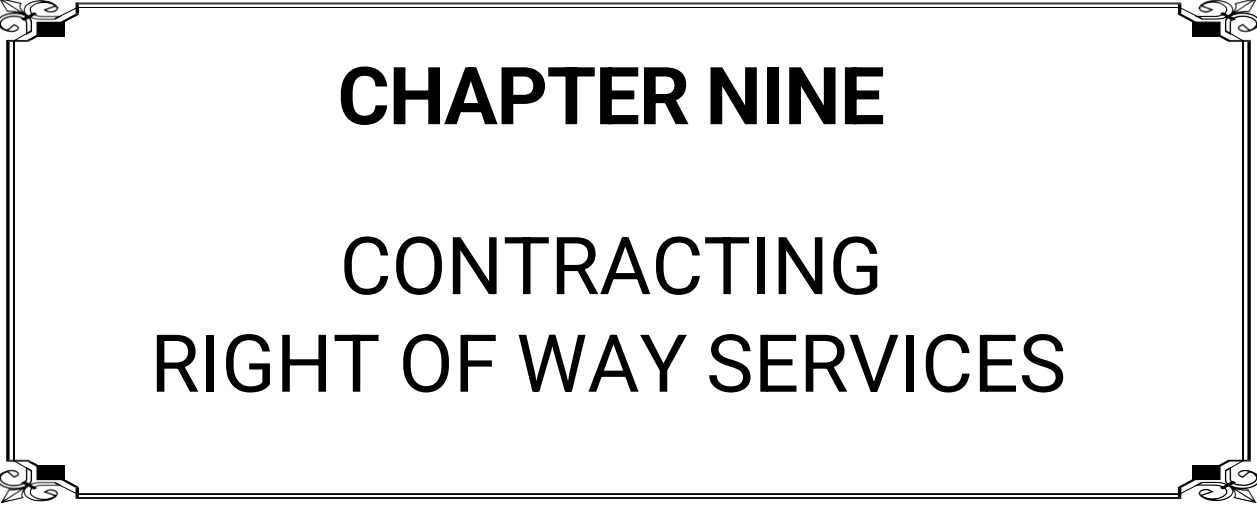
The municipality should ensure that all parcel and project files relating to appraisals and negotiations are secure and that only those persons qualified to access the files are allowed to view them. These records are not available for public information except as noted below and their integrity should be carefully maintained. Access to confidential records should be restricted to officials of the municipality, MaineDOT, the State Auditor and the Federal Highway Administration. Because these data provide the documented support for the establishment and payment of Just Compensation required by law, they should be secured in a safe area with backup records

developed as considered necessary. This is especially important if the data are maintained in computerized form.

Project and parcel records relating to appraisals and negotiations will be open to public inspection 9 months following the completion date of the project. Records relating to claims appealed to the Superior Court will be open to public inspection following the award of the Court.

Notwithstanding public availability of appraisals and negotiations records above, parcel records may contain information of a personal nature relating to claimant income, assets, tax information etc. This information may be protected from disclosure under privacy laws. Officials should consult the local agency or MaineDOT Chief Legal Counsel before making records available.

The municipality will retain records in accordance with the MaineDOT records retention policy as provided in the MaineDOT/Municipality Agreement.



CHAPTER NINE

CONTRACTING RIGHT OF WAY SERVICES

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

CHAPTER NINE

CONTRACTING RIGHT OF WAY SERVICES

9-1 CONTRACTING RIGHT OF WAY SERVICES — GENERAL

9-1.01 Role of Contracted Services in Right of Way

MaineDOT maintains a fully qualified and broadly experienced professional right of way staff consisting of personnel who deliver right of way for scheduled construction projects, and administer the Right of Way functions within the MaineDOT Programs. The MaineDOT Right of Way staff is sized and positioned to accommodate normal project workload demands and acquisition complexity. Right of way services are contracted to private service providers to augment staff resources under the following circumstances:

1. Meet peak project workload requirements that cannot be met by MaineDOT staff.
2. Provide specialized expertise to address unique property acquisition situations.
3. Provide services for short notice to unexpected program needs.
4. Provide timely service in areas of the State that cannot be efficiently served by staff.
5. Meet temporary, urgent or occasional need that cannot be accommodated by MaineDOT staff.

9-1.02 Purpose of the Contracting Procedure

The purpose of the right of way contracting procedure is to set forth a consistent, equitable and effective process to assess contracting needs, evaluate qualifications, contract for services and provide guidance and oversight of Consultants.

9-1.03 Legal Authority

This policy conforms to the following legal authorities:

1. 5 **MRSA**, Section 1816-A – Personal Service Contracting;
2. 5 **MRSA**, Section 1825-B – Bids, Awards and Contracts;
3. 2 **CFR** Part 200;
4. 23 **CFR** Part 172 Procurement, Management and Administration of Engineering and Design Related Services;
5. 23 **CFR** Part 200 – Title VI Civil Rights Requirements;
6. 23 **CFR** Part 710 Right of Way and Real Estate;

7. 49 **CFR** Part 24 Uniform Act

9-1.04 Scope of Right of Way Contract Services

Right of way services will normally be contracted on a project basis using On Call Agreements. However, specialized services may be required on an intermittent “stand-alone” basis as situations are identified that require these services.

The following right of way functions may be contracted by MaineDOT:

1. Preliminary ownership information;
2. Title investigation;
3. Existing Conditions Plans (ECP);
4. Project data collection;
5. Right of way cost estimates;
6. Final mapping;
7. Valuation services:
 - a. Appraisals,
 - b. Appraisal Review,
 - c. Supplemental Appraisal Services,
 - d. Dispute resolution counseling, and
 - e. Expert testimony;
8. Negotiation and acquisition services;
9. Property Surveys;
10. Property Management Services;
11. Property Listings;
12. Relocation field services; and
13. Relocation assistance casework services.

MaineDOT contracts regularly for appraisal services on a parcel or a project basis because this is a continuously recurring activity that is subject to wide workload fluctuations. The other functions will be contracted for on an as needed basis, depending on the availability of MaineDOT property staff to perform work.

While the above functions may be contracted, MaineDOT is responsible for and must perform the following:

- Determination of Just Compensation;
- Right of Way certifications;

- Determination of payees (title verification) for property and relocation payments;
- Approval of administrative and legal settlements;
- Approval of relocation payments;
- Referrals and other functions associated with the processing of unsettled parcels through the State Claims process.

9-1.05 Civil Rights Assurance

MaineDOT will ensure compliance with Title VI of the ***Civil Rights Act of 1964***. This requires that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity for which the recipient receives Federal assistance from the United States Department of Transportation.

MaineDOT ensures Title VI compliance in securing right of way services by advertising for contract services on the MaineDOT Contract Procurement Office's (CPO) webpage at **<http://www.maine.gov/mdot/cpo/>**. MaineDOT affirms that it does not discriminate in the right of way contract selection process or in the evaluation of contractor performance.

9-2 MAINEDOT CONTRACTING PROVISIONS

9-2.01 Contract Procurement and Administration

The MaineDOT Contract Procurement Office (CPO) is charged with creating and overseeing non-construction contracting procedures ensuring that State and Federal regulations are met.

CPO employs Contract Grant Specialists (CS) who provide contracting guidance to the Offices and Programs they serve. Individuals within the Property Office in need of external services are to use their respective CS to ensure that all contract procurement and administration practices are in accordance with the most recent version of MaineDOT's *MaineDOT Consultant and Professional Services Manual*. This also applies to the right-of way personnel who are assigned to specific programs.

The appropriate CS will assist the sponsoring contract administrator in selecting the correct external service provider using the appropriate procurement method, contract type, and payment method.

9-3 CONTRACTING RIGHT OF WAY FUNCTIONS

Traditionally, MaineDOT has contracted primarily for appraisal services as MaineDOT staff performed other right of way functions. Over the last several years, MaineDOT has begun to contract for acquisition, relocation and property management services and anticipates contracting for a broader range of right of way services that will include the functions listed as 1 thru 10 in Section 9-1.04. Contracted services will be in conformance with this manual, State law and applicable federal regulations. Federal projects are governed by 49 CFR Part 24 and 23 CFR Part 710 & 172.

9-3.01 Qualifications

Thorough and relevant qualifications criteria are necessary to fairly assess contract providers of right of way services. MaineDOT conducts a Statewide Request for Qualifications (RFQ) every 4.5 years in order to develop a list of qualified contract providers, though the opportunity to be prequalified for these services remains open between the formal RFQs. This list is established to handle MaineDOT's normal anticipated workload that may be assigned to private sector firms. MaineDOT also has the ability to issue a project or task specific Request for Proposals (RFP) when it sees fit to do so.

Any Right of Way related General Consultant Agreements (GCAs) will be managed and administered by CPO. Program Senior Property Officers needing right of way services will utilize their CS to execute contracts under these GCA's.

The following are examples of the relevant information needed by MaineDOT in order to make a fair assessment of a Consultant's qualifications:

1. Experience. Consultants will only provide information on projects that included similar work performed by the staff who will be assigned to the MaineDOT projects.
2. Staff. Provide information regarding how they assign work within their organization. Resumes must be provided for the staff who will be assigned work on the MaineDOT project.
3. Workload. Consultants must provide information on the current and anticipated workload for the staff and office who will be performing the MaineDOT work.
4. Project Right of Way Coordinator. Identify who within the Consultant's organization will be personally responsible or "in charge" of right of way and relocation components included in the scope of work. The Consultant must describe that person's qualifications, provide a resume that includes information regarding their experience on similar projects, and discuss his or her current and anticipated workloads.
5. Organization Chart. Consultants must provide an organizational chart showing the entire team.

6. Project Coordination. Consultants must describe how they will conduct project coordination with MaineDOT.
7. Services. Consultants will identify those services they have an interest in providing (see Section 9-1.04).

The qualification packets submitted should conform to characteristics of the functions to be performed.

9-3.02 Qualifications for Appraisers – Appraisal Register (Pre-Qualified List)

The qualifications for Appraisers who provide valuation services that are contracted on a parcel or project basis are discussed in Chapter 4. This includes a description of the Appraisal Register, which is the list of Consultant appraisers who are pre-qualified to work for MaineDOT. The process discussed in Chapter 4 will continue. Appraisers on the Appraisal Register will be advised if there is a need to update or augment their qualifications to meet the criteria discussed in this Chapter. The qualifications required for Review Appraisers can also be found in Chapter 4.

9-3.03 Right of Way Functions – Scope of Services

The qualifications packets submitted by the Consultants will identify the services they wish to provide and their qualifications to do so. The following sections discuss the scope of services for right of way functions.

9-3.03(a) Preliminary and Final Mapping

The Consultant providing preliminary mapping services are required to provide the following:

1. Owner Data. The Consultant must gather the names and addresses of abutting property owners within the project limits. This data should be provided to MaineDOT prior to beginning the field survey. Provide the listing in an electronic format and include the following data fields for each parcel:
 - a. Owner's names,
 - b. Mailing address,
 - c. Tax map and lot number, and
 - d. Book and page reference for deed.
2. Maps. Include copies of full size tax map(s) encompassing the project area.
3. References. Include the reference materials used to develop the preliminary right of way plans (e.g., deeds, survey plans, town records).

4. Preliminary Plans. Prepare preliminary right of way plans in either a compatible computer format that is consistent with MaineDOT specifications. The plans should include:
- a. Include property lines plotted from deed, property owner information and existing plans correlated to the property markers as located in the field. This is intended to be an office plotting task to indicate the extent of property ownership limits. MaineDOT's concern and the Consultant's focus should be on the location of the parcel frontage and sideline boundaries. The back line of lots should be shown where practical based on the size of the lot and availability of room on the plan sheet itself. These plans are not intended to be complete boundary surveys and will not require a Land Surveyor's stamp. Property lines reproduced directly from tax maps will not be accepted.
 - b. Include all existing easements and/or other property rights, located and identified.
 - c. Label each parcel depicted with property ownership information, including owner's name(s), parcel number and parcel total area.
 - d. Plat all parcel/property features (e.g., wells, septic systems, water lines, underground utilities).
 - e. For the existing centerline alignment, tie into any existing centerline alignments from previous projects, if there are any in the area. This information is available from the MaineDOT Mapping and Research Section.
 - f. Note any references used (e.g., private surveys, DOT file number of plans, county layout).
 - g. Identify the firm's name on every sheet with the following or similar note "Existing right of way and apparent property lines determined and plotted by _____."

The Consultants providing final mapping services are required to provide the following:

- a. Construction limits and items;
- b. New right of way limits, including slope, clearing and wrought portion limits;
- c. Permanent and temporary rights;
- d. Updated parcel setups;
- e. Acquisition stations and offsets;

- f. Condemnation distances, including base line and boundary lines;
- g. Easement limits and property lines tied into the base line;
- h. Calculated areas of acquisition or take for each type of acquisition (fee, easement, etc.);
- i. Inside distance calculations;
- j. Notes for special items like reserved areas and truck lanes;
- k. Total areas of property ownership calculated from the best available property information;
- l. Plan title block, including the MaineDOT file number;
- m. Right of way plan disclaimer; and
- n. Formal stamp of a Professional Land Surveyor.

The Consultant does a final check on all calculations and other plan data. Then the Consultant reviews the final plans with the Title Office Condemnation Unit to insure quality and conformity with MaineDOT standards, as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2-6.06(f). Once the review is complete, the Consultant distributes hard copies of the final right of way and design plans to the R/W Supervisor, Utilities, and Environmental Members; the Project Manager; and the Title Office. The Consultant also sends to the Project Team Right of Way Operations Member additional project materials, including title cover sheets, PORs and an updated N&A List. See Chapter 2 for additional details.

The plotting of the property lines will be the sole responsibility of the Consultant. The Consultant agrees to perform all work arising out of this agreement in a reasonable and prudent manner and according to industry principles and practices. The Consultant agrees to perform additional work as may be necessary to correct any negligence, errors or omissions in all work required under this agreement without undue delay and without additional cost to MaineDOT.

9-3.03(b) Title Investigation

Title searches are prepared to satisfy the legal requirements as mandated in 23 MRSA and to support acquisition tasks. Title searches are generally ordered after the Project Team establishes

a conceptual project scope that includes the anticipated right of way acquisition needs. The following are the levels of searches that are requested by the surveyor/mapper of a project team based on the impacts to the property.

1. Preliminary Investigations. This level of title investigation is primarily in support of the preliminary mapping effort as described in Section 9-3.03(a). The principal deliverable work product is a compilation of copies of the current deed descriptions for all properties abutting the proposed project. MaineDOT may request these copies be supplied to those individuals who are preparing the preliminary right of way maps at an early stage in the project development process to aid in the initial placement of property line data on the maps.
2. Deed Only Searches. A deed only search is a simple compilation of the current deed, a Grantor schedule only of the current owner from their acquisition forward and an abbreviated cover sheet.
3. Acquisition to Date Titles. The acquisition to date title includes:
 - a. A copy of the deed into the current owner;
 - b. A drawing or sketch of the property description as given in the deed;
 - c. A summary title which includes:
 - 1) A complete schedule of all index entries for the current owner from the deed up to the date that the title investigations are begun (All titles for the project should be scheduled through the same date.);
 - 2) An abstract of all instruments in the chain of title from the current owner forward (The instruments should be copied, not abstracted, when there is a change of description or other pertinent new material is given.);
 - 3) A summary chain of title showing all instruments of record resulting from the schedule of index entries and;
 - 4) A cover sheet showing the owner of record and other information as indicated on the form;
 - d. A project inventory listing all owners of record by parcel number; and
 - e. A listing of any problems that need to be resolved by parcel number together with a report on any measures to cure or additional information gathered by the abstractor.

Finally, the abstractor must be prepared to do any additional preliminary title work that is required for the mapper to complete plotting the property lines.

4. Full 40-Year Titles. Once the final scope of the project is established, the Surveyor/Mapper requests full 40-year title examinations for all proposed project

acquisitions that fall within the 40-year search requirements contained in Table 2-2. Abstractors perform these examinations in accordance with the standards of the Maine Bar Association except where the standards are modified by the Title Office and the Office of Legal Services. The results of the 40-year examinations are used in final right of way mapping, property valuation and acquisition activities. The Title Office prepares the Notification List information, which includes the names and addresses of each party with a title interest in a parcel, as well as any party with a financial interest. The Title Office Condemnation Unit uses the information for document preparation, vouchering of checks and delivery of condemnation packages and other notices to landowners.

The status of project parcel titles is updated once the Senior Property Officer completes valuation and negotiation activities, but no more than 6 months prior to the scheduled acquisition date. The Title Office submits to the Surveyor/Mapper a memo summarizing any ownership or mapping related changes. Survey/Mapping uses this information to update the N&A List, and make any mapping changes.

See Chapter 2 for additional information.

9-3.03(c) Project Data Book

The Project Data Book is a cumulative collection of factual data that are gathered in support of the preparation of project right of way cost estimates, Administrative Acquisition Worksheets and appraisals for a project. The Project Data Book consolidates general data for a related group of individual parcel reports in order to prevent duplicating items such as comparable data sheets, studies, and general conclusions that relate to the area or region (e.g., time, utility, and location), area and neighborhood descriptions, general exhibits, trend studies, etc. On large projects, the intent of the Project Data Book is to promote project consistency and efficiency. The Project Data Book is limited to factual data. Analysis should be included in individual Parcel Reports. It is intended to become an integral part of each Parcel Report by reference.

The Project Data Book content is intended to reflect the scope and complexity of the project it represents. The following summary of procedures and content is intended to outline the required level of effort for a complex project of significant scope. The content of the data package for non-complex projects may be modified appropriately to suit the intended need for these data in relation to the actual project under development. The scope and content of the Project Data Book are to be mutually agreed on by the Consultant and the Contract Administrator as a part of the scope of work for any specific project agreement.

Data collection must continue through submission of the last appraisal on the project. If the data, market, trends or references change during an appraisal project, appropriate additions to and modification of the completed Project Data Book must be made.

See Chapter 4 for additional details regarding required elements in the Project Data Book.

9-3.03(d) Valuation and Appraisal Services

When obtaining valuation and appraisal services, the following will apply:

1. Short Format Appraisal Preparation. The Short Format Appraisal involves the preparation of formal documented Appraisal Reports in compliance with MaineDOT's Short-Form Appraisal specifications. This form of appraisal is used in connection with uncomplicated acquisitions where adequate market data are available and there are no issues of special benefits or severance damages.
2. Before and After Appraisal Preparation. This involves the preparation of detailed Appraisal Reports of the before and after format in compliance with MaineDOT's Appraisal Specifications.
3. Supplemental Appraisal Services. Supplemental appraisal services involve providing supplemental appraisal services in conformity with the above noted appraisal activities. These services may be required due to changes in project scope, change in ownership, discovery of unanticipated property impacts, and updating Appraisal Reports on unsettled acquisitions following eminent domain takings.
4. Dispute Resolution Counseling. These services involve working with MaineDOT's Legal Services Division and others in preparation for State Claims Commission hearings or Superior Court proceedings.

Representative tasks may include participating in pre-hearing/trial conferences, preparing supplemental documentation to appraisal products, assisting in planning for the presentation of testimony and advising MaineDOT personnel on the valuation-related impacts of proposed settlement negotiations.

5. Expert Testimony. This involves representing MaineDOT as an expert witness on matters of real property valuation in adjudicative proceedings.

See Chapter 4 for additional details.

9-3.03(e) Appraisal Review

The qualifications and procedures for fee review appraisers is the same as staff review appraisers. These details and some information regarding contracted fee review is located in Chapter 4 of this manual.

9-3.03(f) Negotiation and Acquisition

MaineDOT Responsibilities

MaineDOT will provide the Consultant with the following:

1. A copy of the project Estimate Sheet (Form VL-18) which summarizes the listing of recommended compensation levels, property owners and property rights required for the project;
2. Verification that necessary environmental and regulatory approvals are in place and that funding is available to support the acquisition(s);
3. A current set of design plans and cross sections, right of way plans and aerial photos, if available;
4. Copies of the project appraisals and valuation documents; including just compensation determinations;
5. Owner Contact Report (Form AQ-14);
6. A Negotiator's Certificate, and Negotiator's Statement (Forms AQ-5 and AQ-6);
7. Copies of applicable MaineDOT approved forms:
 - a. Land owner offer letters, (Forms AQ-1 and AQ-2),
 - b. Land owner assent form (Form AQ-15),
 - c. Work permits (Form AQ-4),
 - d. Administrative Offer Settlement Agreement (Form AQ-8), and
 - e. Other documents as may be appropriate to the proposed acquisition(s).
8. Copies of the acquisition brochure, "A Landowners Guide to the Property Acquisition Process"; and
9. Limited authorization to negotiate administrative settlements.

Consultant Responsibilities

The Consultant will be responsible for:

1. Field Negotiations. The objective of the field negotiations phase is to personally meet with the owners, and establish a trusting professional relationship. The Consultant is responsible for ensuring the owner is fully informed and understands:
 - a. The purpose and need for the project;
 - b. A general description of the overall project plans relating to typical sections drainage, traffic patterns, and schedule;

- c. The impact of the project on each property (e.g., takings, horizontal and vertical alignment changes, drainage, drive grade changes);
- d. The basis for the State's offer and the owner's rights and recourse if the offer is unacceptable;
- e. The schedule for acquisition, method of title transfer, who will be named as payees on the check, and the owners' rights to cash the check without relinquishing appeal rights; and
- f. The name, address and telephone number of MaineDOT's project representative, should issues arise during the construction phase of the project.

The Consultant will meet these objectives in performing the following activities:

- a. Prepare the necessary paperwork before owner contacts.
- b. Highlight and annotate the plans to facilitate owner interpretation.
- c. Become familiar with valuation and appraisal materials; and just compensation determinations.
- d. Make appointments for property owner contacts.
- e. Initiate mail and telephone contacts with non-resident property owners.
- f. Conduct personal contact and negotiations with affected property owners.
- g. Maintain an electronic summary log of all property owner contacts (Form AQ-14). This log should be available immediately upon request to the project Right of Way Manager. This will include:
 - 1) A listing of the items discussed with the owner (e.g., takings, grade changes, trees to be removed).
 - 2) Issues or concerns of the owner and any commitments made by the Consultant to the owner.
 - 3) Detail sufficient to address issues that may arise as the project evolves.
- h. Transmitting to MaineDOT all landowner construction accommodation requests for consideration.
- i. Conducting personal follow-up contacts in response to landowner concerns and/or requests.

- j. To the extent that landowner agreement can be achieved, executing and witnessing appropriate settlement agreements, work permits, etc. Any administrative settlements above the approved offer require explanation and justification.
2. Acquisition Phase. At this phase of the acquisition process initial contacts have been completed, agreement reached where possible, and the process advances to the actual transfer of property rights. These rights will usually be transferred through the condemnation process using the power of eminent domain. The Consultant will have varied tasks at this point in the process. These include:
- a. The Consultant will complete and submit an updated status report; completed settlement agreements, contact reports, and project correspondence file, and submit them to MaineDOT no later than 3 weeks before the condemnation date. This will serve as the basis to request final title verification, preparation of condemnation documents, compensation checks and landowner notification packets.
 - b. Following the filing of the Notice of Layout and Taking and the associated mailings to affected property owners, there are usually a number of landowner communications which will require the Consultant to conduct additional contacts, for the purpose of clarifying process, providing additional project information, and, if possible, negotiating an amicable settlement. The Consultant is responsible for a follow-up contact to all owners, in person, by telephone or letter at the Consultant's discretion, within 14 days of the condemnation date.
 - c. At, or about the "Condemnation Date" the development of the project is handed-off to the Project Resident. The Consultant will prepare and submit a report detailing elements such as negotiated construction accommodations, trees promised to be saved, assumptions regarding non-interference with septic systems, and other details, which will need to be communicated to those responsible for the construction of the project. At a minimum a telephone conversation with the Project Resident is required with an on-site meeting recommended.
 - d. By law, those acquisitions which are unsettled 60 days following the filing of the Condemnation Documents are referred to the State Claims Commission for the scheduling of a land damage hearing. During this 60-day period, it is expected that follow-up contacts will be made with the owner of each unsettled acquisition with the objective of resolving differences and gaining settlements.
 - e. At, or slightly before the expiration of the 60-day referral period the Consultant is required to make a final contact with each owner for a project status update and provide the property owner with a name and number of MaineDOT's

representative. The Consultant will submit to MaineDOT a final status report detailing the status and details of each acquisition.

- f. At the completion of the 60-day negotiations period, the Consultant will turn over all files to MaineDOT.

See Chapter 5 for additional details.

9-3.03(g) Relocation Field Services

From the earliest stages of the project development process, the relocation-related activities involve a varied group of tasks, examples of which include the following:

1. Perform all work in compliance with appropriate FHWA and MaineDOT guidelines.
2. Prepare appropriate Conceptual Stage Relocation Plans for Environmental Impact Statements or Environmental Assessments on larger projects, as necessary.
3. Inventory project corridors to assess potential project impacts that would require commercial sign relocations and residential and commercial dislocations.
4. Prepare detailed estimates of relocation costs and time requirements for the purpose of establishing project budgets and schedules.
5. Contact possible displaced persons prior to public hearings to avoid surprises and confusion at public hearings. Discuss the acquisition/relocation process and give them an overview of how the relocation assistance program works.
6. Coordinate with the Relocation Casework Provider in cases where it appears that there may be hardship issues involved and assist the displaced person(s) in requesting early acquisition procedures.
7. Attend public hearings to answer questions regarding relocation.
8. Coordinate with the valuation/acquisition functions to ascertain the probable magnitude of acquisition offers for the purpose of initiating a preliminary computation of eligibility for, and amount of, replacement housing allowances.
9. Compile an inventory of available replacement housing, replacement rentals or business locations by working with local brokers, the internet, newspapers, and other sources.
10. Develop documentation based on the most comparable available replacement properties in the computation of replacement housing allowances, replacement rental allowances, moving costs, reestablishment expenses or “in lieu of” payments.

11. Establish and maintain a file of all contacts and work products to document every phase of the development of the project. The contact reports must be kept electronically and available to the project Senior Property Officer and Relocation Specialist immediately upon request.

9-3.03(h) Relocation Casework Services

Relocation services involving direct assistance to individuals or businesses normally come to an active phase at, or shortly before, commencement of acquisition negotiations. The acquisition and relocation assistance activities may or may not be conducted by the same person. The tasks associated with providing assistance are extremely variable, and may include, but not be limited to, the following:

1. Perform all work in compliance with appropriate FHWA and MaineDOT guidelines.
2. Coordinate with management, design, mapping, appraisal and displaced person(s) for early acquisitions.
3. Help displaced persons prepare hardship letters requesting early acquisition.
4. Have paperwork (background information and applications for payments) prepared and ready for signatures, if practical.
5. Prepare and send "Notice of Intent to Acquire" as necessary.
6. Compute, request and deliver replacement housing allowances, replacement rental allowances or business relocation payments to owner(s), or tenant(s).
7. Develop documentation (bids, schedules, etc.) for, and compute payments for, moving costs, incidental (closing costs) payments, mortgage buy-down, reestablishment expenses and "in lieu of" payments.
8. Assist affected abutters in coordinating the removal and/or re-installation of commercial signs outside the limits of newly acquired right of way and obtain necessary documentation for, and coordinate the payments for, all eligible reimbursable costs.
9. Prepare necessary documentation and prepare required applications, etc. for owner/tenant signatures.
10. Work with low-income tenants to establish income levels and ability to pay for housing within Federal Regulation guidelines.

11. Monitor moves, set up and attend closings, and inspect replacement housing for DSS standards.
12. Maintain contact reports and files for each relocation case history.

See Chapter 6 for additional details.

9-4 RIGHT OF WAY UNDER DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACT

9-4.01 General

A Design-Build transportation project includes the design and construction phases in a single contract. It is the intent of this section to allow maximum flexibility in the contracting and performance of property related activities as provided in State and Federal laws and regulations for design-build contracts. Any property related Design-Build contracting processes or procedures available under State and Federal law, but not explicitly addressed in this Manual, may be approved by the Property Office Director.

Under the Design-Build federal regulations (23 CFR 710.309), the construction may be phased or segmented to allow right-of-way activities to be completed on individual properties or a group of properties, thereby allowing right of way certification by phase or segment instead of the entire project all at once.

The Right of Way acquisition associated with Design-Build projects can be accomplished under the following general scenarios:

- MaineDOT may acquire the right of way in advance of the Design-Build Request for Proposals.
- MaineDOT may acquire the right of way concurrently with the Design-Build contract with right of way availability dates or acquisition durations included in the contract.
- Responsibilities for certain property acquisition responsibilities may be split between the Design-Builder and MaineDOT. Under this method, the contract will include specific time durations for MaineDOT to complete acquisition tasks upon approval of deliverables from the Design-Builder. Example: The Design-Builder may be responsible for property owner reports, right of way plans and appraisals. Once these deliverables are approved by MaineDOT, MaineDOT would be responsible for activities for the negotiations, acquisitions and relocations within a MaineDOT determined duration of time specified in the contract.
- The Design-Builder may be responsible for any acquisition/relocation tasks allowable under State and Federal Law and associated regulations including but not limited to those functions listed in 9-1.04 items 1-10.

When right of way acquisition and relocation functions are included in a design-build contract, such a contract will normally have the right of way functions performed by qualified subcontractors reporting to the prime Design-Builder. This arrangement must incorporate a process that complies with Maine State law, this Manual, applicable Federal statutes, and implements the following regulations:

- The Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, as amended, and the implementing regulations found in 49 CFR, Part 24*.

- 23 CFR Part 710 in general and 23 CFR 710.309 that contains specific requirements related to projects where the right of way acquisition is included in the design build contract*.
- 23 CFR 635.309(p) requirements for construction authorization as well as 23 CFR 636 for design-build.

* The CFR requirements authoritatively interpret and implement the Federal laws and have the “full force and effect of law.”

In all cases, MaineDOT will assign a qualified employee as the project Senior Property Officer to serve as the first point of contact for all right of way issues for the project.

The purpose of the special right of way provisions under Design-Build set forth below is to enable benefits of the Design-Build concept to be realized while assuring that property owners and occupants have quality services and the same benefits and protections as would be provided if the right of way were administered under the traditional contracting process.

9-4.02 Design-Build Contract Provisions

The following is a list of provisions normally included in the request for proposals and/or the contract when right of way is included under a Design-Build contract. At the discretion of the Property Office Director, the actual contract provisions can be modified to reflect the various right of way clearance methods described in 9-4.01. To the extent, the provisions of this section do not address specific issues associated with law, regulation or process, the provisions may be supplemented at the discretion of the Director, in consultation with the Senior Property Officer.

1. The Design-Builder will be responsible for delivering right of way acquired and cleared in full compliance with the implementing regulations of 49 CFR Part 24, 23 CFR Part 710 Section 309, the MaineDOT Right of Way Manual, and in compliance with Maine State Law.

Conflicts must be brought to the attention of the MaineDOT Senior Property Officer designated for the project if any conflicts are noted by the Design-Builder between written authorities such as what is stated in the request for proposal (RFP) and the MaineDOT Right of Way Manual or other implementing regulations.

2. All resource plans for property related services for a design-build project must be submitted to the MaineDOT Property Office for review and approval before they perform work on the project. The Property Office will determine if the firms or persons in the plan are qualified for the associated assignments. People and companies on MaineDOT's current pre-qualified Consultant firms' list are qualified generally, and may or may not be well suited for complex assignments. A firm from the approved list may request authorization to use additional agents who have not already been pre-qualified. Each agent not on the current list that the firm intends to use must meet the requirements established by MaineDOT for those services. Any persons or companies not pre-qualified

must meet MaineDOT prequalification requirements for those services and be on the contractor's approved resource plan before commencing work.

3. The Design-Builder will submit a right of way action schedule to the Project Manager and Senior Property Officer for review and approval before initiation of right of way acquisition. This will include:
 - A relocation plan describing how the Contractors will comply with the requirements of Chapter 6 of this Manual. The plan will include time estimates for relocation based on individual displaced persons needs, housing availability, and regulatory notice to move requirements. The plan must also include information about a hold off zone around all occupied properties to ensure compliance with ROW procedures prior to starting construction activities in affected areas when relocation of displaced persons from their dwellings has not been completed. The limits of this zone should be established by the grantee prior to the design-builder entering onto the property. There should be no construction-related activity within the hold off zone until the property is vacated. The design-builder must have written notification of vacancy from the grantee prior to entering the hold off zone. Please include in the manual. 23 CFR 710.309(d)(2).
 - Identification of buildable segments of right of way that may proceed to construction when right of way acquisition and relocation are complete and independent of right of way status on other project segments.
 - A proposed time schedule that includes prioritization of activities and performance of acquisition and relocation.
 - A cost estimate for performance of each right of way phase or function for which the contractor will be responsible.
4. The MaineDOT Property Office will determine just compensation, relocation benefit amounts, and any proposed use of Last Resort Housing for displaced persons.
5. The Design-Builder will develop a right of way tracking system to provide ongoing project status of appraisal, acquisition, and relocation. This system will include an up to date electronic contact report which includes summaries of discussions and correspondence with individual property owners.
6. The Design-Builder will develop a quality control system to assess performance of services and payments to owners and occupants and monitor progress in relation to the project schedule.
7. Proposed settlements above the established just compensation amounts and relocation program appeals will be referred to the project Right of Way Manager for decision or resolution under normal MaineDOT protocol.
8. After owners have been afforded a reasonable period of time to consider offers and negotiate settlements, the parcels will be referred to the Right of Way Manager for condemnation through the Property Office based on criteria MaineDOT establishes for the project and the process described in Chapter 5 of this Manual.

9. The decision to advance a segment or phase to the construction stage shall not impair the safety of or in any way be coercive in the context of 49 CFR 24.102(h) with respect to unacquired or occupied properties on the same or adjacent segments of the project.

9-4.03 Design-Build Right of Way Specifications

The Design-Builder is expected to fully comply with all of the specific requirements related to right of way acquisition and certification as stated in the FHWA regulations Title 23 CFR Section 710.

9-4.04 Certification of Right of Way

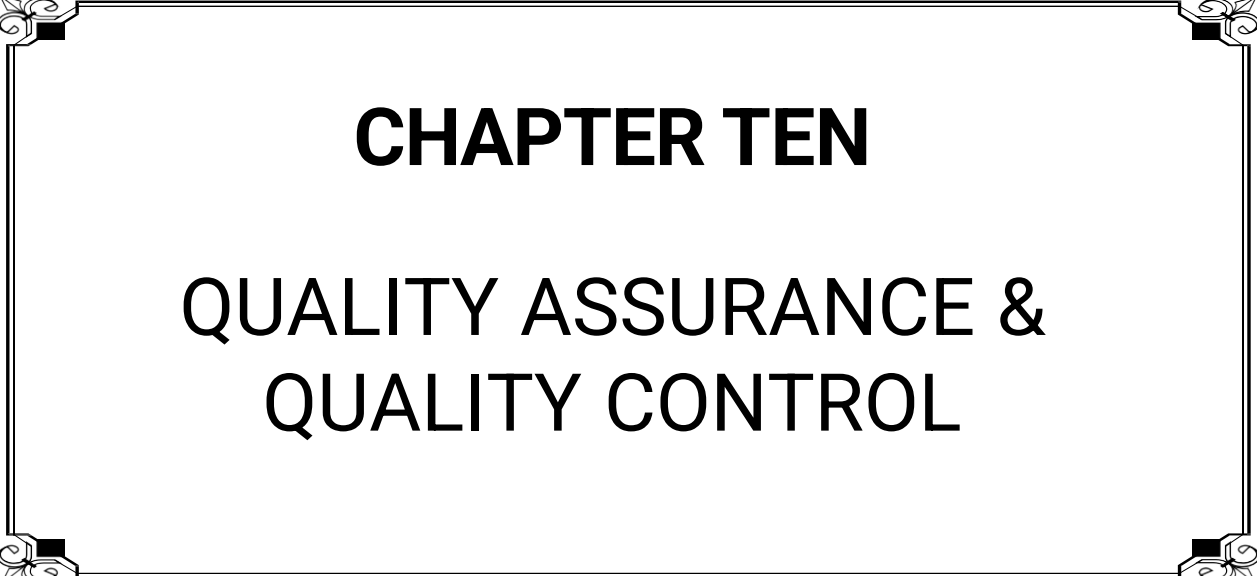
In accordance with Title 23 CFR Section 710.309, a Design-Build project may be authorized for construction in phases or segments as right of way for an individual property or group of properties are available. A project phase will be authorized under the same conditions of right of way certification as are required for traditional contract projects as described in 1-2.02(b) of this Manual. MaineDOT must have legal possession of all property for the phase of construction and occupants must have vacated.

9-4.05 Quality Control

MaineDOT is ultimately responsible for compliance with applicable laws and regulations concerning right of way and for retaining the high level of public trust in the fairness and quality of the acquisition process. The following measures will be taken under MaineDOT's existing quality program to assure owners and occupants are provided the same services, benefits, and protections as they would under traditional contracting process:

1. The Property Office Director will review and approve the right of way acquisition procedures included in design-build Requests for Proposals and contracts. The Director will ensure a qualified Senior Property Officer is designated as right of way liaison to provide timely advice and guidance to the design-build contractor and the right of way subcontractor on right of way law, regulations, and MaineDOT procedures.
2. The MaineDOT Project Quality Control Plan will include oversight reviews, monitoring, and follow up to assure compliance with law, procedures, and contract provisions concerning right of way.

See Chapter 10 of this Manual for more detailed information on MaineDOT's quality control procedures.



CHAPTER TEN

QUALITY ASSURANCE & QUALITY CONTROL

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

CHAPTER TEN

QUALITY ASSURANCE & QUALITY CONTROL

10-1 PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

10-1.01 Purpose

All right of way personnel, at every level and function, share a responsibility to strive for and maintain a high standard of quality of work. Quality is as much a concern to project level professionals, and support staff, as it is to administrators. It is the purpose of this chapter to define a comprehensive and integrated program for incorporating awareness and achievement of quality into the work activities of all right of way staff.

The quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) process is based on the following concepts:

1. Quality is a responsibility of each individual employee and not solely a management responsibility.
2. Quality is a continuous process, not an intermittent concern to address deficiencies that surface. Quality is proactive, not reactive. Quality is a journey, rather than a destination.
3. Quality is a specific, not an ambiguous concept. Quality is reflected in criteria and standards of performance and accomplishment.
4. Quality is customer oriented. The right of way process has a diverse set of customers, including property owners, displaced persons, and the MaineDOT units that use or depend on the completion of right of way services. Thus, each right of way function must identify its customers and define quality performance in relation to their needs.

10-1.02 Quality Defined

Quality in right of way is the measurement of the level of work performance of each employee, and the project team as a group as it relates to the Quality Standards and customer satisfaction. High levels of quality result in a project that MaineDOT is proud to deliver and the customer is pleased to receive. The following are the essential elements of right of way work quality:

1. Level of Service. Quality in delivering right of way requires a high level of knowledge of the body of laws, regulations and procedures that control right of way acquisition, and skill in performing specific functions (e.g., appraisal, relocation). The skills, knowledge and abilities of right of way personnel are critical to delivering a high level of service.

2. Timeliness. The right of way process is responsible for delivery of property rights needed for construction and operation of highways. The timely delivery of right of way to meet project schedules is a primary customer need for which Property Office and Program personnel are responsible.
3. Quantity. The right of way function has limited staff resources to carry out its mission. This requires that all employees work diligently and use efficient work practices. Work production levels are valid evaluation factors in unison with applicable difficulty factors. Evaluation will consider the complexity and level of difficulty of individual cases and projects, and it is not appropriate to measure individual production solely in terms of units delivered over a period of time.

10-1.03 Objective

The objective of this chapter is to establish responsibility and define actions for continuously improving the performance in delivery of right of way services. Tasks to assure quality in each right of way function are set forth. Also, methods of quality control for oversight and improvement of the right of way function as a whole are identified.

10-1.04 Responsibilities

10-1.04(a) Property Office and Program Staff

Every employee has a responsibility for improving the quality of the process they are responsible for performing, and the timeliness, work quantity and level of service they provide. The following are important factors in carrying out this responsibility:

1. Identify improvement factors within personal control.
2. Contribute to joint efforts to improve quality delivery as a member of a project team, office or other group.
3. Discuss perceived obstacles to quality with management.
4. Accept opportunities to improve knowledge and skills through training, new assignments and accepting team leadership responsibilities.

Every staff member needs a clear understanding of job performance expectations in order to carry out the above responsibilities. This includes a current job description, job performance standards and a yearly evaluation of performance. If any of these elements are not provided, the individual should bring this to the attention of management.

10-1.04(b) Property Office and Program Management

The Property Office Management will perform the following actions:

1. Assign responsibilities for coordinating the performance of the Quality Control Process; see Section 10-3.
2. Coordinate the Quality Process with related departmental program functions including Planning, Design, Environmental, Legal, Maintenance and Construction.
3. Review and evaluate the Quality Process.
4. As necessary, report to the Director of Project Development, with recommendations for actions, resources, training, etc., needed to improve quality in right of way procedures.

10-1.05 Quality Standards

MaineDOT right of way personnel work under mandated requirements derived from laws, regulations, agency policy, professional standards, departmental goals and program management. These define mission, goals and basic work standards as described below:

1. Constitutional Requirements. Both the U.S. and Maine State Constitutions require that Just Compensation and due process of law be provided when private property is acquired for public purposes. These basic Constitutional protections form the foundation of laws and regulations, policies and procedures.
2. Laws. The **Maine Revised Statutes Annotated (MRSA)** Title 23, and the **Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (Uniform Act)**, comprise the basic legislated authority that control right of way operations. Additionally, State Licensed and Certified appraisers are required to comply with the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice as required by MRSA Title 32, Section 14028, and Review Appraisers are required to be familiar with these standards as required by Section 4-5.02.
3. Regulations. The primary regulatory authority is the **Code of Federal Regulations**. In particular, 23 **CFR** 710, which includes highway right of way acquisition & relocation provisions under Title 23 USC; and 49 **CFR** 24, which comprises real property acquisition and relocation program requirements for federal and federally assisted acquisition.
4. Right of Way Policy. The primary policy and procedure document is the *Right of Way Manual*. Also important are policy interpretations and clarifications issued by memorandum, and policy guidance provided informally by Property Office staff. Together, these items comprise the body of official guidance for performing the right of way function.

5. Position Standards. This includes position descriptions, professional designation criteria and contractor qualifications criteria. These set forth the body of knowledge, skills and abilities that are critical to effective performance of professionals in right of way functions.
6. Project Team Support. A primary responsibility of right of way personnel is to provide ongoing right of way advisory support to the project teams. This support is aimed at resolving unique or complex situations and problems that are not addressed in established policy. Team support also includes coordinating with other departmental offices, such as the Legal Services Office or the Environmental Office. It also includes communicating with other agencies such as FHWA on issues that involve funding or that cross agency jurisdictions.
7. Program Management. Includes administration of right of way support services, policy, information resources and equipment resources to efficiently carry out the mission of right of way. Program management includes maintaining the system of forms, records, inventories, electronic databases, contracting, personnel evaluation and assignment of support personnel.

The above quality standards support the performance of right of way functions. Quality assurance and control activities may result in modifying the above standards, except laws and regulations, so that they more effectively serve the mission of the right of way function in MaineDOT.

10-2 QUALITY CONTROL

10-2.01 Quality Control — General

Quality control is a process improvement activity that is undertaken at the operational or project level. Each right of way staff member has an individual as well as a shared responsibility to actively contribute to the delivery of quality products by performing tasks appropriate to their assignment and span of organizational influence. The concept of quality control is distinct from quality assurance, which is a program management responsibility described in Section 10-2.02.

The organizational placement of right of way functions within MaineDOT relies on individual initiative and responsibility. The right of way function is performed in context of multidisciplinary project teams. Personnel are directed by project team objectives and accomplish these objectives without on-site operational supervision. This structure requires the skills of a highly experienced and motivated professional right of way staff. It enables efficient and on-time delivery of right of way while allowing a high degree of professional independence and decision authority. A major element in success is the self-assessment by operational staff of the quality of the process that they control.

Quality control activities will be undertaken in each right of way function on a continuing basis. The specific activities will vary with each discipline and will be scaled to accommodate the significance of the function in the current program, vulnerability of the function, the staff resources available to carry out quality assessment and the potential efficiencies to be gained. Each Senior Property Officer in the right of way function will be assigned to perform one or more quality control tasks biennially. The tasks, and the form and timing of reporting, will be developed and directed by the Property Office.

10-2.02 Quality Control Tasks

Staff in each right of way discipline will assess the qualitative aspects of operations by performing tasks that are appropriate to the function being examined. The following listings of assessment tasks for each function are examples and not an exclusive list of assessment tasks.

10-2.02(a) Valuation

Quality control in the valuation function is a process of self-assessing performance and improving methods of producing appraisals and other valuation products. Quality assurance is a shared responsibility of all persons involved in the valuation function, including staff and contract appraisers, review appraisers and support services personnel.

Quality control in the appraisal function may include the following activities and tasks:

1. Develop effective coordination methods with Project Team members responsible for other project development activities.

2. Develop standards for timely assignment of Staff and Consultant Appraisers.
3. Appraisal staff assess appraisal-related training needs.
4. Valuation staff identify critical path tasks involving appraisals to eliminate barriers to timely completion of these activities.
5. Evaluate performance of consultant appraisers after project assignments are completed concerning quality of documentation, analysis of data and timely delivery of appraisal products.
6. Perform effective evaluation and feedback of work of staff valuation personnel.
7. Review and refine appraisal contract procedures, including maintenance of the Appraiser Register. This includes culling the list periodically for appraisers that are no longer available for assignment.
8. Secure feedback from contract appraisers as to how the process involving them can be more effective and efficient.

Quality control is a focus on achieving improvement in performing the appraisal function using the tools of policy, training, evaluation and communications. MaineDOT's continuing refinement of quality control includes the development of performance standards and evaluation methods to establish goals and measure progress in meeting goals.

10-2.02(b) Waiver Valuation

Personnel assigned responsibility for Waiver Valuation will actively examine the process to ensure that it is fulfilling its goals as set forth in Chapter 3 and identify opportunities for improvement.

The following items are examples of specific quality control activities that may be undertaken:

1. Conduct follow-up phone interviews with owners after construction is complete.
2. Identify training opportunities that would expand knowledge and skill in right of way acquisition.
3. Suggest refinement in acquisition practices that will make the process more efficient and effective.
4. Participate in informal workshops to exchange experiences and practices with other professionals involved in administrative acquisition.
5. Perform spot checks of closed files to identify successful and unsuccessful practices.

6. Conduct a letter survey of owners after acquisition.

Each involved staff member will develop the quality assurance actions to be undertaken, in consultation with the Senior Property Officer, or as otherwise directed by the Property Office.

10-2.02(c) Acquisition

Quality control in the acquisition function includes the policy guidance, program management tools and specific training necessary to ensure that responsible personnel are conducting right of way operations in an effective and efficient manner. The various activities used to test and evaluate program activities form the basic elements of the QA function.

Right of way personnel involved in the acquisition function share a responsibility to strive to improve operational quality. This can be advanced by such tasks as:

1. Follow up phone calls with owners after the acquisition process is complete. The purpose will be to determine overall satisfaction with the process and secure suggestions that will be useful in future project acquisition activity.
2. Track and analyze completed negotiation records to identify practices that result in successful settlements. Patterns that indicate successful practices can be determined from examination of a group of completed cases that may not be apparent in day-to-day work activity.
3. Sharing personal best practices with other staff. Experienced property acquisition staff members bring a wide range of skills, knowledge and techniques to the job that contributes to a higher rate of settlements. The knowledge and successful practices may be shared by such means as workshop sessions or one-on-one mentoring of less experienced acquisition staff.
4. Identify acquisition personnel training needs. Acquisition knowledge and skills are best identified by a formalized process because this is a human focused and subjective area of work. Training opportunities and resources should be prioritized based on objective discovery of employee training needs.

10-2.02(d) Property Management

The goal of quality control in property management is to secure and protect acquired property, generate income from sale or rental and achieve other objectives stated in Section 7-1.01. Responsibilities for quality control in Property Management include the following:

1. Regularly review policies. Revise as necessary to reflect best property management practices and more effective compliance with applicable law and regulations.

2. Provide advice and guidance to project and field staff that will enhance their knowledge and skill in performing the elements of property management for which they are responsible.
3. Provide specific advice and instruction to field personnel on standards of performance in areas such as building inspection and security, building disposals and property rental.
4. Formal and informal review of property management activities at the department level, including work by staff and by private contractors. The purpose of the reviews is to ensure compliance with laws, regulations, policies and professional standards and to identify opportunities to improve performance. The Property Manager under the direction of the Legal Services Office and the Property Office will determine the form and frequency of reviews.

10-2.02(e) Relocation

Quality control in relocation is an inclusive process of evaluating performance and developing ways to continuously improve accomplishment of program goals. This is accomplished by performing spot checks that monitor the function as to the following performance elements.

1. Effective coordination with project team members responsible for other project development activities;
2. Timely and relevant assistance provided to displaced persons, with special focus on those having needs, including elderly and disabled;
3. Assessment of relocation related needs of relocation personnel;
4. Identification of critical path tasks involving relocation, including prioritizing so that more time is available to those having more serious relocation problems;
5. Evaluation of consultant staff that are employed by MaineDOT to perform relocation services;
6. Participation in process and performance evaluations; and
7. Participation in the continuous refinement of relocation practice and policy to reflect best practices in the field of work.

MaineDOT's continuing refinement of quality assurance includes development of performance standards and evaluation methods to establish goals and measure progress in meeting goals.

10-2.02(f) Contracting Right of Way Services

Quality control includes activities that are incorporated into the contracting process for right of way services to measure progress, monitor progress performance and evaluate the performance of completed work. This includes the following activities:

1. Review and refine Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) and Requests for Proposals (RFP). The initial development of RFQs and RFPs should not be regarded as a final product. Each need for republication of these documents should be occasion for review and revision based on knowledge gained from past experience.
2. Develop more effective means to inform right of way service contractors of MaineDOT policy concerning functions provided under contract and provisions of law that MaineDOT applies specifically to MaineDOT right of way operations and impose sanctions in cases of material non-compliance as per 23 CFR 710.201(g).
3. Develop improved ways to attract qualified professionals to submit qualifications and proposals for right of way work contracted by MaineDOT. In particular, develop ways to maximize participation by minorities and women.
4. Perform post project reviews and evaluation of provider's performance under every professional function that is contracted to private sources.

10-2.02(g) Local Agency Acquisition

The following activities are appropriate quality control measures that can be undertaken by the municipality performing real property acquisition:

1. Perform a second-party internal review of all documents before they are delivered to the property owner. This includes appraisals, agreements, instruments of conveyance, offer letters, etc.
2. Provide relevant training to agency personnel who are engaged in specialized right of way activity (e.g., appraisal, negotiations, titles, relocation).
3. Perform quality spot checks of completed work concurrent with any ongoing project acquisition activity.
4. Perform peer reviews of work activity when there is more than 1 staff member involved in property acquisition for right of way.
5. Conduct phone or mail surveys of property owners following acquisition.
6. Develop internal procedures or policy to apply to specific recurring situations or circumstances in order to ensure consistency and equitable treatment.

-
7. Perform joint project reviews between MaineDOT and local agency management staff.

10-2.02(h) Mapping

The following tasks may be performed by staff to contribute to improving the quality of the MaineDOT mapping function:

1. Develop a peer review process of evaluating mapping work products with the aim of constructively identifying opportunities for improvement.
2. Perform formal evaluations of the quality and timeliness of consultant work products.
3. Perform evaluations of specific mapping processes. This would include participation of all parties involved in the process.
4. Survey departmental and external “customers” as to the effectiveness of specific mapping and research policies and practices.

10-3 QUALITY ASSURANCE

10-3.01 Quality Assurance — General

Quality assurance is the management process that ensures conformance of right of way operations to MaineDOT's mission and goals in the most effective manner and ensures that the right of way process complies with requirements of law, regulations and policy. Quality assurance involves independently evaluating and testing the activities in the right of way process, including the quality control processes. Actions are taken to modify the elements in the process as necessary to better conform to MaineDOT's mission and goals, as well as controlling legal, funding and regulatory authorities.

The MaineDOT concept of quality assurance affirms professionalism of right of way staff. Experienced professionals conduct day-to-day right of way operations within multidisciplinary project teams with minimal direct supervision. This structure allows decisions to be made at the level at which issues arise, in a more timely and responsive manner. The project team approach contrasts to the traditional organizational structure in which there is a vertical chain of supervision, with much decision authority held at an organizational level that is higher than where issues and problems arise.

10-3.02 Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is the evaluation of relative vulnerability of individual right of way programs and processes. The risk assessment will guide the development of process review activities.

Property Office Staff working with the R/W Supervisors perform a risk assessment for activities under each person's scope of responsibility. Professional and support staff in each unit should be involved either by consultation or direct participation.

Risk vulnerability is a broad scan based on professional judgment and experience of the manager performing the assessment. Each vulnerability factor is rated "low", "moderate" or "high." Explanations or comments on each individual ranking are not appropriate. However, comments summarizing the completed ranking and pointing out elements of high or low vulnerability should be provided.

The first step is to identify the vulnerability factors applicable to the function. Vulnerability factors may include such items as public exposure, impact on citizens or responsibility for public funds, or degree of independence from legal or regulatory controls. Identification of risk factors may be a one-time activity. However, factors may be refined or modified to accommodate changes over time in unit responsibilities or the evolution of the function.

The second step in risk assessment is to rank every element in the function on a relative vulnerability scale, from low to high vulnerability. This will require subjective reasoning but will provide a relative degree and relative priority of risk within each unit.

The Property Office will perform the risk assessment for the right of way function from reports of R/W Supervisors, as well as consultation with managers and “customers” of the process. This assessment will conclude in the identification of functions, programs, processes or projects that will be subject to process reviews.

10-3.03 Process Reviews

The process review is an in-depth review of the need, opportunity and methods for improving performance and service in program areas identified as high priority in the risk assessment process. The topic of study should be narrowly defined so that the review can be performed with available staff.

The process reviews will be varied in their scope, methods and format. The depth and scope of the reviews, while as detailed as practical, will be scaled to available staff resources and the characteristics of the activity under review. The reviews may be performed with participation of persons outside of right of way personnel to gain perspective and expertise. For instance, the Property Office may invite participation of civil rights or contracting division staff in a review of right of way contracting.

The following are several process review activities that may be performed:

1. Project Reviews. A recently completed single right of way project might be reviewed comprehensively with spot checks of appraisals, negotiations relocation, etc. The review might include participation by staff from other project teams, or be performed as a peer review.
2. Joint MaineDOT – FHWA Team Reviews. The MaineDOT – FHWA Partnering Agreement for Shared Oversight of Federal-Aid Projects provides a good structure for joint involvement and responsibility for quality control reviews. The oversight by direct involvement concept can be expressed through joint development of a process review plan or by joint involvement in executing reviews or by shared development of strategies for improving reviewed components of the right of way process.
3. Peer Consultations. Professionals in any field tend to respect each other’s knowledge and experience, learn from each other, readily share helpful concepts and accept constructive advice for improvement. The Peer Consultation concept provides a structure for this to occur. Experienced staff is assigned to observe and consult with counterparts in other locations for a brief time (several days). It is important that this takes place in a non-judgmental environment. A very general report will be made to the Property Office Director, with the primary value in peer discussions of best practices and experience sharing.
4. Temporary Job Exchange. Experienced people in distinct but related jobs may trade positions for a period of time. For example, an experienced appraiser and review

- appraiser might occupy each other's positions for a 6-month period. They would then formally report to each other and to the Property Office on the experience. Or an appraiser could perform as a relocation agent or negotiator. This may result in fresh insights and approaches to accomplishing jobs. Participants can gain a broader perspective on their job by having "walked in the other person's shoes" for a time. Personnel are cross-trained to other positions. Involved people become more aware of the effectiveness of their actions when they know that others will be working "their territory."
5. Right of Way Customer Surveys. Property owners and occupants of property acquired by MaineDOT comprise a set of customers that MaineDOT is committed to providing quality services and benefits. A well-designed customer mail survey after the final official transaction with MaineDOT can provide feedback that will guide improvement in services on future projects.
 6. Function Reviews. This is an in-depth examination of specific functions (e.g., appraisal, administrative settlements). It would include an in-depth review of work product (e.g., files, records, reports) evaluations, owner interviews and review of quality assurance products relating to the function. The objective would be to identify the need and methods of achieving improvement in the operation of the function reviewed.

10-3.04 Evaluation

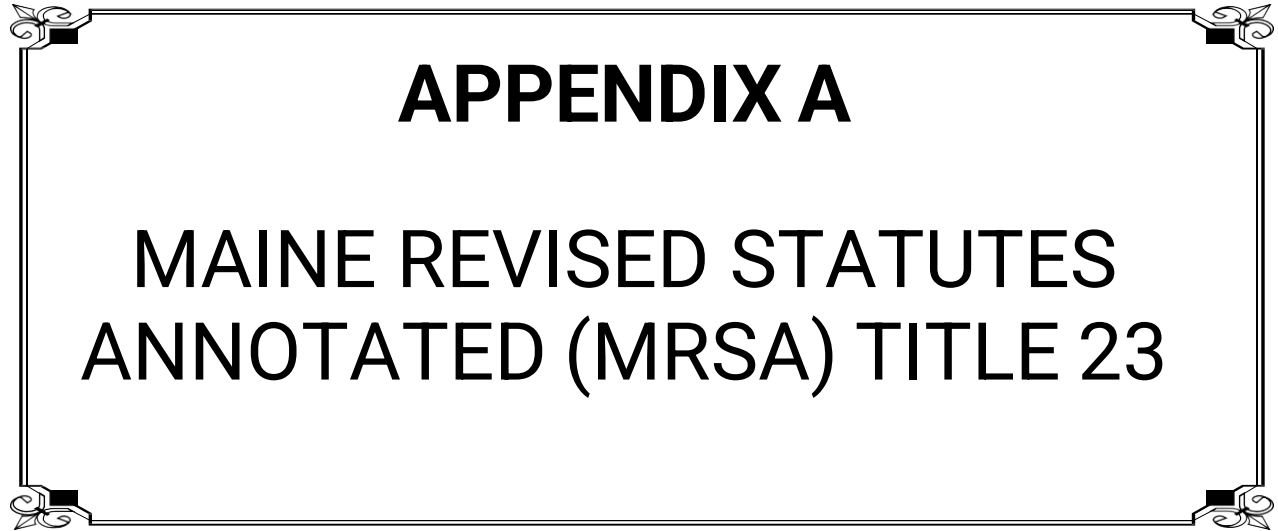
At the end of the biennial cycle of process review activities, the quality subcommittee or other party assigned quality control responsibility may summarize the findings and recommendation in a report to the Property Office. The report may recommend any changes that are supported by the quality control activities. A copy of any formal report generated will be provided to the FHWA Division Office. The recommendations may address the following:

1. Changes needed in right of way policy,
2. Training needs of personnel,
3. Staffing needs,
4. Equipment resources needed to perform right of way functions,
5. Right of way workload changes,
6. Coordination with other departmental functions,
7. Project team participation,
8. Coordination with local agencies,
9. Oversight of contracted services, and
10. Service to property owners.

10-3.05 Implementation of Quality Improvements

The Property Office will report to the Director, Project Development Bureau, with any specific actions to improve quality in right of way. The Property Office Director will determine the appropriate form and content of the reporting. In certain cases, it may include as a minimum a summary of the quality control activities including the risk assessment, process review and evaluation phases. A copy of any formal report generated will be provided to the FHWA Division Office.

Any implementation may require addressing the need for resources, policy revisions or organizational changes that require approval or participation outside of the right of way function.



APPENDIX A

MAINE REVISED STATUTES ANNOTATED (MRSA) TITLE 23

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TITLE 23, SECTION 61; VACATION, SALE OR LEASE OF ACQUIRED LAND

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APPENDIX B

**CODE OF FEDERAL
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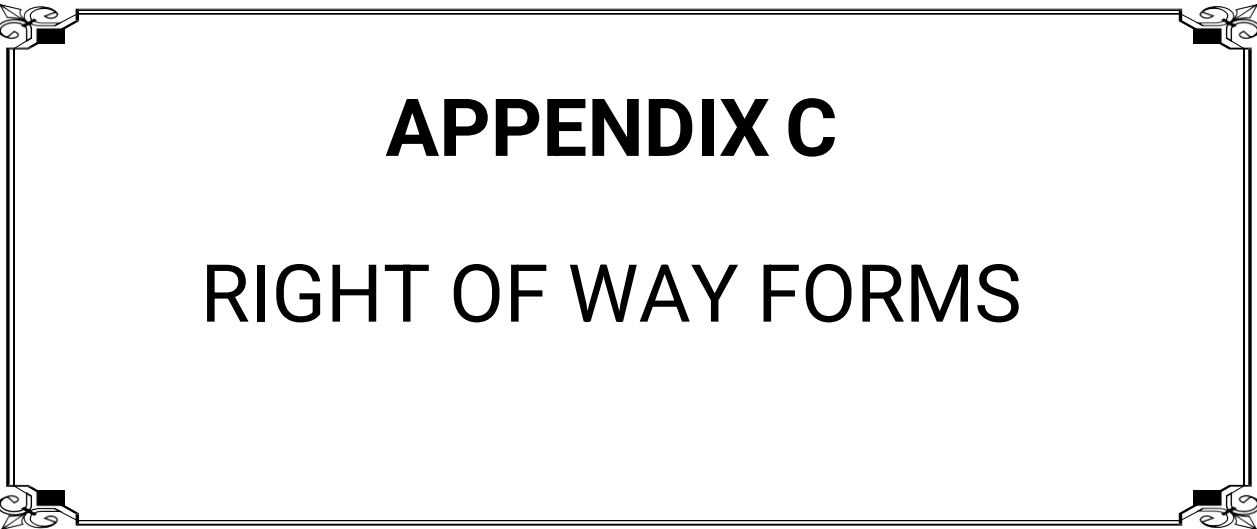
23 CFR 710	Right of Way and Real Estate	B(1)
49 CFR 24	Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition	B(2)

23 CFR 710 RIGHT OF WAY AND REAL ESTATE

https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title23/23cfr710_main_02.tpl

49 CFR PART 24—UNIFORM RELOCATION ASSISTANCE AND REAL PROPERTY ACQUISITION FOR FEDERAL AND FEDERALLY ASSISTED PROGRAMS

<https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=2f47f177dd89171734735b9f1f07a013&mc=true&node=pt49.1.24&rgn=div5>



APPENDIX C

RIGHT OF WAY FORMS

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MR-2	Project Check List
MR-3	Estimate of Survey Markers & R/W Monuments
MR-4	Notice of R/W Plan Changes
MR-5	Transmittal - Maps & Plans to Operations
MR-16	Discontinuance Order

Section 3 — R/W Valuation (VL) Forms

Number	Title
VL-1	Assessment and Area Record
VL-2	Town Data Template
VL-3	Sale Data Form
VL-4a	Master Waiver Spreadsheet
VL-4b	Administrative Acquisition Worksheet
VL-5	Value Finding Format
VL-6	Purpose of the Appraisal
VL-7	Right to Accompany the Appraiser Letter
VL-8	Short Format Appraisal Setup
VL-9	Certification of Appraisal
VL-11	Sales Check sheet
VL-12	Short Form Check Sheet
VL-13	Detailed Narrative Check Sheet
VL-14	Tax Pro Ration Sheet
VL-15	Review Determination and Approval (A-5)
VL-16a	Statement of Determined Damages-No Severance (A-7)
VL-16b	Statement of Determined Damages-Severance (A-6)
VL-17	Incidental Right of Way Cost Estimate
VL-18	Estimated Cost of Right of Way
VL-20	Valuation Specifications
VL-21	Review Appraiser's Report Memo
VL-22	Minimum Payment Worksheet
VL-23	Donation and Waiver of Just Compensation
VL-24	Notice of Interest in Acquiring Real Property

Section 4 — R/W Acquisition (AQ) Forms

Number	Title
AQ-1	Offer Letter – Detailed
AQ-2	Offer Letter – Simple
AQ-3	Administrative Settlement Justification
AQ-5	Negotiator's Certificate
AQ-6	Negotiator's Statement
AQ-7	Settlement Agreement (more money)
AQ-8	Administrative Acquisition Offer Letter & Settlement Agreement
AQ-9	Settlement Agreement (no more money)
AQ-10	After Condemnation Request for State Claims Commission by owner
AQ-15	Owner's Offer-Assent
AQ-20	Initiation of Negotiations Statement
AQ-62	Agreement to Pay Tenant Owned Improvements Directly to Tenant

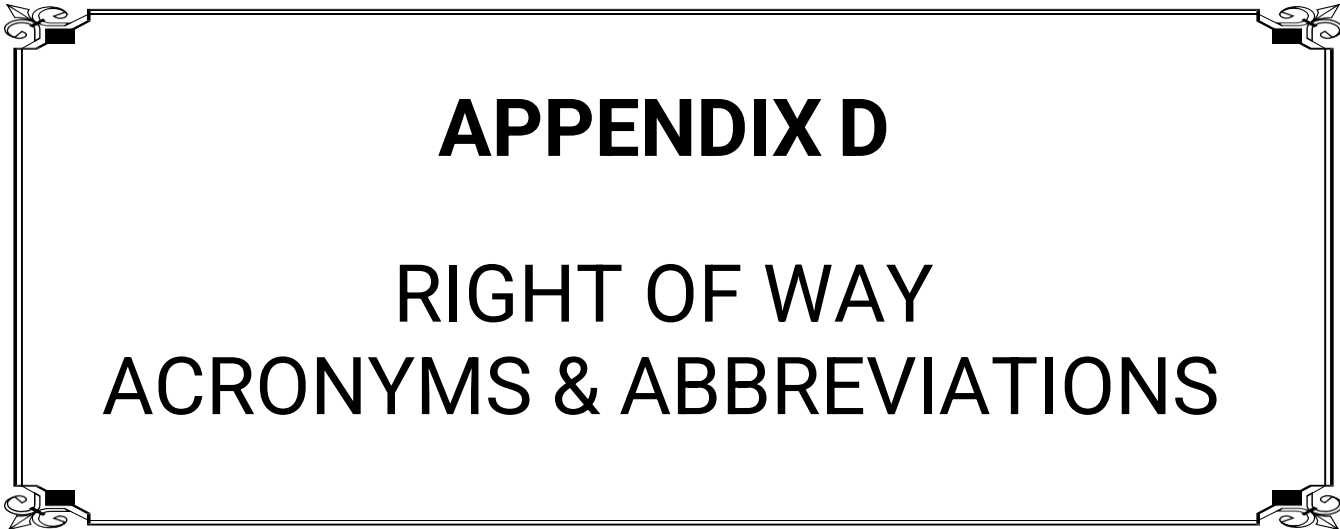
Section 5 — R/W Relocation (RA) Forms

Number	Title
RA-1	Displaced Person Inventory
RA-2	Planning Stage Master Inventory
RA-3	Planning Stage Single Family
RA-4	Planning Stage Apt-Multi Family
RA-5	Planning Stage Business
RA-7	Summary Public Hearing
RA-8	Relocation Assistance Plan
RA-9	Field Worksheet
RA-10	Estimated Costs
RA-11	Residential Questionnaire
RA-12	Business Relocation Needs & Preferences Questionnaire
RA-13	Advertising Sign Cost & Relocation Data
RA-14	Displaced Person Master Relocation Record
RA-16B	Initial Relocation Notice (Business)
RA-16R	Initial Relocation Notice Letter
RA-21	Notice of Intent to Acquire
RA-21PP	Notice of Intent to Acquire Personal Property
RA-22	Small Business Adm.
RA-23	Comparable Replacement Housing Notice
RA-24	Business Fixture Notice
RA-25	Replacement Housing Estimate – Tenant
RA-29	Comparable Grid
RA-30	Notice of Eligibility
RA-31	90-Day Notice
RA-32	30-Day Notice
RA-33	Replacement Rental Price List
RA-36	Legal U.S. Resident Certification
RA-37	Advisory, Relocation Assistance Offer
RA-38	Reestablishment Claim
RA-39	Moving Expense Finding - Business
RA-40	Fixed Moving Expense Schedule
RA-41a	Personal Property Relocation Eligibility Letter
RA-41b	Personal Property Relocation Bid Amount Approval Letter
RA-42	Referral to Commissioner /State Claims Commission Appeal
RA-43	Fixed Payment in Lieu of Actual
RA-44	Residential Occupants Moving Expense Claim
RA-45	Advance Payment Residential Moving Expense Claim
RA-46	Moving Expense – Business, Farms, Non Profit Organizations

Number	Title
RA-46-a	Advance Payment Moving Expense. Business, Farm, Non-Profit Organization
RA-47	Moving Expense Personal Property Only
RA-48	RHP Notice / Application
RA-48A	Advance Replacement Housing Notice-Application
RA-49	RHP Notice / Application – Rental or Down Payment
RA-50	RHP Notice / Application – Mobile Home
RA-51	RHP Notice / Application – Owner Retention
RA-52	Increased Interest Payment Application
RA-53	Incidental Expense Payment Application
RA-55	Escrow Payment
RA-56	Escrow Agreement
RA-59	Decent, Safe and Sanitary Inspection Report
RA-60	Notice to Vacate Personal Property
RA-61	Verification of Move
RA-62	Agreement to Pay Tenant Owned Improvements Directly to Tenant

Section 6 — R/W Property Management (PM) Forms

Number	Title
PM-1	Occupancy Agreement
PM-2	License Agreement



APPENDIX D

RIGHT OF WAY ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

MAINE RIGHT OF WAY MANUAL

July 2026

APPENDIX D

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

1. Administrative Policy Memorandum (APM). Departmental directives.
2. Bureau of Project Development (BPD). Organizational Unit of MaineDOT having general responsibility for preconstruction project activities, including right of way.
3. Categorical Exclusion (CE). Lowest Federal environmental impact classification. Detailed definition is at 23 **CFR** 771.117.
4. **Code of Federal Regulations (CFR)**. Rules published by agencies of the Federal government that are necessary to implement provisions of Federal law.
5. Decent, Safe and Sanitary (DS&S). Required health and safety requirements of replacement housing under the relocation program. See Section 6-1.06 of this *Manual*.
6. Environmental Assessment (EA). Environmental study undertaken by the Department to clearly establish environmental impact of a proposed project. The EA is defined at 23 **CFR** 771.119.
7. Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A comprehensive study of social, environmental and economic impacts of a proposed project and evaluation of all reasonable alternatives. The EIS is described fully at 23 **CFR** 771.123 and 125.
8. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Federal agency under the U.S. Department of Transportation having responsibility for oversight and coordination of the Federal-Aid Highway Program.
9. Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Finding by FHWA subsequent to an EA, that a proposed project will not have a significant effect on the environment. The FONSI is fully described at 23 **CFR** 771.121.
10. Local Public Agency (LPA). Includes all jurisdictions of local government.
11. Last Resort Housing (LRH). Program of providing replacement housing for displaced persons when it is not available on the market or is not available within normal relocation program benefits. LRH is fully described at Section 6-10 of this *Manual*.
12. Least Environmentally Damaging Practicable Alternative (LEDPA). Decision makers approve a preferred project alternative using input from stakeholders, planning partners, and detailed information about potential impacts.
13. MaineDOT Bureau of Maintenance and Operations (M&O). Right of way coordinates closely with M&O in managing right of way after construction. See Chapter 7 of this *Manual*.

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14. Maine Department of Transportation (MaineDOT).
 15. Mortgage Interest Differential (MID). Relocation benefit which compensates for the displaced persons loss of a mortgage having a favorable interest rate. See Section 6-7.04.
 16. Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21). Federal law that creates a streamlined and performance-based surface transportation program and builds on many of the highway, transit, bike, and pedestrian programs and policies established in 1991.
 17. Maine Revised Statutes Annotated (MRSA). Title 23 includes provisions relating to right of way.
 18. Names and Addresses List (N&A List). Property ownership information compiled early in the right of way process. See Sections 2-2.01 and 2-3.01.
 19. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Comprehensive Federal law providing for evaluation of environmental impacts of federally assisted programs and projects and measures to protect and enhance the environment.
 20. National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Comprehensive Federal law protecting America's historic resources.
 21. Property Owner Report (Form MR-1) (POR). Assembly of property information including ownership (from N&A List) land use and property improvements. See Section 2-3.03.
 22. Plans, Specifications and Estimate (PS & E). Assembly of documents necessary for submitting a highway construction project for bid.
 23. Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC). Activities performed to assure a continuing high level of quality in right of way. See Chapter 10.
 24. Request for Proposals (RFP). Advertised call for submission of proposals to perform work under contract.
 25. Request for Qualifications (RFQ). Advertised call for submission of consultant qualifications for performance of specific professional services.
 26. Replacement Housing Payment (RHP). Financial benefit to residential displaced people that enables the displaced person to purchase a comparable replacement dwelling. See Section 6-7.
 27. Rent Supplement (RS). Financial benefit to residential tenant displaced people that enables the displaced person to rent a comparable replacement dwelling. See Section 6-8.
 28. Right of Way (R/W). A right of way is a type of property right (fee ownership or easement) granted or reserved over the land for transportation purposes, this can be for a highway, public footpath or trail , rail transport, etc. A right-of-way is reserved for the purposes of
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- maintenance or expansion of existing services within the right-of-way. In the case of an easement, it may revert to its original owners if the facility is abandoned.
29. RMS. Realty Management System. A database that manages the myriad of data created in the right of way/property process.
 30. State Claims Commission (SCC). State Board established by the Maine Legislature to make awards of just compensation in highway condemnations. The purposes and powers of the SCC are set forth at 23 **MRSA** 151 and 152.
 31. **Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century** (TEA-21). Federal law authorizing funding for surface transportation programs including highways, and setting forth national transportation goals.
 32. **Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970** (UA) (as amended). Federal law defining uniform policies for real property acquisition, and declaring a program of assistance and financial benefits to persons (residents, businesses, farms, non-profits) displaced as a result of any Federally funded program or project.
 33. **United States Code** (USC). Codification of all Federal laws under 49 Titles. Right of way activities are found in Title 23 – Highways, and in Title 49, Transportation.
 34. Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice (USPAP). Appraisal standards established by the Appraisal Standards Board of the Appraisal Foundation. The USPAP is a national standard binding on State certified appraisers in all States.