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## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <i>FHWA Program Management Improvement (PMI) Team Review.....</i> | <i>2</i> |
| <i>Annual Employee Online Title VI Training.....</i>              | <i>3</i> |
| <i>New Employee in CRD.....</i>                                   | <i>3</i> |
| <i>TSU Selected as 2016 NSTI Host Site .....</i>                  | <i>4</i> |
| <i>Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Update.....</i>                      | <i>4</i> |
| <i>2016 First Diversity Brown Bag Lunch.....</i>                  | <i>5</i> |
| <i>Region Two Black History Celebration.....</i>                  | <i>5</i> |
| <i>Women in Transportation Month.....</i>                         | <i>6</i> |
| <i>On the Job Training Contract Review.....</i>                   | <i>7</i> |
| <i>EEO Training.....</i>  | <i>7</i> |
| <i>EEO and AA Posters.....</i>                                    | <i>7</i> |
| <i>2016 U of M SETWC .....</i>                                    | <i>8</i> |
| <i>Contact Information.....</i>                                   | <i>9</i> |

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## Launch of the Civil Rights New E-News

The Civil Rights Division (CRD) is pleased to announce the launch of our new e-newsletter, Civil Rights E-News. This inaugural issue is a combination of interesting articles from and about the endeavors of the EEO/ Affirmative Action Program and Title VI Program. This format will allow the CRD staff to capture and demonstrate how closely the programs work to promote diversity and nondiscrimination in TDOT's programs and activities.

The staff endeavors to create a publication that is genuine and beneficial to our readers. We want to ensure that the content delivered is relevant and informative. CRD staff views the creation of this joint newsletter as a great opportunity to increase the e-newsletter's readership, broaden the audience base, and ultimately enhance networking and outreach opportunities. We look forward to hearing from our readers. Your comments, recommendations, and observations will be beneficial as we evaluate the effectiveness of our publication and its content. Look forward to our next issue in September.

*The Mission of the Civil Rights Division is to ensure adherence to Equal Employment Opportunities, Title VI, and Small and Disadvantaged Business Initiatives.*



## FHWA Program PMI Team Review

**TITLE VI** E-News

In September 2015, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST) tasked each modal administration with strengthening the administration of and compliance for USDOT's Title VI Programs. In response, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Civil Rights (OCR) created a five-point Title VI Action Plan to be executed in 2016 – 2018. Specifically, FHWA's objective is to determine the current state of practice for State DOT's implementation of Title VI and the effectiveness of FHWA's stewardship and oversight.

The FHWA Program Management Improvement Team (PMI) is conducting reviews of six states that were randomly selected and represent a range in size and geographic location. Arkansas, Mississippi, New York, New Mexico, Illinois, and Tennessee were the State DOTs selected for this comprehensive review. The PMI Team members include professionals who represent FHWA Divisions across the U.S.:

Dave Bruce, CPA, National Review Team Leader (Colorado); Matt Lupes, P.E., Review Lead (Virginia); Carey Shepard, Title VI Team Leader (Florida); and Leigh Oesterling, Planning and Environment Team Leader (Ohio). TDOT was first on the schedule, having its Title VI review April 5 – 8, 2016, and concluding with a video Title VI conference on April 12. The PMI Team focused on Title VI responsibilities, policies, and procedures, which included those of the Planning, Environmental, Design, Community Relations, Right-of-Way, and Construction divisions.

FHWA will incorporate the review results into its Title VI Action Plan as a part of its comprehensive effort to improve Title VI implementation. FHWA will also provide a report of observations, recommendations, and best practices, if any are identified. The draft report of the national Title VI review will be submitted to the OCR and the Directors of Field Services by September 30, 2016, with a final report four weeks later.



*FHWA PMI Team, Civil Rights Division, Title VI Program Video Conference with Planning, Environmental, Design, Community Relations, Right-of-Way, and Construction divisions.*



## Title VI Annual Employee Training

**TITLE VI** E-News

On April 1, 2016, the Civil Rights Division's (CRD) Title VI Program staff began its mission of training 3,406 of TDOT's employees, utilizing its Title VI Employee training module. Commissioner Schroer's training goal is, of course, to have 100% of his workforce complete the annual Title VI training. As of today, 69% of TDOT's workforce had completed the training. The Community Relations and Strategic Transportation Investment Divisions were the first to complete the training.

The CRD would like to encourage those who have not taken advantage of this easy and informative training module to do so as soon as possible. The completion date for the training is June 30, 2016.

The training is convenient and can be taken privately on an employee's PC, laptop, or smartphone. The training can also be administered in a group setting. Just remember to complete the registration form after participating in the training. When a participant completes the registration form, the information that is inputted provides a database for the CRD records. If you are unsure of what to do, contact your Title VI liaison or this office for guidance. This year, certificates of completion are available to print for your records.

Take a few minutes out of your workday to complete this annual training at: <http://intranet.tdot.tn.gov/civilrights/titlevi/default.htm>

### James "Wes" White New Employee in the CRD

The Civil Rights Division Title VI Program is pleased to introduce its newest staff member, James "Wes" White. White is a Nashville native who recently returned to Tennessee after residing in Pittsburgh, PA for the past 16 years. He received his B.S. in Mass Communications from MTSU in 1994. In 2003, White completed the Paralegal Studies program at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. He has 13 years of experience in the legal industry, working as a conflict-of-interest coordinator, as well as a finance review/compliance analyst for two of Pittsburgh's largest law firms. After many years in Pennsylvania working in the law firm environment, White returned to his native Tennessee. He currently resides in Goodlettsville, TN.

White brings his past compliance experience to TDOT's Civil Rights Division Title VI program. He is a Title VI Specialist and is responsible for Title VI compliance in Region 4. Additionally, White is the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Coordinator for TDOT. Please join us in welcoming him to the TDOT family.



*Wes White, Title VI  
Program Specialist*



## 2016 NSTI Host Site

**TITLE**  
*VI*

Annually, the CRD administers the National Summer Transportation Institute (NSTI) Program, which gives the Title VI Staff an opportunity to focus on inspiring and shaping tomorrow's leaders. The NSTI is a four-week, federally funded summer program developed to increase the awareness of middle and high school students to the engineering field and other transportation related careers. The NSTI program's objectives are to improve STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) skills, provide awareness to middle and high school students (particularly minorities, females and disadvantaged youth). The program's aim is to encourage participants to consider transportation-related courses of study in their pursuit of higher education.

In December 2015, the Title VI Staff of Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT), in partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) solicited proposals

from accredited colleges/universities to host the 2016 NSTI program. The deadline for submission was January 29, 2016. This office received two proposals.

Tennessee State University (TSU) was selected by the Proposal Rating Committee as the 2016 Host Site. TSU's College of Engineering, Technology and Computer Science will partner with the FHWA, the TDOT, the United States Army Corps of Engineers, and the Metropolitan Nashville Airport Authority in administering this year's program.

Twenty (20) 10th and 11th grade students from across the United States will enjoy a packed schedule, consisting of classroom activities, laboratories, field trips, and a host of guest lectures. The Commissioner's Luncheon is a highlight of the program. The informal luncheon gives students an opportunity to discuss topics relevant to the transportation industry, TDOT, and its work environment along with Senior Management.

## Ad Hoc Advisory Committee Update

**AFFIRMATIVE**  
**ACTION**

In August of 2015, the Affirmative Action Program staff and a group of Tennessee highway contractors formed the Ad Hoc EEO Officers Advisory Committee. The purpose of this coalition was to address specific concerns related to the highway construction industry, explore ways to improve the workforce of contractors doing business in Tennessee and to enhance opportunities for the recruitment, training and promotion of females, minorities, disadvantaged persons and veterans. Now, less than one year later, there is active participation and support

from the Tennessee Road Builders Association, Mayor Barry's Office, the Tennessee College of Applied Technology, Goodwill Industries, as well as other business and community groups.

Currently, the committee is finalizing a training curriculum designed to help applicants gain the skills necessary to enter the highway industry. Employees of the FHWA have recently requested that the Affirmative Action staff share information learned in this process with other states.





## First Diversity Brown Bag Lunch of 2016

**AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION**

The first Diversity Brown Bag Lunch for 2016 was held on February 18th, at TDOT Headquarters. Pamela Kordenbrock, FHWA Division Administrator, was the featured guest speaker. Kordenbrock, born in Puerto Rico speaking Spanish as her first language, generously shared stories from her past that demonstrated challenges she's endured because of her minority statuses – Hispanic and female. Kordenbrock's openness lead to a healthy discussion on shared experiences. Kordenbrock tackled the elephant in the room, "the Glass Ceiling", an unfair system or set of attitudes that prevents some people (such as women or people of a certain race) from getting the most powerful jobs. She fully acknowledged the existence of the glass ceiling and how oppressive it has been and continues to be for women and minorities in the workplace. In a cautionary manner,

she warned the attendees of another career derailer, a behavior that gets in the way of progress, "Sticky Floor". Kordenbrock explains the sticky floor syndrome as one's ability to sabotage career advancement due to being comfortable in their present position, being afraid to compete or apply for advancement, and/or allowing self-doubt to paralyze ambitions. She offered that had it not been for her mentor and the encouragement of others, she may not have applied for the position of FHWA Division Administrator. She was comfortable where she was and felt that someone else was primed for the position. In closing, Kordenbrock encouraged attendees to seek out a mentor and mentorships. She also asked attendees to go beyond comfort zones and seek out new challenges. We are all the better after receiving the inspirational message from Kordenbrock who did not allow the "Sticky Floor" to keep her down.



*Pamela Kordenbrock,  
FHWA Division  
Administrator*

### Region Two Black History Celebration

On February 26, 2016, the Affirmative Action Staff was invited by Ray Rucker, Director/Assistant Chief Engineer for Region 2, to attend the first Black History event in the region.

The event included displays of Civil Rights history and featured black history from surrounding areas. The guest speaker for the event was Herb Barnett, Civil Rights Activist. He shared many memories of his experiences

during the Civil Rights Movement.

There was soul food provided for everyone to enjoy. Rucker addressed the group with a message regarding the importance of respect. Sherree Hall Crowder congratulated Rucker and contributing employees. Crowder stated that Diversity is the one true thing that we all have in common, so celebrate it every day.



*Ray Rucker, Region Two Director,  
and Sherree Hall Crowder,  
CRD Affirmative Action Program  
Director*



## Women in Transportation

**AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION**

On March 30, 2016, Amanda Snowden, Region 1 Director of Operations, hosted a luncheon honoring Women in Transportation. The Affirmative Action (AA) Staff were invited to participate in the luncheon. The theme for the luncheon was “Working to Form a More Perfect Union: Honoring Women in Public Service and Government”.

Snowden shared a PowerPoint presentation and display about the history of women in transportation. Lyndsay Botts, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of Staff, was the keynote speaker for this event. Botts reflected on her childhood memories and discussed how women should build on their “Strengths.” Commissioner John Schroer took a few minutes to discuss the TDOT Reconnect Pilot Program for employees that will begin in Region One.

In addition, Sherree Hall Crowder, AA Director, spoke on “Valuing Diversity in the Workplace,” Cheryl Harleston, Kathy Combs and Yolando Jackson assisted the participants with playing the Diversity BINGO Game. Diversity BINGO demonstrated how important it is to recognize similarities, as well as differences in the workplace.

Jennifer Green, Sr., VP of Administration and Academic Affairs of Huntington College of Health and Science, discussed “The Basics of Nutrition.” Suzanne Eaton, Premier Designs, captivated everyone with a display of beautiful jewelry and demonstrated how to use existing clothing to avoid having “The Not so Extreme Closet Makeover.”



*John Schroer,  
Commissioner*



*Lyndsay Botts, Deputy Commissioner/  
Chief of Staff*



*Jennifer Green, Sr., VP  
of Administration and  
Academic Affairs of  
Huntington College of  
Health and Science*



*Display of Women in Transportation*



## OJT Contract Review

**AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION**

The FHWA requires highway contractors/subcontractors to meet or exceed Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) contractual requirements as a condition of receiving Federal-Aid funding. This year, the current plan includes conducting more than 28 on-site reviews across the state of Tennessee. After a review is completed, a summary report will be sent to the FHWA for final approval. Deficiencies that are found must be corrected or substantial penalties may be assessed.

On-site reviews provide an opportunity for the Affirmative Action (AA) staff to interact with EEO Officers, management staff of contractors/subcontractors and persons participating in the On-The-Job Training (OJT) program. These reviews give staff a chance to answer questions and to make suggestions on how to make compliance easier. It also allows contractors an opportunity to voice their concerns and to make suggestions on how things could be made better.

### Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Online Training

Once a year, FHWA requires TDOT to provide Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) training to contractors and subcontractors. Each year, the Affirmative Action (AA) staff provides a PowerPoint presentation that includes EEO requirements and any needed updates. Following the online training, a post assessment must be completed and returned to AA.CC@tn.gov. Successful participants are issued a Certificate of Completion.

The post-training assessment is designed to ensure

that EEO Officers for contractors and subcontractors understand the basic principles related to their contractual EEO obligations. This knowledge is necessary for them to be in compliance with requirements set by the FHWA. An analysis of the assessments and issues found during On-Site Contract Compliance Reviews help staff to address weak areas with EEO Officers. The 2016 post assessments indicate most of the contractors and subcontractors have an excellent understanding of their EEO requirements.

### EEO and AA Posters

All TDOT Regions, including Headquarters, were 100% in compliance with the required federal posting of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Affirmative Action posters, including “EEO is the LAW” poster.





## U of M SETWC Seminar

**AFFIRMATIVE  
ACTION**

During the first week of March, 2016, TDOT was one of the sponsors of a seminar presented by the Southeast Transportation Workforce Center in Memphis. In attendance were representatives from major companies, the FHWA, TDOT, over 200 local high school students, as well as Sherree Hall Crowder, Norris Teachworth and Pamela Sharp from the Civil Rights Division.

Commissioner Schroer was the highlight of the conference as he delivered a memorable keynote address regarding employment opportunities in the transportation industry.

Numerous break-out panels explored various aspects of the transportation field, as well as the need for diversity. A number of high ranking female executives and entrepreneurs spoke of how they had progressed in their careers and had overcome unique difficulties and challenges. Of particular interest to the Affirmative Action Program was a panel discussion regarding specific efforts being made by several major companies to recruit, hire, train and promote women.

Ron Garrison, CEO of the Memphis Area Transportation Authority, spoke of the significant advances being made to make mass transit cheaper and more affordable to individuals in urban areas. Currently, local community groups are targeting those who live in the most disadvantaged zip codes in Memphis, for enhanced efforts to provide employment opportunities.

This seminar presented an opportunity for the Civil Rights staff to meet and network with representatives from many companies and the FHWA to learn what others are doing to increase diversity in transportation.



*Commissioner Schroer*



*Toks Omishakin, Deputy Commissioner/Chief of TDOT Environment and Planning and Tanisha Hall, Director, TDOT Long Range Planning*



*Sherree Hall Crowder, TDOT Civil Rights*





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