in this issue >>>

President Messages

IRWA Course Schedule

When the Teacher Becomes the Student: The quest for continued learning in leadership

Member Spotlight!!

Upcoming Events

IRWA
CALIFORNIA INLAND EMPIRE
CHAPTER 57

…On the Move

August/September 2026
Volume 10, Issue 1

President's Message

From Timothy Green, Chapter 57 President

To our Chapter 57 IRWA Members…

Dear Chapter 57 Members,

It is my honor and privilege to serve as President of IRWA Chapter 57. As we begin a new chapter year, I would like to extend a warm welcome to all of our members and thank you for your continued support and dedication to our profession.

Our chapter's success is built on the engagement, expertise, and commitment of members like you. I encourage each of you to take an active role in Chapter 57 by attending events, participating in committees, sharing your knowledge, and helping us strengthen our professional community.

I am also excited to invite you to our upcoming **Engineering Seminar on September 17, 2026, at the Victoria Club in Riverside, California**. This event will provide valuable industry insights, professional development opportunities, a casino night and a chance to connect with colleagues and peers from across our region. You can find more information and a registration link on our website.

As we look ahead, I wish each of you a productive, successful, and rewarding year. Together, we can continue to advance our profession and make Chapter 57 a vibrant and valuable resource for all members.

Thank you for your membership and involvement. I look forward to seeing you throughout the year and working alongside you to make this an outstanding year for Chapter 57.

Sincerely,

Tim Green
President, IRWA Chapter 57

Membership Luncheon >>>

In lieu of our usual Membership Luncheon, please join us for our Engineering Seminar and Casino Night
September 17, 2026
12:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Keynote Speaker:
David Thomas
Riverside County Transportation Commission

Panel:
Sal Chavez (SBCTA)
Erik Galloway (RCTC)
David Thomas (RCTC)
Josue Vaglienty (OCTA)

Victoria Club
2521 Arroyo Drive
Riverside, CA 92506

IRWA Courses – Regional 1

C603 Understanding Environmental Contamination in R.E., 8/10/26, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C100 (2-Day) Principles of Land Acquisition, 8/10/26, (Ch. 2)

C303 Project Management (Initiate to Close) and the Consultant Hiring Process, 8/13/26, Virtual Class

C606 The Environmental Process, 8/18/26, Virtual Class

C904 GIS Principles and Use in Infrastructure and Asset Management, 8/19/26, Virtual Class (Ch. 46)

SR/WA Review Study Session & Exam, 8/25/26, Virtual Class (Ch. 1)

C803 Eminent Domain Law Basics for ROW Professionals, 9/1/26, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C902 Property Descriptions, 9/1/26, (Ch. 2)

C417 The Valuation of Environmentally Contaminated Real Estate, 9/2/26, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C804 Skills of Expert Testimony, 9/3/26, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C501 Residential Relocation Assistance, 9/3/26, Virtual Class (Ch. 28)

C901 Engineering Plan Development & Application, 9/3/26, (Hybrid – Virtual & In-Person) (Ch. 27)

Additional courses are listed on IRWA's website at
www.irwaonline.org

Are you interested in taking a free class? Contact any of the Board members, to find out how you can become a coordinator.

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IRWA Mission Statement

The International Right of Way Association will be the worldwide leader for innovation and excellence in the acquisition and management of right of way and public use.

International Right of Way Association
CHAPTER 57, INLAND EMPIRE
San Bernardino/Riverside
California

About RWIEF

RWIEF
RIGHT OF WAY INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION

THE RIGHT OF WAY INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FOUNDATION WAS ESTABLISHED FOR THE PURPOSE OF FUNDING RIGHT-OF-WAY EDUCATION INITIATIVES. THE FOUNDATION FOCUSES ON GENERATING FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND DETERMINES HOW MUCH TO ALLOCATE THOSE FUNDS FOR THE BETTERMENT OF RIGHT-OF-WAY EDUCATION. OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, FUNDS HAVE BEEN ALLOCATED FOR EDUCATIONAL SUMMITS, CREATION OF NEW COURSES, UPGRADES OF EXISTING COURSES, CONVERSION TO ONLINE DELIVERY METHODS, AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS. CUTTING-EDGE EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE GROWTH AND ADVANCEMENT OF OUR PROFESSION AND TO EACH OF US AS PROFESSIONALS IN THIS FAST-PACED, EVER-CHANGING INDUSTRY.

When the Teacher Becomes the Student

The quest for continued learning in leadership

By Yasmin L. Stump, Esq., SR/WA

"Learning is finding out what you already know. Doing is demonstrating that you know it. Teaching is reminding others that they know just as well as you. You are all learners, doers, teachers." – Richard Bach, "Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah"

Right of way professionals emerge as leaders based upon their various experience and skills, as well as teaching others. Definitionally speaking, a "teacher" and a "leader" are not identical. That said, the teaching component of leadership can be neither dismissed nor diminished. The roles of teacher, learner and doer are not distinct, and Richard Bach's quote above from his book "Illusions" reminds us that a symbiotic relationship exists among the three. In leadership, it is axiomatic that teaching and learning are confirmed through doing.

Effective leaders must continue learning, and the quest for continued development can, and should, remain steadfast. But, unfortunately, for some leaders, this journey yields to barriers, thereby frustrating the process of continued advancement. Certain leaders, in their roles as teachers, disseminate the same advice or information repeatedly. For instance, think of the leader who gives the same presentation year after year without incorporating any current information in, or updating the material for, the presentation. The danger of this practice is that eventually the presentation becomes stale, and the leader's effectiveness as a teacher is decreased.

The continued learning quest for leadership is not only beneficial but essential

Although a perception may exist that the continued learning quest applies only to seasoned leaders to avoid becoming out of touch and impairing relevance, this pursuit applies equally to emerging leaders to ensure their success and effectiveness. The benefits of any leader's search for persistent betterment include "fostering continuous growth, career advancement, and adaptability, which are essential for thriving in today's dynamic business environment," as author Christopher A. Smith notes in Join the Collective's 2024 article, "The Power of Lifelong Learning in Leadership."

Although the benefits of a leader's quest for continued evolvement are evident, lifelong learning as a leader is not merely beneficial. It is essential in today's right of way industry. In the industry's fast-pasted and rapidly changing landscape, leadership's persistent expansion is necessary to remain current on new developments, trends and technology. The information gained from the leadership enlightenment pursuit enhances efficiency, communication and productivity.

Why leaders avoid continued learning and confronting attitudes that create impediments

If the quest for continued learning in leadership is not just beneficial, but essential, why do some leaders avert the mission? The reasons for doing so can be intentional or inadvertent and include leaders resting on their laurels, the perception of weakness for a lack of knowledge, insufficient time and being overwhelmed by information. Even the most revered leaders can overlook ceaseless evolution from time to time. When this situation occurs, it is important for the leader to acknowledge such parallelization and to candidly assess and confront the attitudes for doing so to effectuate positive change and growth.

Certain leaders rest on their laurels and discontinue learning because they believe they have arrived at a point in their careers where they know all that they need to know. However, such an attitude is harmful because development is not a destination; it's a continued journey. In his 2025 blog entry on the subject, Generous Benefits Founder Bret Brummitt notes, "In today's world, the most effective leaders aren't the ones who arrive at some ultimate destination of knowledge. They are the ones who treat leadership as a lifelong practice. It's something to be refined, challenged and nurtured over time." Writer Christie Gren for Industry Leaders magazine adds in her May 2022 article, "Avoid the trap of 'knowing it all. Instead adopt a beginner's mindset. The best leaders are perpetual students.'"

Another reason for avoiding persistent expansion grows out of believing you know it all, which is that it

Continues on Page 4

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We'd love to hear from you!

Would you like the Chapter to host a luncheon on your favorite topic? Do you know anyone who would like to speak at an upcoming luncheon? If so, please contact Timothy Green, President-Elect, at (951) 787-7141, or via email at tgreen@rctc.org.

Have comments or suggestions for the newsletter?

We value your opinion and welcome your input! If you have any comments or recommendations for the newsletter, please contact Sheryn Smay, SR/WA, Newsletter Chair, at (951) 826-5343 or via email at ssmay@riversideca.gov.

Did you know? >>>

Fun Real Estate Trivia

Balmoral Castle, purchased by Prince Albert in 1852, was the Scottish estate where Queen Elizabeth II passed away on September 8, 2022.

When Teacher Becomes the Student (continued)

exposes a leader's vulnerability about what he or she does not know. However, the most effective leaders know that, with learning, ego must be abandoned. "This type of leadership embodies humility. It's the willingness to say, 'I don't know, but I'm willing to learn.' It's a mindset that values evolution over ego and growth, over comfort," as Gren expounds.

Insufficient time is another obstacle to persistent growth for leaders. Undoubtedly, most leaders would acknowledge this concern. Leaders' time is absorbed by numerous activities involving their work and home lives. However, insufficient time for leadership's perpetual evolvement is predicated on the premise that enduring expansion is time-consuming. Gren dispels this myth. "[T]he truth is, learning doesn't need to be time-consuming. Microlearning — short bursts of focused content — can be incredibly effective."

One final reason for a leader overlooking lifelong development is being overwhelmed by information, and it's easy to comprehend why. All of us are bombarded with a plethora of data in our everyday lives, both professionally and personally, and it becomes just too much and mentally exhausting. Our minds are incapable of meaningfully processing an abundance of intelligence at such a rapid pace. Gren offers this advice in response to this obstacle: "Focus on relevance. Curate your learning just like you curate your calendar."

Strategies for promoting a leadership continued learning quest

Aside from overcoming the hurtles that undermine the leadership learning quest, strategies exist to advance the mission. Initially, just as certain negative attitudes can impair the leadership continued betterment journey, the right mind set can promote the pursuit. Smith elucidates, "One key insight into the importance of lifelong learning for leadership development is the concept of the growth mindset. Coined by psychologist Carol Dweck, a growth mindset fosters resilience in the face of setbacks, viewing challenges as opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge."

In-class education is a traditional method of persistent learning for leaders. Classes are available to obtain, and in some situations to maintain, educational degrees, professional licenses and designations. These courses are offered in person and virtually through institutions of higher education, professional organizations and employers. Speaking of gaining knowledge traditionally, books, treatises and magazines are beneficial resources for continued advancement for leaders as well. Informal learning can be accomplished by consultation with experienced professionals, as developed through relationships with other colleagues, mentorship and coaching. Aside from attending programs offered at conferences and symposiums, in-person attendance at these events provides the opportunity to create new and meaningful relationships with other professionals.

Obviously, the internet is an incredible and expeditious tool for continued learning. As a baby boomer who was taught to research through scouring multiple volumes of the family encyclopedia and visiting the library to comb through card catalogues and then search for hard copy materials, I am mesmerized by the ease at which information can be obtained today on the internet. The caveats for utilizing the internet for continued learning are to confirm the accuracy of information provided by artificial intelligence (AI) through other sources, such as articles by subject matter experts, since AI can sometimes hallucinate, and as discussed above in this article, intentionally and carefully narrow your search to avoid becoming overwhelmed by the breadth of available information.

Websites for professional organizations are also valuable tools for incessant learning. Our Association's website includes a tab for "Member Resources," which has beneficial industry information and can be accessed at **www.irwaonline.org/members/leadership-resources/international-leadership-resources/**.

One final note is that ceaseless growth for leaders is not limited to gaining knowledge through new sources. Rather, it can be achieved by routinely revisiting reliable material. In his article, Brummitt relays a story about one of his mentors that illustrates the significance of relearning. Brummitt's mentor "reread chapters [of 'a well-worn leadership book'] he could probably recite and relisten to podcast episodes he'd already marked as favorites … When I finally asked him why, he said, 'Because every time I return to something I notice what I missed the first time. Or how I've changed.'" Thus, relearning from an old source creates the opportunity for a leader to extract something fresh from that source. Think of what you discerned additionally the second time you read a book or saw a movie.

Ultimately, a leader's quest for continued expansion can be accomplished through many avenues, and the discussion of the avenues here is certainly not exhaustive. In the edgy 1967 movie "To Sir with Love," starring Sydney Poiter, who portrays a teacher at a secondary school in a tough London neighborhood, his academic colleague asks his character a thought-provoking question, which remains pertinent almost one-half century later: "So long as we learn, it doesn't matter who teaches us, does it?"

"Aside from overcoming the [hurdles] that undermine the leadership learning quest, strategies exist to advance the mission."

Yasmin L. Stump, Esq., currently serves as IRWA International General Counsel and Parliamentarian. She is also an IRWA Chapter 10 past president. Yasmin is the president and founder of Yasmin L. Stump Law Group, PC in Indiana and has practiced in real estate transactions and litigation, as well as been a member of the right of way industry, for more than 35 years. She has more than 40 years of leadership experience with business and nonprofit organizations and is authoring this column, Leadership.

Reprinted from IRWA's Right of Way Magazine: "LEADERSHIP: When the Teach Becomes the Student" July/August 2026

UPCOMING EVENTS

ENGINEERING SEMINAR &
CASINO NIGHT
September 17, 2026
Victoria Club
Riverside, California

PSOMAS

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RICHARDS WATSON GERSHON

2026 IRWA 72nd Annual International Education Conference
June 25–29, 2026 | Omaha, Nebraska

I recently had the opportunity to attend the International Right-of-Way Association (IRWA) 72nd Annual International Education Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. The conference brought together right-of-way professionals from across the United States and around the world to exchange knowledge, discuss emerging industry trends, and strengthen professional relationships.

The conference opened with updates on the State of the Profession and the State of the Association, followed by an inspiring keynote address from Ambassador Roger D. Carstens, former U.S. Presidential Special Envoy for Hostage Affairs. Drawing on his military and diplomatic experience, he shared valuable lessons on leadership, perseverance, negotiation, and decision-making under extraordinary circumstances.

Educational sessions covered a wide range of topics, including acquisitions, eminent domain, valuation, property management, leadership, and the historical foundations of the right-of-way profession. One of my favorite sessions, **"Where the Roads Begin and End: The Lifecycle of Right of Way – From Wagon Trails to Highways,"** explored how early wagon trails evolved into today's transportation network and examined the legal and historical foundations of roadway development. The presentation served as a reminder that every road has a story and that understanding our profession's history helps us better plan for its future.

Another conference favorite was **The Great Eminent Domain Debate**, where eminent domain attorneys and appraisers debated legal, valuation, and industry topics in an informative and entertaining format.

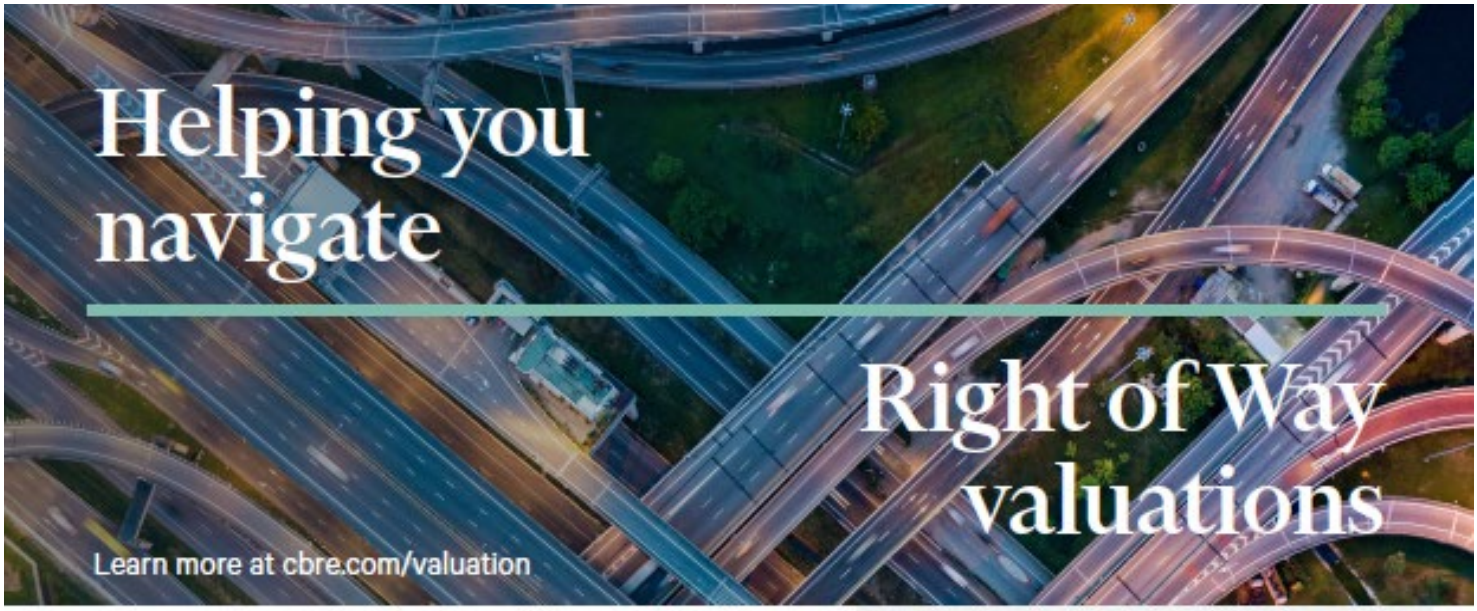
I was also proud to attend the SR/WA Recognition and Awards Luncheon, where **IRWA Chapter 57** received the **Website of the Year Award**, in recognition of the chapter's outstanding communication and member engagement.

In addition to the educational opportunities, the conference offered excellent networking events. One evening was held at Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo and Aquarium, where attendees had the opportunity to reconnect with colleagues while exploring the zoo after hours. Highlights for me included seeing a bat-eared fox for the first time and walking through a bat cave filled with hundreds of flying bats, an unforgettable (and aromatic!) experience.

Outside the conference, fellow City of Riverside attendees Jessica Andresen, Peggy Barnes, and I walked across the pedestrian bridge spanning the Missouri River, where we stood on the state line between Nebraska and Iowa—a fun reminder that learning often extends beyond the classroom.

Overall, the conference provided an outstanding balance of technical education, leadership development, and networking. I returned with new ideas, renewed enthusiasm for the right-of-way profession, and a greater appreciation for the work we do in serving our community. It was a rewarding experience that reinforced the importance of lifelong learning, professional collaboration, and remembering that every property—and every road—has a story.

Sheryn Smay, SR/WA
IRWA Chapter 57
Newsletter Chair



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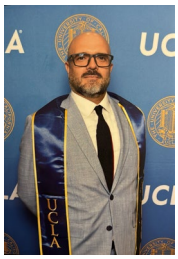
Member Spotlight!!

Hello, my fellow Chapter 57 members!

In this issue, I am happy to have
C. Mauricio Obando, RWA, SR/WA
in our “Member Spotlight!!”



Sometimes a career path begins with a carefully laid-out plan. Other times, a few right-of-way projects simply get "dumped" on your desk, and you discover an entirely new professional passion.

In this issue, I’m spotlighting a member whose journey into right-of-way began around 2017 while working as a Real Estate Manager. He has a background as a real estate attorney and suddenly found himself representing the landowner's perspective on projects involving power transmission, water canals, and flood control.

Rather than being intimidated by this unfamiliar territory, he was intrigued. In his words, "[he] found these interactions rather fascinating and professionally rewarding, and they sparked [his] desire to learn more about the ROW industry."

With the assistance of an IRWA Headquarters scholarship that covered much of the required coursework, Mau (his nickname 😊) pursued his RWA certification, earning it in February 2018. It was the beginning of what would become a much deeper involvement with the Association and the right-of-way profession.

A Chapter 57 member from the start, Mau credits IRWA with helping him build both professional relationships and lasting friendships while advancing from Real Estate Broker to earning the SR/WA designation. "IRWA provided education, mentorship, and a strong professional network."
His career has included roles as Property Manager, Asset Manager, and Right-of-Way Agent, but he says some of the greatest benefits have come simply from being involved in the Association.

That involvement has opened doors to new opportunities, expanded his expertise and, as he puts it, allowed him to start "befriending entire agencies.
"What's better than that?"

Answering what he likes most about IRWA, he says it comes down to two things: people and knowledge. Through the Association, he has developed friendships with experienced mentors who helped him navigate everything from valuation and relocation to legal descriptions and engineering plans. "Their support has been instrumental in both my professional growth and career development."

That curiosity and willingness to keep learning eventually led him in another direction, mapping land rights and Geographic Information Systems, or GIS. In December 2025, he earned a Certificate in GIS and Geospatial Technologies from UCLA, with distinction, an accomplishment he considers one of the most rewarding of his career. And he's already thinking about what comes next.

As technology continues to reshape the profession, he sees tremendous potential in bringing Asset Management, Right-of-Way, and GIS together. "I believe the future of our profession will increasingly be driven by data visualization and spatial intelligence."

With geospatial technology evolving rapidly, and artificial intelligence accelerating that evolution, he sees opportunities to use these tools to better understand, manage, and communicate the many facets of right-of-way.
Of course, keeping pace with all that technology brings its own challenges. As older records and established processes transition into new digital systems, he believes ongoing training and self-directed learning have become essential. But he also sees the payoff: today's mapping tools can help professionals evaluate land rights, property values, environmental risks and other critical issues more quickly and efficiently.

Here's a fun fact: although he came into the profession with a legal background, experience has taught him that sometimes the best legal strategy is avoiding the need for one. "I quickly realized that the best right-of-way professionals make life so smooth that the lawyers barely get called. So, I keep my legal hat handy but usually tucked away." For him, successful right-of-way work is about building relationships and finding practical solutions rather than creating legal headaches.

That philosophy is also reflected in one of his favorite sayings: "Being right is only half the battle; the other half is making it happen." And then there's another favorite: "A bad settlement is better than a good lawsuit." Why? Because right-of-way isn't about winning arguments; it's about finding solutions. Or, in his words: "If attorneys are celebrating, the project probably isn't!"

For new IRWA members, his advice reflects the same curiosity that first drew him to the profession. "ROW is a lifelong learning adventure. Every project introduces a new expert, a new challenge, and usually something I didn't know yesterday." It's the intersection of so many different disciplines that continues to make the profession interesting to him, and keeps him learning.

So, the next time you see him at a Chapter 57 event, there's one question you might want to ask: What are you learning? Just be prepared. "I'll probably ask you the same question right back!" 😊

Woo hoo! ROW watch out! Mau is coming to get you. We all need a bit more curiosity and a zest for learning in our lives.

Signing off for now,
Sheryn Smay, SR/WA
Chapter 57 Newsletter Chair

Did you enjoy the last venue? We would appreciate any feedback you'd like to give. Please reach out to any Board member.

IRWA Chapter 57
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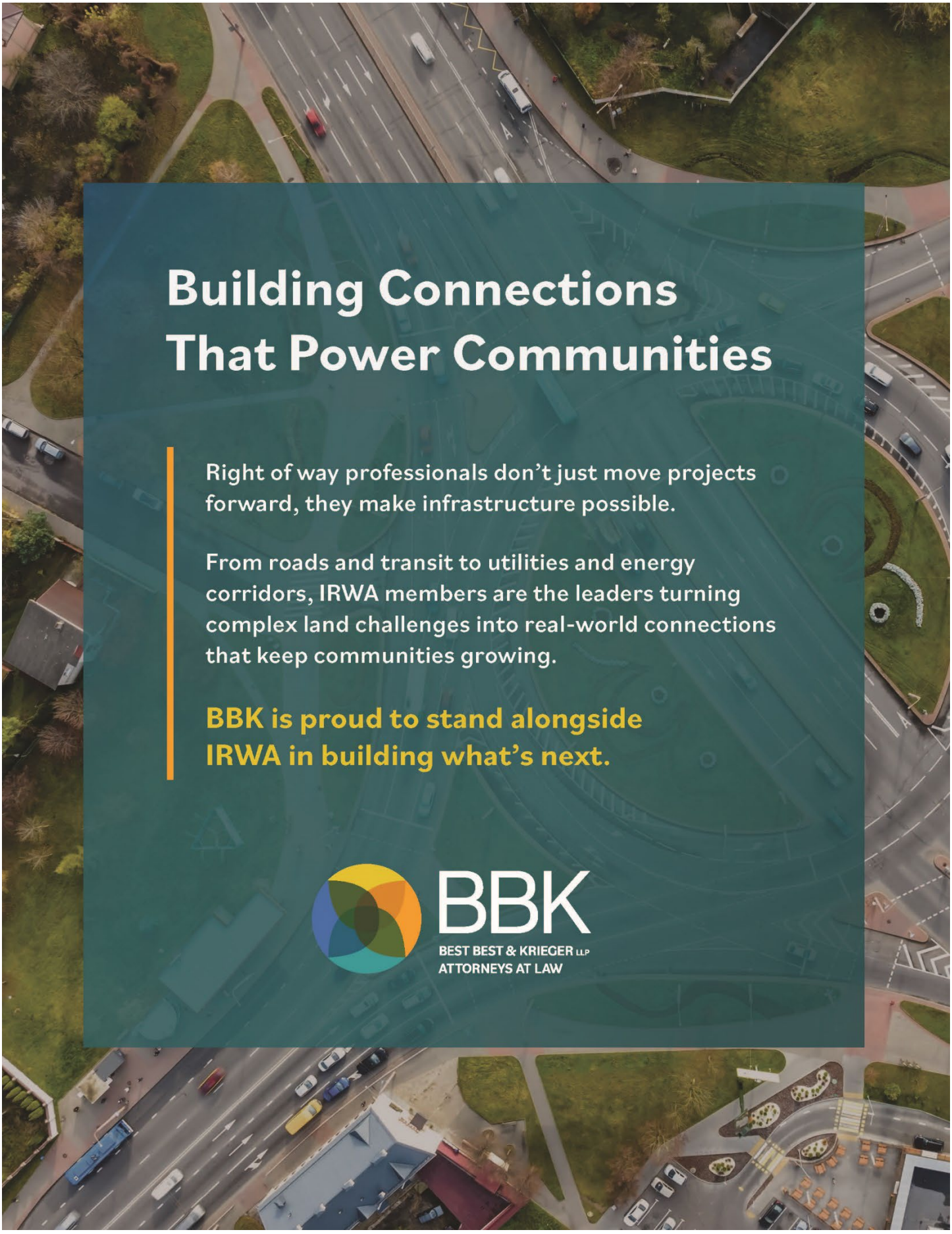
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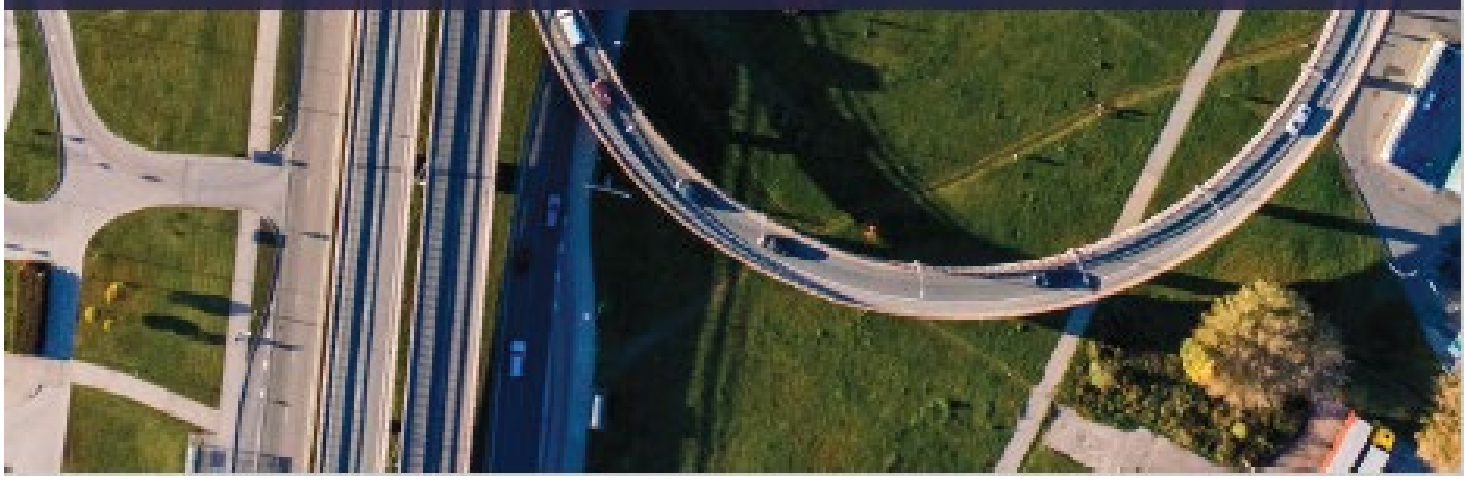

INTERNATIONAL RIGHT OF WAY ASSOCIATION
CHAPTER 57

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Education Co-Chair	Vacant
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Professional Development (2nd Year)	Kim Bibolet, SR/WA, R/W-NAC
Professional Development (3rd Year)	
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Events	Darcy Mendoza, SR/WA-GN, R/W-NAC
Legal Issues	Mark Easter, Esq.
Newsletter	Sheryn Smay, SR/WA
Young Professional (YP)	Ashley Turner
Industry Committees	
Asset Management	Mau Obando, SR/WA
Electric & Utilities	Vacant
Environment	Matt Nusenow, P.E.
Oil & Gas Pipeline	Mau Obando, SR/WA
Public Agencies	John Chaconas, SR/WA
Relocation	Vacant
Survey	William Estepa, PLS
Transportation	Vacant
Valuation Co-Chair	Randall Blaesi, ASA, MRICS
Valuation Co-Chair	Christine Santolucito, R/W-AC