in this issue >>>

Presidents' Messages

IRWA Course Schedule

Protecting Project Integrity in Right of Way Practice: The importance of documenting the process

Member Spotlight!!

Upcoming Events

IRWA CALIFORNIA INLAND EMPIRE CHAPTER 57

…On the Move

June/July 2026
Volume 9, Issue 5

President's Message

From Ramie Dawit, Outgoing Chapter 57 President

To our Chapter 57 IRWA Members…

Hello Chapter 57 Members and Friends. It's hard to believe my term as Chapter 57 President is already coming to an end. I want to take a moment to thank everyone for their support and encouragement throughout the year. It has truly been an honor to serve as your president and represent such an amazing Chapter!

Over the past year, we've had some great luncheons and educational opportunities that brought our members together. I've enjoyed seeing familiar faces at our events and watching our chapter continue to grow and stay engaged. I would especially like to thank our Board members and committee chairs who dedicate so much of their time behind the scenes. Their commitment and hard work are what keep Chapter 57 moving forward and successful year after year.

As we look ahead, I am excited to welcome our incoming officers:

- Tim Green – President
- Paul Mim Mack – President Elect
- Jessica Andresen – Treasurer
- Gregory Snarr - Secretary

I know the chapter will be in excellent hands under their leadership, and I look forward to continuing to support them as an active Board member.

I also encourage everyone to continue attending our luncheons, courses, and chapter events. One of the best parts of IRWA is the opportunity to learn from one another and build lasting professional relationships.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to serve as your President. I truly appreciate the experience, and I look forward to seeing all of you at future Chapter 57 events.

All the best,
Ramie Dawit
Chapter 57 President 25/26

Membership Luncheon >>>

June 10, 2026
11:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Speaker:
Cami Stigall, Project Manager
Monument ROW

Topic:
Wildfire Recovery: Right-of-Way Efforts Behind the Rebuild

Victoria Club
2521 Arroyo Drive
Riverside, CA 92506

IRWA Courses – Regional 1

C205 Bargaining Negotiations, 6/3/26, Virtual Class

C303 Project Management (Initiate to Close) and the Consultant Hiring Process, 6/8/26, Virtual Class

C606 The Environmental Process, 6/9/26, Virtual Class

C100 (2-Day) Principles of Land Acquisition, 6/11/26, Virtual Class (Ch. 67)

C504 Computing Replacement Housing Payments, 6/17/26, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C801 U. S. Land Titles, 7/9/26, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C901 Engineering Plan Development & Application, 7/13/26, Virtual Class

C200 Principles of R. E. Negotiation, 7/14/26, Virtual Class (Ch. 42)

C421 The Valuation of Partial Acquisitions, 7/14/26, (Ch. 27)

C409 Integrating Appraisal Standards, 7/17/26, Virtual Class (Instructor TBD)

C100 (2-Day) Principles of Land Acquisition, 7/20/26, Virtual Class (Ch. 28)

C900 Principles of Real Estate Engineering, 7/23/26, Virtual Class

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.

Protecting Project Integrity in Right of Way Practice

The importance of "documenting the process"

By Esther M. Franklin

Public infrastructure projects tend to be judged by what people can see. They see construction last anywhere from some weeks to several months. The community can observe the crew, heavy equipment and finally, the completed structure — all of which receive the most attention. But far less visible is the administrative and legal framework that allows those projects to proceed in the first place. Those involved in the profession may be somewhat familiar but likely do not understand the magnitude of the weight it holds to ensure the project gets to the forward-facing construction stage. In practice, however, the work involves far more than just concrete and bulldozers.

Long before construction begins, right of way professionals work through the complicated process of acquiring the land necessary for public infrastructure. The behind-the-scenes work is the foundation that must be laid before the work begins.

Because acquisition work takes place early in the project lifecycle, its importance is sometimes underestimated. Yet the quality of right of way practice often determines whether projects remain on schedule and within regulatory compliance long before construction begins. Before construction equipment even arrives on site, the integrity of the project has already been shaped by the quiet but critical work of acquisition teams. And in many ways, that early work determines the success of the entire endeavor.

Acquisition operates within a structured system of regulations that ultimately protects the integrity of the entire project.

Anyone who has worked in right of way long enough knows that acquisition rarely begins or ends with negotiation. The public often sees the appraisal or closing, but behind every project sits a quieter system of compliance processes that determines whether a project ultimately moves forward. "Documenting the process" is by far the best axiom used in business system processes because it provides a clear record of actions that supports both legal and administrative functions.

Large infrastructure projects can span over multiplies counties, which requires coordination of project teams. Engineers design and assess the project for implementation while the project manager ensures the project is coordinated properly and carried out within a set time schedule based on the needs of the agency as set forth in the scope of work. Once that process is complete, the project goes out for bid for construction and eventually, the construction contractors carry out construction. Right of way professionals operate in the middle of this system, acquiring the necessary acquisitions needed for the project.

Without structured supervisory frameworks and training continuity, interpretations may vary. Over time, that variability can introduce risk exposure and undermine uniformity. Regulatory oversight ensures professional discretion remains aligned with statutory and regulatory guidelines. Because highway projects frequently involve federal or state funding, acquisition activities must comply with a detailed regulatory framework. In the United States, the authority for public agencies to acquire private property is rooted in the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which provides that private property shall not "be taken for public use, without just compensation." This constitutional principle establishes the legal foundation for eminent domain.

At the federal level, acquisition procedures connected to federally funded projects are further governed by the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act (42 U.S.C. §4601–4655) and the implementing regulations found in 49 C.F.R. Part 24. These rules establish national standards foras it relates to the acquisition. Within that regulatory framework, documentation becomes a central element of responsible right of way practice.

Each step in the acquisition process must be documented to demonstrate both procedural compliance and professional judgment. Federal law requires acquiring agencies to maintain these records to confirm that acquisitions were conducted in accordance with the protections established. A

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

Rising above Manhattan since 1931, the Empire State Building is a landmark Art Deco skyscraper designed by Shreve, Lamb & Harmon. Its name was inspired by "The Empire State," a nickname commonly associated with New York.

Protecting Project Integrity… (continued)

complete file typically includes signed settlement documents needed to convey legal rights to the property. The file may include the following: appraisal reports, recorded deeds, W9, temporary construction easement, fee simple deed, drainage easement or slope easement deed.

These documents confirm that statutory procedures were followed and represent a transparent record of the decisions made and how they were implemented. The acquisition file should tell the real story of the project. To ensure a smooth transition from project initiation to project implementation, the following lists outlines the pertinent documentation at specific phases:

Project Planning Documents

- Project scope of work
- Notice to proceed
- Environmental clearance documents
- Right of way plans and maps

Title Evidence and Property Data

- Title reports
- Property ownership deeds
- Tax certifications
- Assessment information

Relocation and Negotiation Records

- Notice of acquisition and offer letters
- Appraisal
- Negotiation Control Sheet
- Highlighted plan
- Resolutions and legal descriptions
- Record of payments including:
- RW943 (Payment Transmittal) and LPS 14
- Settlement sheet
- Eligibility determinations
- Relocation benefits offers
- Moving expense reimbursement forms

Legal and Official Approvals

- Authorization and resolution records
- Environmental assessments and clearance
- Approvals from oversight agencies

When documentation is thorough, it reinforces the integrity of the acquisition process. Agencies can demonstrate compliance during administrative review, project managers gain assurance that parcels have been acquired in accordance with regulatory standards and property owners benefit from a transparent, accountable process.

On the other hand, when documentation is incomplete or inconsistent, the acquisition process becomes vulnerable. Missing or unclear records can cause issues in the future — minor documentation gaps can quickly snowball and create significant challenges, especially within large infrastructure programs, which can deal with anything from dozens to hundreds of parcels.

In addition, the right of way agent's discretion is a necessary part of the project and the profession. Infrastructure projects rarely present identical circumstances, and professionals must apply regulatory standards. Without clear internal procedures and supervisory oversight, different teams may interpret regulatory requirements differently. Over time, those variations can produce acquisition files that lack uniformity. From an administrative perspective, inconsistency introduces unnecessary risk that may lead to internal and external compliance issues.

For this reason, experienced right of way professionals often view documentation as a core disciplined practice. Proper documentation safeguards the legal defensibility and long-term integrity of the entire project.

In my experience working within the right of way industry, the difference between a well-managed acquisition effort and one that struggles often comes down to the systems in place to guide that professional judgment.
For example, the Federal Highway Administration developed a strong system of standardized procedures. These systems help ensure that professional judgment remains aligned with the broader regulatory framework governing acquisition activities. Equally important, they ensure consistency and longevity for future professionals who will carry this work forward.

Another challenge facing the infrastructure sector today is the transfer of institutional knowledge. Many experienced right of way professionals developed their expertise over decades of project work. Their understanding often extends beyond what is written in formal guidance manuals.

As these professionals retire, agencies and consulting firms face the task of ensuring that their knowledge is not lost. Training programs play an important role in this transition, but effective education must go beyond procedural instruction.

"On the other hand, when documentation is incomplete or inconsistent, the acquisition process becomes vulnerable."

Workforce development and training initiatives are becoming increasingly important across the infrastructure sector as agencies work to prepare the next generation of professionals responsible for planning, building and maintaining public corridors. In my book "Bridging the Gap," published by ForbesBooks, I explore the importance of bringing greater awareness to the professions that support the transportation industry, particularly those who operate behind the scenes but are essential to the long-term preservation of our nation's highways.

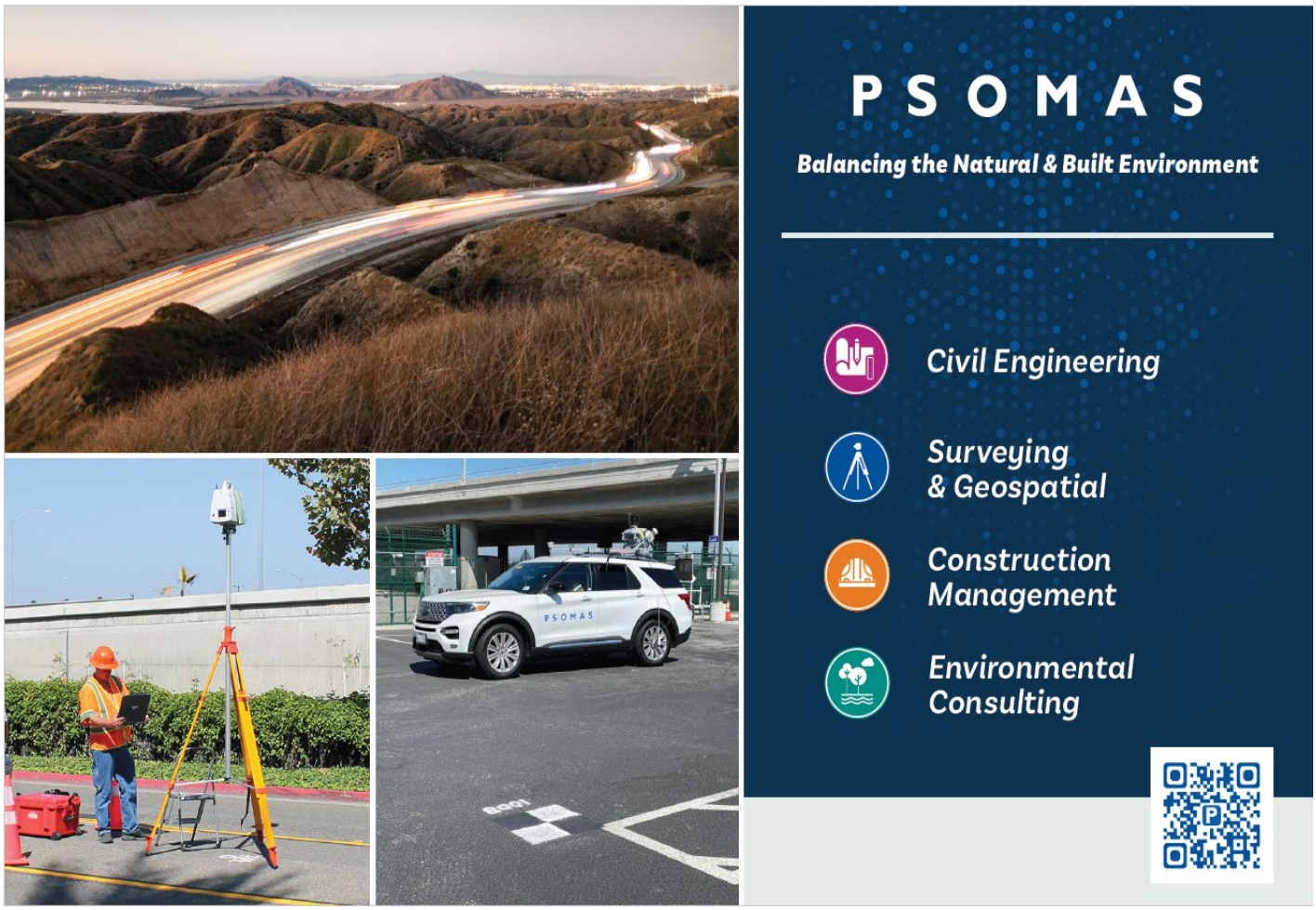
When professionals recognize that processes serve broader governance functions, they approach their work with a deeper sense of responsibility. Mentorship programs and structured training initiatives can help bridge this generational gap. By pairing experienced practitioners with emerging professionals, organizations can preserve institutional knowledge while strengthening the next generation of right of way leadership.

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: "Protecting Project Integrity in Right of Way Practice: The importance of 'documenting the process'." May/June 2026

UPCOMING EVENTS

IRWA 72ND Annual International Education Conference
Omaha, Nebraska
June 26-29, 2026



President's message from Incoming President – Timothy Green

Hello Chapter 57, I hope you are all ready for a new year of luncheons, IRWA classes and networking opportunities. We have a great year planned with four luncheons in November, February, April and June and an engineering seminar planned for September with a casino night. We will be having our luncheons on the second Tuesday of the month's mentioned above with our venue being the Victoria Club. Please mark the dates on your calendar and make a point to come out and enjoy the many topics we will be discussing as well as taking advantage of the networking opportunity.

The IRWA International Conference will be held in Omaha, Nebraska this year with a number of educational sessions lined up as well as some fun events for all to participate in. Check the IRWA website for more information.

The Chapter will be working on offering classes this year for those of you looking to get your designations or just looking to get more educated for your right of way career.
I look forward to serving you and the chapter this next year as we look ahead to supporting each other in one of the most unique, challenging and rewarding careers in life.

I would like to make a plea for sponsors as we start this new year. This is how the chapter survives, companies and firms supporting the local chapters and people volunteering their time to serve on board positions giving input and helping out with events and classes. Please reach to me or Paul Mim Mack our Vice President if you would like to sponsor the chapter or a luncheon or volunteer in any capacity. Thank you.
Finally, let me conclude by saying that I am excited for this year, and I hope to see you all many times as we continue to build chapter 57 and give right of way folks a place to collaborate and celebrate our industry.

Thank you,

Tim Green
Chapter 57 President
2026/2027

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RICHARDS WATSON GERSHON

IRWA Annual Valuation Seminar Delivers Practical Insights for Right of Way Professionals

On May 28, 2026, real estate and right-of-way professionals from across California gathered at the IRWA Annual Valuation Seminar in Montebello for a full day of education focused on eminent domain, appraisal methodology, valuation trends, and emerging industry challenges. Patricia Sanchez and I attended on behalf of the City of Riverside and came away with valuable insights directly applicable to our work.

The seminar opened with a presentation on the most influential eminent domain decisions affecting valuation professionals today. Attorneys David Graeler and Laura Mendenhall reviewed landmark court cases involving highest and best use, business goodwill, severance damage, project influence, and temporary construction impacts. One of the recurring themes was the importance of understanding how court decisions continue to shape appraisal methodology and compensation determinations decades after the cases were decided.

A session on self-storage properties highlighted the unique valuation challenges associated with this growing asset class. Presenters discussed market trends, capitalization rates, operating income analysis, and the effects of recent market fluctuations. The discussion reinforced the importance of understanding both local market conditions and property-specific characteristics when evaluating specialized real estate.

One of the more thought-provoking presentations examined acceleration payments, condemnation additurs, and other valuation complexities that arise during acquisitions. The speakers explored how agencies sometimes provide compensation beyond appraised value to encourage early settlements and reduce project delays, while also discussing the legal and practical considerations involved in balancing public benefit, project schedules, and litigation risk.

The afternoon included a detailed look at the fixture and equipment appraisal process, often referred to as “womb to tomb.” The presentation emphasized the importance of properly identifying and classifying improvements, distinguishing between real and personal property, and accounting for depreciation, relocation considerations, and intangible assets. As projects become increasingly complex, accurate classification remains critical to producing credible valuation conclusions.

Another standout session focused on managing large-scale appraisal assignments. The presenters stressed that communication is often the determining factor between a successful project and a problematic one. Establishing clear scopes of work, confirming assumptions early, maintaining consistent methodologies, and coordinating with reviewers throughout the process can significantly improve efficiency and defensibility. One memorable takeaway was that “silence is the most expensive mistake on a project.”

Technology and data management also played a prominent role in the discussion. Geographic Information Systems (GIS), valuation matrices, parcel mapping, and data-driven quality control tools are increasingly helping appraisers maintain consistency across large acquisition programs. These tools allow project teams to identify inconsistencies, visualize impacts, improve communication, and support valuation conclusions with greater transparency.

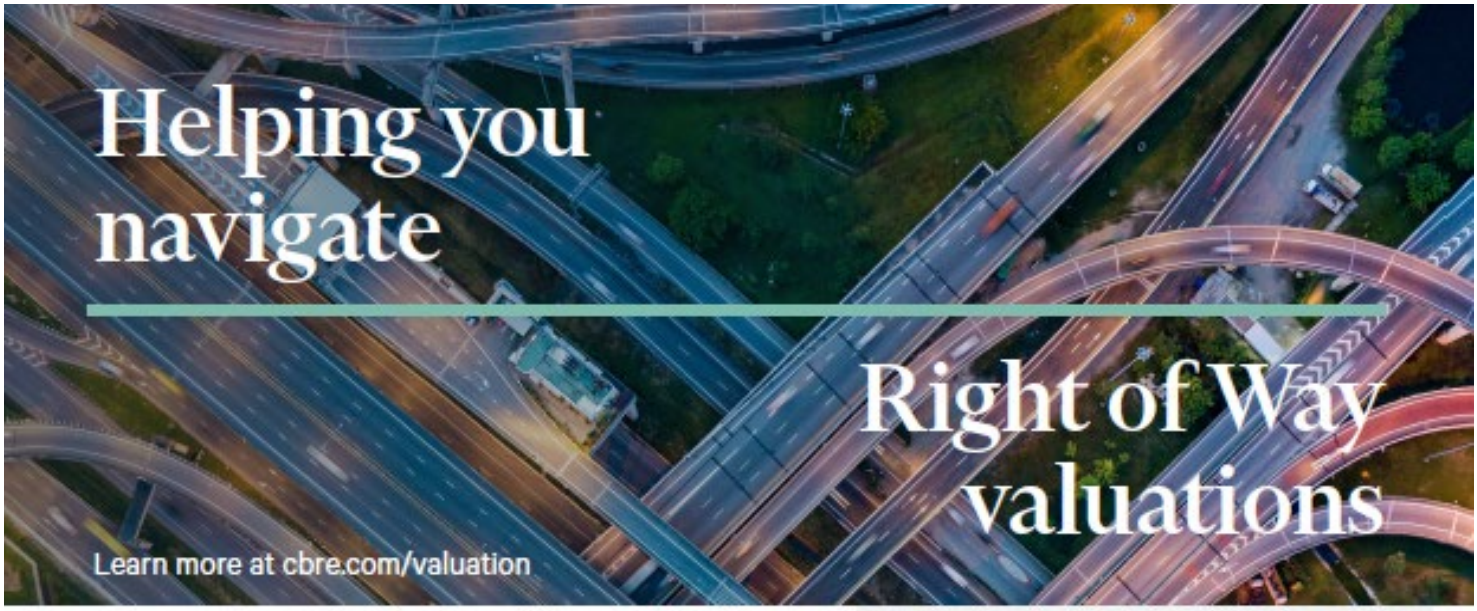
Temporary construction easements (TCEs) were another important topic. Presenters discussed current approaches to evaluating temporary impacts, compensation methods, and the importance of documenting construction-related effects on the remainder of the property. As project schedules become longer and more complex, understanding temporary impacts remains an evolving area of valuation practice.

The seminar concluded with a discussion of interest calculations in eminent domain cases. Speakers reviewed current economic conditions, changing interest-rate environments, and the role of interest as part of just compensation. The presentation served as a reminder that broader market forces can significantly influence valuation outcomes and compensation calculations.

Overall, the Annual Valuation Seminar provided an excellent opportunity to learn from leading attorneys, appraisers, and industry experts. Beyond the technical content, the event reinforced the importance of communication, consistency, sound methodology, and professional collaboration in delivering credible valuation services. The knowledge shared throughout the day offered practical tools and perspectives that right-of-way professionals can immediately apply to their projects and organizations.

As public projects continue to grow in complexity, the seminar reinforced that successful valuation work requires more than technical expertise. Effective communication, collaboration, and consistency remain essential to delivering credible results and keeping projects moving forward.

Sheryn Smay, SR/WA
Chapter 57 Newsletter Chair



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Southern California ROW Practice Leaders

John G. Ellis
MAI, FRICS, CRE
Executive Vice President
+1 818 290 5455
john.g.ellis@cbre.com

Beth B. Finestone
MAI, AI-GRS, FRICS, CRE
Executive Vice President
+1 818 290 5455
beth.finestone@cbre.com

Stephanie Kavanaugh
Vice President
+1 949 591 8149
stephanie.kavanaugh@cbre.com

Nicole Galvez
Vice President
+1 818 251 3646
nicole.galvez@cbre.com

CBRE

Member Spotlight!!

Hello, my fellow Chapter 57 members!

In this issue, I am happy to have
Jessica Andresen, RWP
in our "Member Spotlight!!"

Jessica is a rising professional whose enthusiasm for the right-of-way industry, commitment to lifelong learning, and resilience in the face of adversity are truly inspiring.

A member of IRWA since 2023, she describes joining the Association as a turning point in both her professional and personal life. "Honestly, I feel like my life has totally transformed since becoming involved in the IRWA."

Coming from a background in commercial and residential real estate, transitioning into infrastructure real estate and right-of-way presented some unexpected challenges. Fortunately, IRWA provided more than just education. "Not only was I able to build my knowledge on foundational expertise through the IRWA, but I found a network of like-minded professionals that I could connect with, and that has been an invaluable experience for me."

When asked what she enjoys most about being a member, her answer was immediate: the people. She recalls taking Course 207, *Practical Negotiations for U.S. Federal and Federally Assisted Projects*, virtually last year and being deeply impacted by the instructors.
"These women, with over 25 years of R/W experience, gave of themselves selflessly, and I'm totally honored to have been a recipient of that knowledge."

The mentorship and encouragement she received extended beyond the classroom, reinforcing the sense of community that makes IRWA unique.

Professionally, she is currently a Realtor and Real Property Agent with the City of Riverside. Having recently earned her RWP designation, she is also pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Land Policy and Real Estate Development at Claremont Lincoln University.

Rather than focusing on a single achievement, she credits the many opportunities she has been given along the way. "I'm forever grateful for all the open doors and opportunities I've been given."

Looking ahead, she has ambitious goals. She plans to complete her degree program within the next 18 months while simultaneously pursuing the coveted SR/WA designation. "I'm open to seeing where life takes me and the adventures that await me career-wise!"

One of the most powerful parts of her story is the challenge she faced in 2023 when she was diagnosed with a brain aneurysm. Following months of uncertainty, she underwent open brain surgery in June 2024 while continuing to manage a demanding workload and a major grade separation project.

Reflecting on that difficult season, she shares: "It was a challenge to face, but I overcame it. I didn't do it alone. I'm grateful first to God for His hand in my life and to all those who stepped in to support me. We are not in this alone!"

Outside of work, she is a proud mother of three children—Noni (25), Jojo (24), and Benny (22). Family time is a priority, and when she's not working or studying, you'll likely find her baking cookies, making homemade ice cream, or dreaming about one day turning her home into a bunny sanctuary.

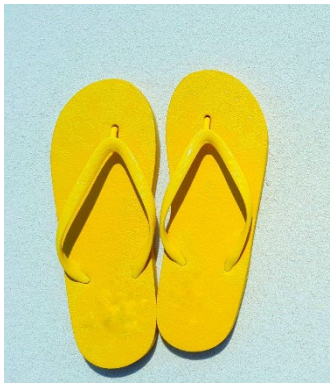
Her favorite verse is Proverbs 3:5–6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." She explains that the verse reminds her to let faith take the lead. "It's about dropping the illusion of total control and allowing faith to take the front seat, while kicking anxiety and worry to the curb."

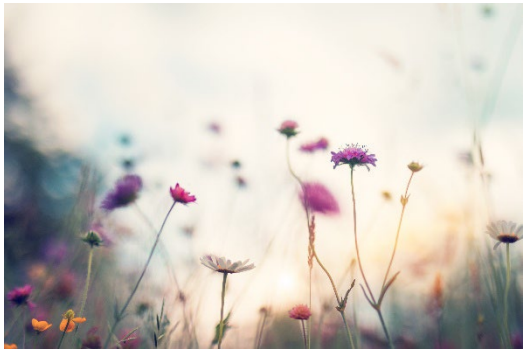
For new members wondering how to get the most out of their IRWA experience, her advice is simple: "Dig in! Take ALL the classes, talk to ALL the people, give of yourself, and if you feel alone or out there in the wind, draw closer, and you'll find your tribe."

With her passion for learning, dedication to the profession, and positive outlook on life, there's no doubt that her journey in IRWA is only just beginning.

Wow. Did that hit you like it hit me? Powerful and inspiring.

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
Sheryn Smay, SR/WA
Newsletter Chair

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E-mail
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Congratulations to our 2026 Chapter 57 Award Recipients!

Chapter 57 is proud to recognize the outstanding individuals and organizations whose contributions have strengthened our profession, supported our chapter, and advanced the right-of-way industry. Please join us in congratulating this year's award recipients:

- Large Employer of the Year - ***Nossaman***
- Small Employer of the Year - ***Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD)***
- Professional of the Year - ***Paul Mim Mack***
- Sustaining Member Service – ***Sheryn Smay, SR/WA***
- Distinguished Service (President's Award) - ***Robbie Hechanova***
- New Member Service - ***Mau Obando***

These recipients exemplify the dedication, professionalism, leadership, and service that make Chapter 57 a thriving community. We thank them for their continued commitment to the right-of-way profession and congratulate them on this well-deserved recognition.

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Bob Hara
VP Client Relations
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Joe Villegas, MAI
Inland Empire Regional Manager
former President IRWA Chapter 57
jvillegas@curtisrosenthal.com

Chris Kim, MAI, AI-GRS
ckim@curtisrosenthal.com

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CHAPTER 57

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International Right of Way Association
CHAPTER 57, INLAND EMPIRE
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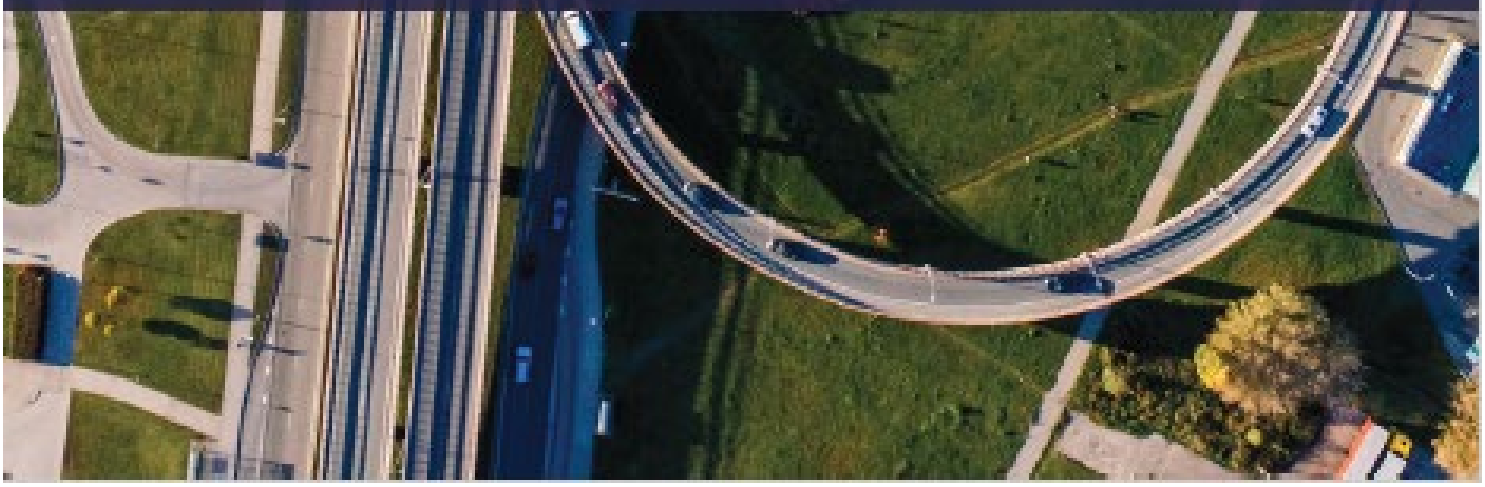

INTERNATIONAL RIGHT OF WAY ASSOCIATION
CHAPTER 57

Executive Officers	Name
President	Ramie Dawit, SR/WA
President-Elect	Timothy Green
Treasurer	Paul Mim Mack
Secretary	Jessica Andresen
Immediate Past President	
2024-25 Parliamentarian and Advisor to the Board	Darcy Mendoza, SR/WA-GN, R/W-NAC
Advisors to the Board	
Past President 2023-24	Robbie Hechanova, RW-RAC
Past President 2022-23	Hector Casillas, SR/WA
Past President 2021-22	Matt Nusenow, P.E.
Special Advisor	Peggy Barnes
Standing Committees	
Education Co-Chair	Vacant
Education Co-Chair	Vacant
Membership	Griffin Wayne
Nominations and Elections	Robbie Hechanova, RW-RAC
Professional Development (1st Year)	Kim Bibolet, SR/WA, R/W-NAC
Professional Development (2nd Year)	Pat Villa, SR/WA
Professional Development (3rd Year)	John Chaconas, SR/WA
Chapter Committees	
Communications	Emily L. Madueno
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