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## QUARTERLY Bundle of Writes

NEWS AND EVENTS FOR IRWA CHAPTER 67

Q2 2026

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

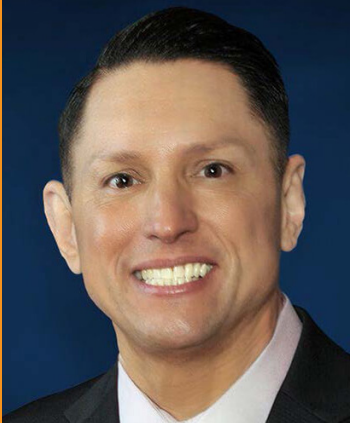
*Jacinto A. Munoz,*  
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Greetings, Chapter 67 Members and Friends,

It is my honor to write to you as your incoming Chapter President, and I could not be more excited about the year ahead. The work we do across right-of-way, valuation, relocation, public agency, utility, legal, engineering, and project delivery asks a great deal of all of us, but it also connects us to one of the most interesting and consequential areas of the real estate and infrastructure professions. That shared work is what this chapter is all about, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside you.

As many of you know, we are now in our summer recess, so there will be no luncheons during the summer months. Consider this a well-earned break to recharge, take a vacation, spend time with family, and enjoy a little breathing room before we get back to business

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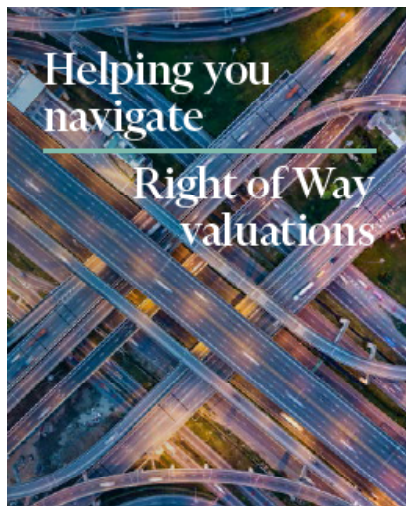
Lara Boyko, J.D., SR/WA  
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in the fall. Our next luncheon will be held on September 8th, and we will share the venue, speaker, and topic as soon as those details are finalized, but I am happy to share that our speaker will be someone from Nossaman. Please keep an eye on your inbox and this newsletter so you do not miss the registration window.

September will also bring one of our marquee educational events of the year: our Tribal Seminar on September 25th at our normal stomping grounds, the Holiday Inn in Santa Ana. This seminar is being chaired by Joe Munsey, RPL, who is putting together a tremendous lineup of speakers. Tribal engagement and consultation continue to grow in importance across so much of our right-of-way and infrastructure work, and this is a rare opportunity to learn from the people leading that conversation. Watch for registration details soon, and plan to join us. This is one you will not want to miss.

In the meantime, our colleagues from across the country are gathered this week at the IRWA Annual International Education Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. I had a last-minute conflict, so for those attending, I hope you are enjoying the education sessions, networking opportunities, and energy that only Conference can offer. For those of us at home, I look forward to hearing the takeaways our members bring back and to finding ways to share those insights with the chapter.

Looking ahead, one of the events I am most enthusiastic about is our annual Tri-Chapter Luncheon, which is being chaired by the always-fantastic Rudy Romo, who is working to host it at the Great Park in Irvine. The Tri-Chapter tradition is one of the best things we do all year. It brings together our neighboring chapters for a day of learning, fellowship, and the kind of relationship-building that makes our regional right-of-way community so strong. These events remind us that while each chapter has its own identity, our profession is strengthened when we stay connected across chapter lines. We will have much more to share on the program, speakers, and registration in the coming weeks, but for now, please keep it on your radar as an event you will not want to miss.



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A reminder as well, if your office is closer to one of our sister chapters in Los Angeles or the Inland Empire, we regularly share invitations to their luncheons by email. Wherever you can connect, we encourage you to come out, meet your peers, and take advantage of everything our chapters offer together. Those relationships pay off in practical ways too, especially when a project crosses jurisdictional lines and a familiar face at another agency or firm makes all the difference.

If part of your year ahead includes deepening your right-of-way knowledge or earning a credential, please remember that scholarship funds are available so you do not have to draw from your employer's budget or your own pocket. Information on these opportunities can be found in this newsletter, on the IRWA website, or by reaching out to me directly. I am always happy to help point you in the right direction.

Thank you for your continued involvement and support. Chapter 67 is only as strong as the members who show up for it, and I am looking forward to a productive and rewarding year alongside all of you. Enjoy the rest of your summer, stay safe, and I look forward to seeing everyone in September.



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Welcome back readers to the Q2 2026 edition of our newsletter. If you would like to contribute content to the newsletter, advertise, have questions or any ideas to improve the content, please contact me.

Thank you to our newsletter sponsors! Please reach out to me for additional information if you would like to learn more about becoming a sponsor.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

### September 2026 Luncheon

Tuesday, September 8, 2026  
Holiday Inn Santa Ana  
2726 South Grand Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92705

### Tribal Seminar

Friday, September 25, 2026  
Holiday Inn Santa Ana  
2726 South Grand Avenue, Santa Ana, CA 92705



Chapter 67 Is on LinkedIn!  
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## EDUCATION

*James Vanden Akker*  
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For questions regarding IRWA education, whether it be information on a particular course, how to register, potential upcoming courses, or the credentialing program, please reach out to James.

### Upcoming Courses

**Course: 200 Principles of Real Estate Negotiation**

Dates: 07/14/26 - 07/15/26

Course Level: Core

IRWA Credits: 16 QEU / CEU

Class Time: 8am - 5pm

Tuition: \$415.00 / Non-member \$575.00

Location: Virtual

**Course Description:** This course presents a blend of the legalities and communication skills associated with successful right of way negotiations. This two-day course introduces you to the primary communication principles and concepts associated with right of way acquisitions. The course begins with a brief introduction of the three major types of negotiation: Integrative, Bargaining, and Intra-Agency, followed by the basic negotiation principles, as well as the characteristics and attitudes of successful negotiators. You will engage in an in-depth study of the acquisition process and develop a plan for effective negotiations. Finally, you will discuss communication variables affecting negotiations and strategies to employ when negotiations fail.

**Instructor:** Pat Thayer, SR/WA, attended the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Pat is the 2017 Frank C. Balfour Professional of the Year Award winner. She is employed as a Sr. Project Manager for HDR and is co-locating between Alaska and Washington State. HDR is a Global, Employee owned Company providing a wide range of comprehensive land rights and right of way services which include, acquisition, permitting, and relocation for pipeline, power, energy, renewable, transportation, tribal and native allotment land, telecommunication, and governmental sectors. Pat has been involved in the Right of Way Industry since 1980 and has worked for both private and public sectors negotiating various property rights as well as providing relocation advisory services for various projects in both the private and public sectors. Pat has worked on unique projects in Alaska, Utah, Oregon and Washington State. Pat has been an IRWA member for 33 years and holds her SR/WA designation. She is a member of Chapter 71 in Fairbanks, AK as well as a member at large with sister Chapter 49 in Anchorage, AK. Pat is a member at large of the International Pipeline Committee.

**[REGISTER HERE](#)**

**Course: 421 The Valuation of Partial Acquisitions**

Dates: 07/14/26 - 07/16/26

Course Level: Intermediate

IRWA Credits: 24 QEU / CEU

Class Time: 8am - 5pm

Tuition: \$565.00 / Non-member \$765.00

Location: 715 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814

Course Description: This intermediate three-day appraisal course includes discussions, exercises, and case studies related to the Federal (Before-and-After) Rule and the State (Summation) Method. This course also includes valuation principles applicable to the identification and valuation of the larger parcel, acquisition area, and analysis of benefits and severance damages. The components of compensation (i.e., value of the part taken, damages to the remainder, benefits to the remainder and cost to cure) and methods to quantify each impact will be analyzed. This course is intended solely to introduce participants to the concepts and does not replace advice from a qualified appraiser.

Instructor: Mr. Larry Castellanos began his professional career as a right of way agent with the California Department of Transportation in Orange County, where he developed significant expertise in property management, real estate appraisal, and property acquisition. He joined Associated Right of Way Services, Inc. in 1997 and served as vice president. He managed complex projects for freeways, interchanges, local roads, bridges, flood control, utilities, and redevelopment. His responsibilities included project planning, property appraisal, acquisition, and providing relocation advisory assistance. He possesses extensive expertise in property acquisition, relocation services, and appraising properties for public agency purchases. Mr. Castellanos is a California Certified General Real Estate Appraiser, holds a Real Estate Broker's license, and is an IRWA CLIMB certified instructor. He has made presentations to the Appraisal Institute, IRWA, California Redevelopment Association, professional engineers and for continuing legal education, on topics including appraisal, acquisition and relocation assistance. Mr. Castellanos earned his MBA with an emphasis in finance from the University of San Francisco and his Bachelor of Science Degree in business administration with a concentration in finance from CSU, Sacramento.

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## CASE OF THE QUARTER

### *Rails With Trails – a Twist on Rails to Trails Conversion*

*Bradford Kuhn, Esq., Partner  
Law Firm of Nossaman LLP*

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We've previously reported on the "Rails to Trails" process by which old railroad corridors are being abandoned and converted into other uses, such as hiking, biking or other trail purposes, and the potential ability of adjacent property owners to seek just compensation in certain circumstances. But what happens when the railroad is owned in fee by the railroad, or alternatively, where the railroad continues to operate but adds a pathway within the railroad corridor? Is compensation owed in these circumstances?

The Nossaman team recently litigated these issues in a case where numerous property owners adjacent to a railroad corridor claimed that they owned the underlying fee interest in the corridor, and the transit agency only had an easement which precluded it from constructing a multi-use pedestrian and bicycle pathway. The plaintiffs sought to quiet title in the underlying fee interest in the railroad corridor, and also sought compensation by claiming the pathway construction infringed on their property rights. After a multi-day trial, the court ruled in favor of Nossaman's client, the transit agency, finding that the agency owned the railroad corridor in fee, and that regardless, the agency had the statutory authority to operate the pathway as part of its rail operations.

Specifically, the court found that the original conveyance documents to the railroad, containing language that the owners agreed

to "grant, bargain and sell" the "right of way for the construction" of the railroad "over, through, upon or across" the land, including "all the right, title and interest" of the owner, constituted a fee conveyance – not a railroad right of way easement. The court concluded there is no rule of law or presumption that a deed granting a right of way to a railroad only conveys an easement. The court relied on two rules of construction most pertinent to the interpretation of a deed: (i) Civil Code Section 1069, pursuant to which a grant is to be interpreted in favor of the grantee; and (ii) Civil Code section 1105, pursuant to which a fee simple title is presumed to be intended to pass by a grant of real property, unless it appears from the grant that a lesser estate was intended. The court further concluded that the "centerline presumption" was inapplicable given the history of the corridor conveyances, and under these circumstances, the railroad corridor was owned in fee by the transit agency.

The court further found that the transit agency's legislation defines "rail transit works" to include "ancillary bicycle and pedestrian pathways that provide connections between and access to station sites." Based on this legislation and testimony from the transit agency, the court concluded that the pathway encourages ridership by providing "first mile, last mile access" to train stations as pedestrians and bicyclists can use a safe route for traveling to and from the station.

Additionally, the path allows maintenance workers, code enforcement officers, and emergency responders to reach remote locations without traveling on the tracks, thus not only making their access safer, but also avoiding delays in providing rail service to the public. Because the pathway enhances the safety of, enhances ridership on, and increases the efficiency of the operation of the railroad, the court held that the pathway is ancillary to the operation of the railroad and in furtherance of the railroad use of the right of way. The ongoing use of the railroad for transit purposes took the case out of the “Rails to Trails” abandonment cases, which the court concluded have no application to the operation of a pathway while transit operations continued.

The case may have significant implications across the United States, as transit agencies and railroad operators should be able to construct and operate multi-use pathways within their active railroad corridor without fear of “Rails to Trails” litigation. If you have questions on permissible railroad right of way uses, deed conveyance interpretation, or “Rails to Trails” applicability, do not hesitate to contact us.

Mr. Kuhn can be reached at [bkuhn@nossaman.com](mailto:bkuhn@nossaman.com).



  
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## ARTICLE

### *California Approves \$540M in Transportation Funding for Safety, Transit and Infrastructure Upgrades*

*California Construction News*

More than \$540 million has been approved for transportation projects aimed at improving roadway safety, upgrading aging infrastructure and expanding transit and active transportation options across the state.

Funding, approved by the California Transportation Commission in coordination with state lawmakers, supports Gov. Gavin Newsom's "Build More, Faster – For All" infrastructure initiative.

Projects are designed to improve travel times, enhance safety near schools and community centers, modernize freight and highway corridors and generate an estimated 6,000 jobs.

"Californians deserve a transportation system that is safe, reliable and built for future growth," said California Transportation Secretary Toks Omishakin.

Funding comes from a combination of federal, state and transportation revenue sources, including the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, California's SB 1 gas tax program and the State Highway Account. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) said the package will accelerate maintenance, improve climate resilience and strengthen system reliability.

Among the largest approved projects:

- \$117.8 million to replace the fender system on the West Span of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge to better protect against vessel collisions
- \$70 million for statewide highway repair and maintenance projects
- \$53 million to upgrade the Bay Area Rapid

Transit (BART) system to increase service frequency and capacity ahead of major events, including the 2026 FIFA World Cup

Additional projects focused on local safety and mobility improvements include:

- \$6.7 million for pedestrian safety and accessibility improvements in downtown Long Beach
- \$520,000 for walking and biking routes near schools and community centers in Visalia's Highland neighborhood
- \$35,000 to design safer routes to two elementary schools in northeast San Bernardino

Officials said the investments are part of a broader effort to modernize California's transportation network while expanding clean mobility options, including transit improvements and electric vehicle infrastructure. They described the initiative as one of the nation's largest ongoing transportation modernization programs, combining road and bridge rehabilitation with transit expansion and emissions reduction strategies.

## ARTICLE

### *California Moves Forward on \$3.5 Billion High-Speed Rail Track Installation*

*By: Ben Thorpe  
Equipment World*

The next stage of building California's future electrified high-speed rail system will begin this year after state officials awarded a new \$3.5 billion contract.

A contractor consortium including Kiewit, Stacy Witbeck and Herzog won the contract with the California High-Speed Rail Authority board of directors, covering 119 miles of track installation, overhead contact system, train control and communications infrastructure between Merced and Bakersfield.

The contract also covers tracks north and south into the future Merced and Bakersfield rail system extensions. Work is expected to begin later this year, and no scheduled completion date has been announced.

The 119 miles of future track are currently under civil construction, and the consortium's track construction will begin in phases as civil construction is finished. The Rail Authority says it has directly procured long lead materials including rail, concrete ties and ballast to accelerate the project's completion and reduce costs.

The completed rail system between Merced and Bakersfield will cut through California's Central Valley and reach speeds up to 220 mph, the authority says. It is the largest track and system installation project in the country and the first true high-speed rail track built in the Western Hemisphere, according to the authority.

Work already completed on the future 119-mile rail corridor includes track installation at the southern railhead facility in Kern County, which will become the new project's staging and distribution hub; 84 miles of guideway; and 61 major structures.

Currently, 171 miles of the future high-speed rail system between Merced and Bakersfield are under design or construction, and 27 more structures are under construction across Madera, Fresno, Kings and Tulare counties.

This new \$3.5 billion contract falls under the 494-mile first phase of California's overarching high-speed rail plan, and the remainder of Phase 1 will extend the system into San Francisco and past Los Angeles, in Anaheim. Currently, 463 miles of the Phase 1 system are fully environmentally cleared and ready for construction.


Phase 2 of the project will further extend the line from Merced north into Sacramento and from Los Angeles south into San Diego.

The first construction package under Phase 1 was awarded in 2013 to a joint venture between Tutor Perini, Zachry and Parsons, covering a 32-mile corridor between Avenue 19 in Madera County to East American Avenue in Fresno County. This contract, which remains ongoing, covers 12 grade separations, two viaducts, one tunnel, a major river crossing over the San Joaquin River and the realignment of State Route 99.

After all contracts under Phase 1 and 2 have been completed, California's complete high-speed rail system will stretch 776 miles. California voters first approved the rail system project in 2008.

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