

IRWA Chapter Becomes Catalyst in Connecting the DOTs

Program attendees earn continuing education credits from multiple entities

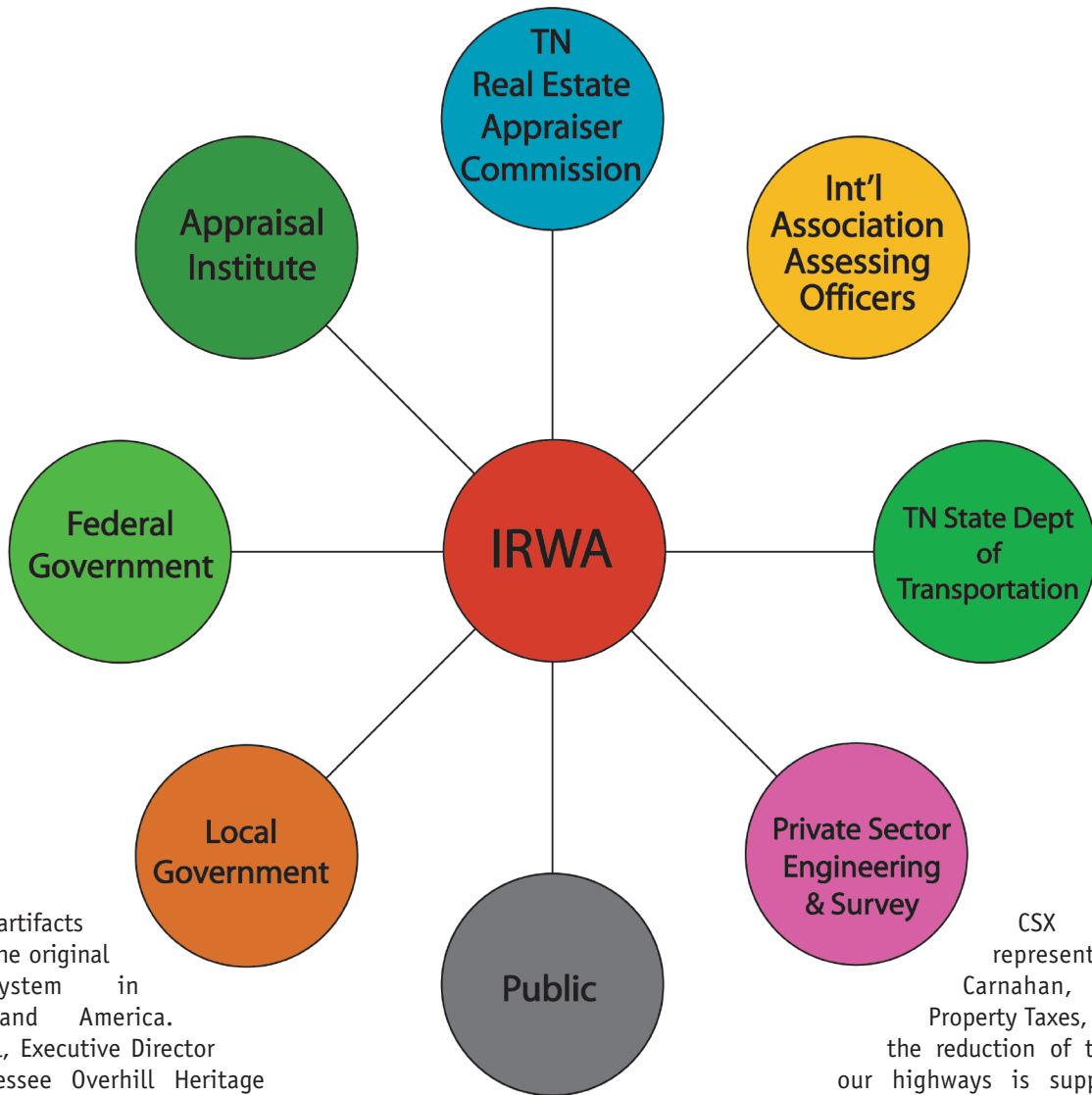
BY BILLY R. MEDLEY, SR/WA

On March 16th, 2007, IRWA Chapter 32 presented a one-day continuing education program on the Evolutions of the Railroads in Tennessee. The program attracted professionals from state, Federal and local government entities, private sector engineering and survey companies, and railroad consultants.

While the main attraction was the subject matter, offering multiple credits approved for the program also drew those who normally would not attend a chapter program. This program was particularly unique, as it allowed attendees with multiple designations or certifications to earn various continuing education credits just by attending the one-day event. By teaming up with our Chapter Education Chair, Ronnie Acorn, SR/WA, we were able to get continuing education credit approval from the Tennessee Real Estate Appraisal Commission, the International Right of Way Association, the International Association of Assessing Officers and the Appraisal Institute.

Our chapter believes that presenting “more bang for the buck” educational programs is a great way for a small chapter to supplement income from their existing scheduled classes. The cost of \$100 per attendee was designed to make the program affordable for all interested parties, and as a result, our Chapter generated over \$2,000 in profit in educational funds. Of course, we also promoted membership in IRWA. During my morning kick-off introduction, I highlighted the benefits of belonging to a professional organization, and IRWA membership packets were made available to all attendees.

The program had a true all-star line up of speakers. Tom Fleming, CAE, Assistant to the Comptroller of the Treasury, opened the program with a presentation on the beginning of the railroads, describing how they became one of the powerful forces in the evolution of our country. Wayne Moore, Assistant State Archivist for the Secretary of State, followed with a presentation of several



100-year old artifacts and maps of the original railroad system in Tennessee and America. Linda Caldwell, Executive Director of the Tennessee Overhill Heritage Association, shared details on the revival of an abandoned rail line into an excursion train along the Hiwassee River through the mountains of East Tennessee to Copper Hill. Tennessee Department of Transportation's Robert Pack spoke about the short line railroads and their funding and progress. Thomas Farquhar, with Regional Transit, was greeted with great anticipation as he explained the new light rail commuter system from Nashville to Lebanon named the "Music City Star." Gary Harris, CAE, Assistant Director for Office of State Assessed Properties in the Comptroller's office, explained the unit rule in valuing railroad companies in Tennessee and outlined the difference between charter and fee ownership of railroads.

The early afternoon session was dominated by the Class I railroad companies, as each explained their position in the new "global economy" and the use of container (or) Intermodal transportation to move consumer goods/freight to the market.

CSX railroad was represented by Kerry Carnahan, Director of Property Taxes, who noted that the reduction of truck traffic on our highways is supported by the Federal and State Departments of Transportation as part of the larger alternate freight transportation program now underway. He presented data and graphs indicating how the movement of goods/freight via the intermodal railroad system would help dramatically reduce the congestion of 18-wheel truck traffic on the interstate system. Norfolk Southern Railroad was represented by Everett Gibson, their general counsel. Dwight Johnson, U.S. Property Tax Manager, from Canadian National/Illinois Central and Judy Cummings, Director of Taxes for BNSF Railway showcased their new multimillion dollar Intermodal yards in Memphis. Their programs centered primarily on the changes in the use of the national rail system over the past few years.

Connecting the various entities (or DOTs) within Tennessee was a big success for IRWA Chapter 32 . It exposed diverse entities to vital current information, while generating additional funds for the chapter.