

An Agency Endorsement

IRWA education recognized by Utah Department of Transportation



JAMES OLSCHEWSKI, CET, SR/WA

Working for the Utah Department of Transportation has enabled me to work on a diverse range of crucial infrastructure projects. It has also given me the opportunity to work with some instrumental leaders—people who have really made a difference in the way we think about our role and how we envision the future of transportation.

I am also a proud member of IRWA's International Transportation Committee (ITC), a group that has taken an active role in addressing key industry issues with other transportation professionals. In April, the ITC presented its 2nd Annual Transportation Symposium focusing on the Vision of Transportation. Aptly titled "Planes, Trains and Automobiles the Next Generation," the educational event attracted more than 100 attendees to Park City Utah.

Earning Trust and Respect

Carlos Braceras, PE, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) was one of the symposium speakers. During his 30 years with UDOT, he has helped to shape UDOT's strategic direction and its mission of innovating transportation solutions that strengthen Utah's economy and enhance the quality of life, making it one of the most respected and influential DOT's in the nation. Today, his influence extends beyond the state through his service on national and regional boards and committees, including his role as President of the Western Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials.

In his presentation, Carlos emphasized the link between our construction projects and the relationship we have with the public. "Public trust is our number one currency and when we lose this trust, our piggy bank runs empty."

He shared a personal story about one of his first projects as a young engineer, stating that he had no idea how difficult things could be until he had to take two homes. For one landowner, it wasn't about the money or why his home needed to be taken for the project. It was the reality that this was where he had raised his family. One of the door jams showed all the markings of his children growing in height over the years. This and other priceless memories would be lost forever. Hearing this, he went out to the owner's garage, grabbed a crowbar and carefully removed the door jam. The emotional impact that transportation projects have on landowners—and how right of way professionals demonstrate trust and respect—is a lesson that he still remembers vividly today.



UDOT's Executive Director Carlos Braceras, PE, stays focused on the agency's mission "To Keep Utah Moving" by implementing innovative solutions to help solve Utah's transportation challenges.

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In addressing the need for qualified right of way personnel to help UDOT provide a world-class transportation system, Carlos made a heartfelt endorsement of IRWA's educational programs. He believes that the agency's goals are in total alignment with those of IRWA's higher purpose—improving people's quality of life through infrastructure development. Whether an individual uses the roadways or not, all the goods and services we enjoy come from the infrastructure we have today and are building for tomorrow.

The Right of Way Agent is one of the most critical pieces in this process and IRWA plays a significant role in helping to prepare professionals for doing the job effectively. Right of Way Agents are selected from the UDOT Right of Way Services and the Local Government Pool found on the UDOT website, where the requirements and qualifications are based on IRWA education and experience for each discipline that applies for any right of way consultant. In this pool, the IRWA is directly linked to eight of the 11 disciplines.

Envisioning the Future

The overarching theme of the symposium was to stay focused on the bigger picture. And the ability to deliver world-class transportation projects is dependent on successful partnerships and determining how we can best work together. UDOT's values and those of the IRWA are aligned to provide world-class infrastructure from the most qualified right of way professionals.

Building and keeping the public trust allows UDOT to deliver on its promises and continue to maintain the public's trust. This trust stems from the lessons and education provided by the Association. Like the IRWA tagline says, "Building a better world, together." 🌟



James A. Olschewski, SR/WA, is a Professional Land Surveyor and is currently the Deputy Director of Right of Way for Utah Department of Transportation. He is an IRWA Climb Certified Instructor and is the current President Elect for IRWA Chapter 38. He also holds the title of Certified Engineer Technician (CET) from the National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies.