



The Right of Way Road: THEN AND NOW

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At IRWA, we improve people's lives through infrastructure development. While some of us may believe this to be a more modern philosophy, in reality, infrastructure development has played a significant role in improving human existence since the dawn of time. To find food, water and shelter, early humans followed existing animal trails or made their own. If you'll humor me, let's imagine a neanderthal 400,000 years ago — we'll call him Grock — who was ambling into the woods with his buddy Rock one day and thought to himself, *wouldn't life be so much better if I didn't constantly get whacked by the same tree limb every morning?* Just then, he was hit for the second time on that fated day — though this time, it was with a brilliant idea. If he could knock the tree down so that it fell across the creek, it would do two things: one, it would ensure he would never be bothered by that branch again, and two, he and Rock could use the tree trunk to reach the fat deer on the other side! And so, the first right of way project was born.

Next came the wheel. Single-track paths were no longer sufficiently wide enough for the use of a cart. The roads needed to be improved with rocks or timber to keep the carts from getting mired in the mud. Soon after, towns were established, which meant roads took on significant importance for trade and communications with other villages. Then those villages became cities, and new types of infrastructure were needed more than ever. Greek historian Dionysius of Halicarnassus wrote, "The extraordinary greatness of the Roman Empire manifests itself in three things: the aqueducts, the paved roads, and the construction of the drains." The Ancient Romans were great believers in using infrastructure that bettered people's lives. These infrastructure improvements allowed the Roman Empire to grow and remain prosperous for centuries. Such was the skill of the Romans in creating roads that many of the routes across Europe and the Middle East today are developed along highways that were originally built by the Romans.



The Roman roads facilitated efficient trade and communication across the vast expanse of the Empire, significantly boosting economic activity. By enabling the swift movement of goods, armies and information, these roads helped integrate distant provinces into a cohesive economic system. This connectivity ensured that resources could be distributed more effectively, contributing to the Empire's prosperity and stability.

Throughout history and now in the modern age, infrastructure development has become both a necessity and a challenge. There are more state and federal regulations regarding acquisitions under eminent domain, as well as an environment of activism and a dose of public cynicism that must be navigated in order to deliver any right of way project. It takes skill, knowledge and a great deal of empathy. This is where IRWA plays such a vital role. Through education and ethics, IRWA members personify our purpose statement. This is true for our members and affiliates across the globe. Being intentional about doing things right is not as common as one might think, which is why IRWA members stand out — in a good way.

It is our core values of integrity, excellence, flexibility, collaboration and leadership that allow IRWA members to live with the knowledge that continues this ever-evolving cycle of improving people's quality of life through infrastructure development. ☆