

IRWA Chapter 1

FY 25/26 Q2 Newsletter

NOVEMBER

President's MESSAGE

Our Chapter's year is in full swing...



In FY2025/2026 we are continuing our Chapter's historical commitment to education and increasing social connection through professional seminars and productive luncheon learnings.

December 10th is the Tri-Chapter Lunch at the historic Huntington Library, Art Museum and Botanic Gardens. **The keynote address will focus on the LA28 planning for the Olympics, hosted in the City of Los Angeles.**

Registration for the event is now open, please use the QR code below, or follow this link... <https://www.ticketleap.events/tickets/irwa1org/tri-chapter>



We are currently seeking sponsors and volunteers for this event.

Alana Edwards is the event chair, Aedwards1@socalgas.com for more information



2025 EVENTS !

November 12th 5PM – 7PM
Chapter 1 YP Happy Hour
For young professionals and the young at heart
Traxx Bar at Union Station, DTLA

December 10th 11:30AM
Tri Chapter Lunch
at the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens
Chapter 1 is this year's host. This event will include an admission to the gardens, good through the end of the day.

Other Related Events...
November 4th 11:30AM
Chapter 67 Lunch
Holiday Inn – John Wayne Airport
November 6th 11:30AM
Chapter 67 Litigation Seminar
Sheraton, Cerritos
November 20th 11:30AM
Chapter 57 Lunch
Victoria Club

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES HOW CALTRANS LOCAL ASSISTANCE SUPPORTS LOCAL AGENCIES

By Neidy Pinuelas, President Elect SR/WA, RW-RAC, RW-URAC

California's transportation network is vast and diverse, and much of its success depends on the collaboration between state and local agencies. At the heart of this collaboration is **Caltrans Local Assistance**, a vital program that ensures local agencies have the tools, funding, and guidance they need to deliver transportation projects that improve safety, mobility, and quality of life across the state.

What is Caltrans Local Assistance? Caltrans Local Assistance is a division within the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) that works directly with **cities, counties, and regional transportation agencies** to help them navigate the complex world of federally and state-funded transportation projects. Whether it's a new bike path, a bridge retrofit, or a complete streets project, Local Assistance ensures that local agencies can access funding and deliver projects efficiently and in compliance with all applicable regulations.

Why is Local Assistance So Valuable to Local Agencies? Local agencies often face challenges such as limited staffing, evolving regulations, and complex funding requirements. Caltrans Local Assistance acts as a **partner and guide**, helping agencies overcome these hurdles through:

1. Funding Access and Oversight Local Assistance helps agencies secure and manage federal and state transportation funds, including:

- **Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG)**
- **Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP)**
- **Active Transportation Program (ATP)**
- **Bridge Preventive Maintenance Program (BPMP)**

They ensure that agencies meet all eligibility, documentation, and reporting requirements, reducing the risk of audit findings or funding delays.

2. Technical Guidance and Training Caltrans provides **extensive training and technical support** to local agency staff. This includes:

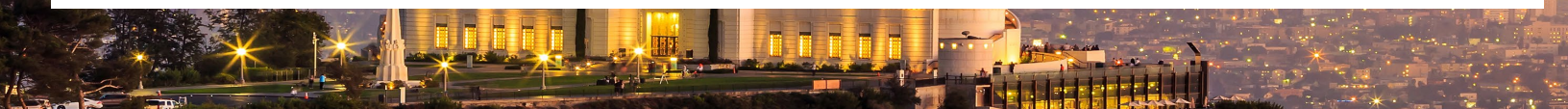
- **Local Assistance Procedures Manual (LAPM)** – A comprehensive guide to delivering federally funded projects.
- **Local Assistance Program Guidelines (LAPG)** – Policy-level guidance on program requirements.
- **Workshops and Webinars** – Covering topics like environmental compliance, right of way, construction administration, and more.

3. District Local Assistance Engineers (DLAEs) Each Caltrans district has a **DLAE team** that serves as the primary point of contact for local agencies. These engineers and support staff provide hands-on help with project delivery, from initial programming to final invoicing.

4. Support for Disadvantaged and Rural Communities

Caltrans Local Assistance places a strong emphasis on **equity and inclusion**, offering additional support to **disadvantaged and rural communities** that may lack the resources or experience to navigate federal-aid processes.

Caltrans Local Assistance is more than just a regulatory body—it's a **partner in progress**. By providing funding access, technical expertise, and personalized support, it empowers local agencies to deliver transportation projects that meet the needs of their communities. In doing so, it helps build a safer, more connected, and more sustainable California. Get to know more about Caltrans Local Assistance by going to their website: [Local Assistance](#)





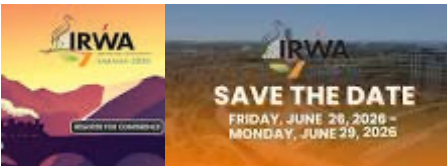
Update from Region 1 Fall Forum

IRWA Region 1 Fall Forum. Thank you, Chapter 28, for hosting us in beautiful Phoenix, AZ!

Chapter elected officers were treated to continued education in leadership and learned important information coming to the larger organization.

Some highlights:

- New Chapter Leadership training will launch November 13th, 2025
- IRWA HQ is making it easier for Chapters to use CHIPs (our chapter incentive programs).
- Modified credentialing program will launch on November 13th, 2025
- The International Public Agency Committee is hosting a Transportation Symposium this spring on South Padre Island, Texas. Look for more details to come...
- Of course, the [IRWA 2026 Education Conference](#) will be held in [Omaha, Nebraska, from June 26-29, 2026](#). The event is the 72nd Annual International Education Conference, and registration is now open at the official conference website: irwaomaha2026.org.

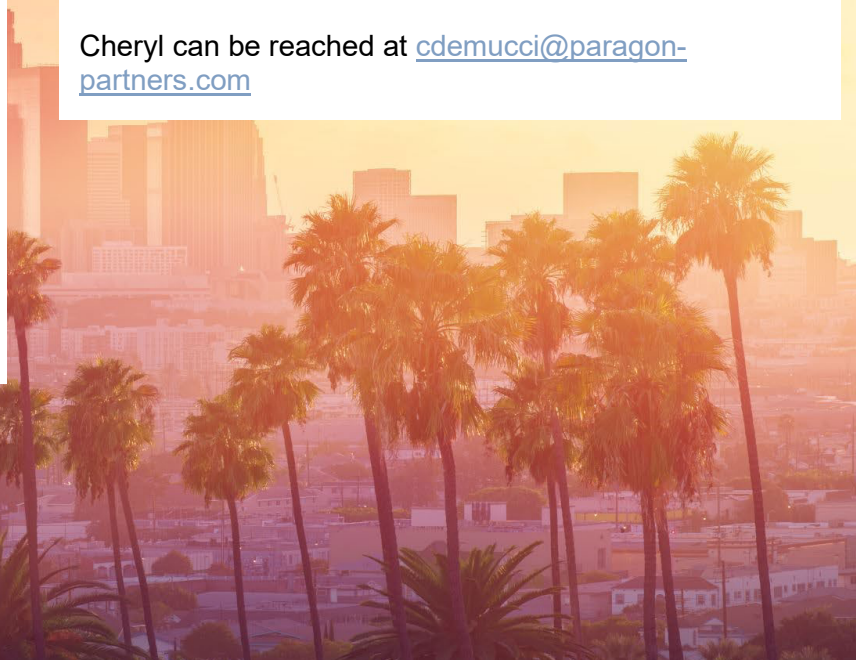


Cheryl DeMucci, Secretary

She is Vice President at Paragon Partners Consultants, Inc. and has been an active member of IRWA Chapter 1 for over 20 years. She began her involvement as the Luncheon Chair, a role that gave her the opportunity to connect with nearly every member of the chapter. As a former Professional Development Chair, Cheryl has mentored and supported many professionals seeking to advance their careers in the right of way industry.

At Paragon, she specializes in project management, acquisition, relocation, and property management services. Outside of work, Cheryl enjoys spending quality time with her family and her beloved four-legged companions—both cats and dogs.

Cheryl can be reached at cdemucci@paragon-partners.com



Leading with
Purpose

Leadership

I want to share what I've learned about leadership throughout my career. I enjoy exploring what makes leaders successful, and I'm always interested in expert perspectives. Let me know if there are specific topics you'd like me to research.

By: Cheryl DeMucci, SR/WA, R/W-RAC

Congratulations, you've been promoted to a leadership position. What comes next?

Becoming a better leader requires intentional growth, and you must take the initiative to start this process. Utilize mentors, books, and podcasts to aid your development. However, the responsibility for your growth lies with you. Identify your strengths and focus your time and effort on enhancing them, rather than trying to improve your weaknesses.

To effectively grow, create your own mentorship plan by reading books, listening to relevant podcasts, preparing a personal growth plan, and actively engaging in those areas. Remember, practice is essential for growth.

****Personal Growth Plans**** – Clearly define what you want to improve. Then, allocate your time and energy towards those goals to achieve a higher return.

Stay consistent. Once you discover your strengths, maintain that consistency as it will lead to noticeable results. Consistency compounds; small efforts made daily can lead to significant achievements over time.

If you don't invest in yourself, how can you expect others to invest in you? While personal drive is important, having a team is invaluable. Find a community where you can share ideas, discuss your projects, and seek feedback. While having a mentor is beneficial, sometimes we need input from multiple mentors throughout our lives.

Reflect on what you need to learn and how you can grow. Leadership expert John Maxwell emphasizes that consistency is a fundamental principle for achieving meaningful, lasting change. He often states, "Motivation gets you going, but discipline keeps you growing," and that "small disciplines, repeated consistently every day, lead to great achievements gained slowly over time." Maxwell highlights that consistency builds momentum and compounds over time, fostering excellence rather than relying on short bursts of intensity.

2025 Fall Happy Hour

by Sarah Riggs, RWA,

I am pleased to be the new Chair for Young Professionals. We're looking to meet up in October/November and I've compiled a list of happy hours in the Los Angeles area by neighborhoods. **I'd like your input before scheduling one of these.** Please submit your response to me Sriggs@paragon-partners.com. See my trendy yet budget conscious ideas:

Downtown LA (DTLA)

Perch (Rooftop) – French-inspired, romantic, and great for groups with multi-level outdoor space. Happy hour **4–6 pm**.

Broken Shaker – Chic rooftop pool bar at Freehand LA. Expect \$12 cocktails, \$8 tacos, and \$12 carne-asada fries during **3–6 pm (Mon–Thu)**—perfect for early sunset meets.

Mezcalero DTLA – Laid-back rooftop-style patio with deep mezcal selection and incredible value: drafts around \$4 and bottles at \$3, with snacks and house margaritas from **3–7 pm**.

South Bay (Hermosa & Manhattan Beach)

The Mermaid – Picture-perfect for sunsets: beachside seating, rotating "Drink of the Week" at \$5, \$4 beers/wines, plus \$5-\$7 food during **3–7 pm daily**.

Top Deck of Hennessy's – Elevated views on The Strand, structured for seated groups. Offers \$5 select drinks and food (like ahi tacos and sliders) during **4–7 pm weekdays**

Four Daughters Kitchen – Warm, cozy, perfect for daily socializing. Enjoy \$5 house wine, sangria, appetizers, and half-off drafts **every day from 4–7 pm**.

Westside (Santa Monica & Venice)

Bodega Wine Bar (Santa Monica) – Unpretentious and perfect for groups who love wine. Happy hour features \$6 wines, \$4 beers, \$6 soju cocktails, and \$6 appetizers **daily 5–7 pm**.

FIG at Five (Fairmont Miramar, Santa Monica) – Elegant yet accessible—50% off most food and drinks during **5–6 pm daily**.

Hama Sushi (Venice) – Casual patio with surf videos and inexpensive sushi starters (\$2–6). Drinks are discounted by \$1, and happy hour runs **4–7 pm daily**.

Kassi (Hotel Erwin Rooftop, Venice) – Recently reopened with lush Greek-inspired décor, Pacific views, and lounge seating for ~Great for group style nights, with cocktails and Eastern Mediterranean bites.