

RIGHT_{OF}WAY

for the Robert Moses Game Design Challenge
by Jonas Stallmeister

Build highways, buy right-of-way, balance short-term popularity and long-term usefulness, all to make history as the builder of the city's best highway system.

Two players, 45–60 minutes

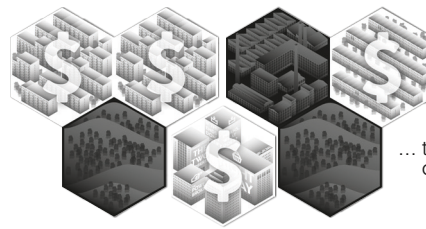
Setup

The playing board consists of 21 pieces. There are 20 y-shaped pieces containing three **city tiles** each, and one single **city center tile**. The y-shaped city pieces only speed up setup, they don't matter in-game. 31 of the city tiles have a **dollar sign (\$)**. They are the rich, influential, popular parts of the city. The 30 unmarked city tiles represent the poor, powerless, unpopular parts of the city.

First, place the city center tile. Shuffle all other city tiles into a face-down drawing stack. Take turns drawing and placing city tiles face-up adjacent to the existing tiles until all city tiles are laid into a continuous city area. The ideal city area is hexagonal, but any contiguous shape works.

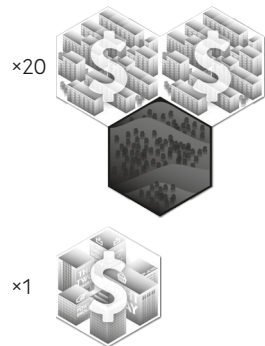
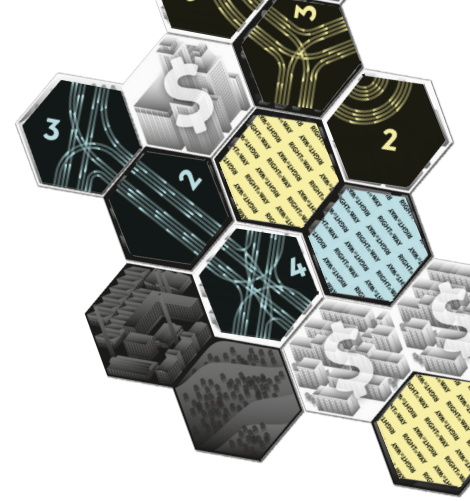
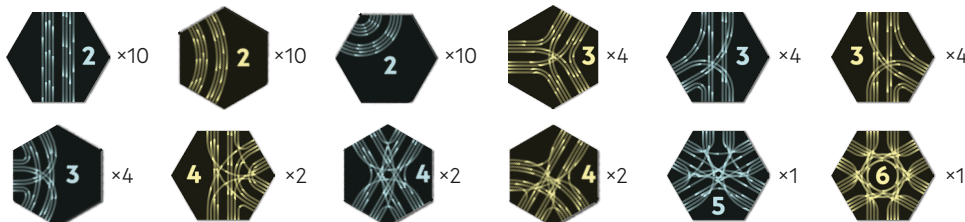


First, place the city center tile ...



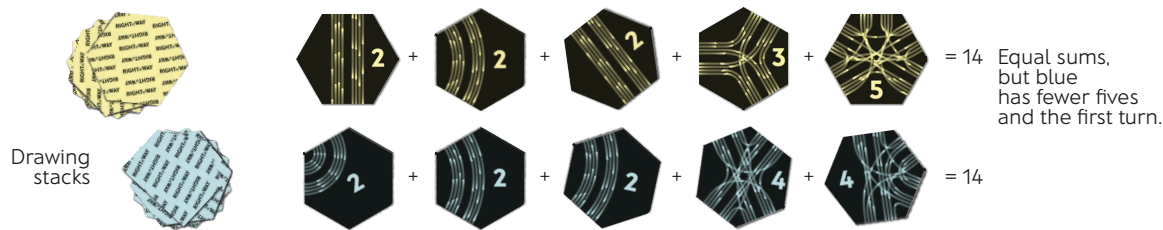
... then adjacent city tiles.

Every player has 54 hexagonal **highway tiles** in that player's color. Every highway tile has road running across it, with **connections** at the edges of the tiles. Highway tiles can be straights or bends with two connections, or junctions with three to six connections.



Before the start of the game, shuffle your 54 highway tiles into a face-down drawing stack. Draw the top five highway tiles from your stack and place them face-up before you. This hand of tiles may shrink or grow. It represents your current power.

The player with the lowest sum of values on the highway tiles in her hand has the first turn. For equal sums, the player with less sixes has the first turn. If both players have the same number of sixes, the one with the fewest fives has the first turn, and so on.

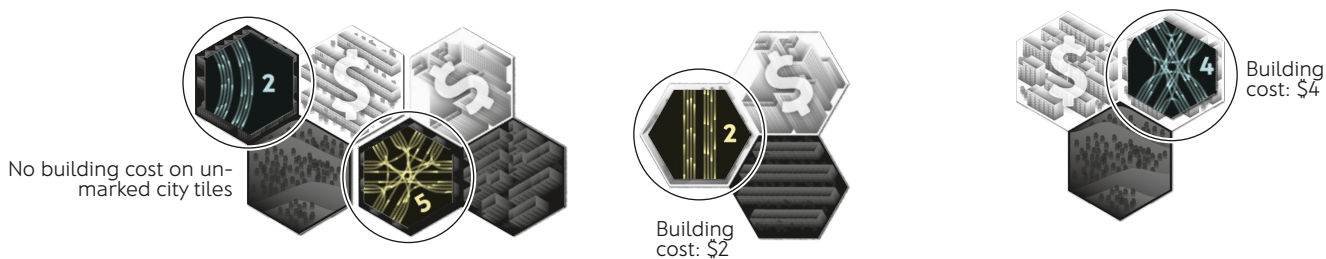


Building highways

Take turns placing a highway tile from your hand face-up on a free city tile. You must each place **one highway tile each turn**, no more and no less.

Everytime you place a highway tile, you generate **building cost** and **building profit**. They represent the power (money, public support and political influence) you expend and get on this building project.

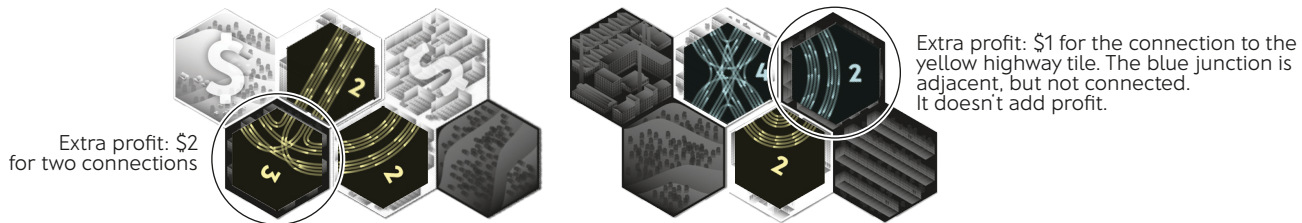
Building **cost** depends on where you place your highway tile. Highways placed on a \$ city tile have a building cost equal to the highway tiles' connections. Highways placed on unmarked city tiles are free.



Building **profit** depends on the city tiles you connect. Each of the highway tile's connection facing a \$ city tile adds \$1 profit.



For extra building profit, place your highway tile **connecting** to existing highways. Every connection of a newly placed highway tile that faces a connection of an existing highway tile adds \$1 profit. Connections to your own highways count the same as connections to other player's highways. A connection that faces, but does not connect to an existing highway tile does not add extra profit.



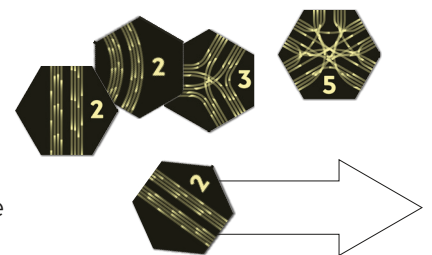
Building cost and building profit are absorbed. A positive **overall result** adds to your power: **draw** a number of new highway tiles equal to the result from the drawing stack and add them to your hand. A negative overall result reduces your power: **discard** a number of highway tiles of your choice equal to the result from their your to your discard stack.



Both drawing or discarding ends the building project and its cost-profit calculation. Building cost and profit are independent of victory points (see „Victory“).

If you can only place highways which produce a negative overall result and don't have enough highway tiles in your hand to discard, you have to discard your already-placed highway tiles until the result is balanced. You also can discard your highway tiles placed face-down (see next part: Buying right-of-way). If you discard the top highway tile in a right-of-way stack, that city tile reverts to the other player. You may not discard a highway tile placed this turn.

If your turn ends without any highway tiles in your hand, immediately draw one highway tile so you can continue building in your next turn.



Buying right-of-way

In every turn, in addition to placing a highway tile, you may buy the **right-of-way** for one free city tile, but you don't have to. Right-of-way prohibits other players from placing a highway tile on that city tile. To buy right-of-way, place a highway tile from your hand face-down on the free city tile.

You can alternatively **buy other player's right-of-way** – for a higher price. Discard one highway tile from your hand, then place a highway tile from your hand face-down on top of the other player's already placed face-down highway tile to start a **right-of-way stack**. A right-of-way stack can be bought by discarding one highway tile for each tile in the stack and then placing an additional highway-tile face-down on top of the right-of-way stack.

To place a highway tile on a city tile with your right-of-way, discard the face-down highway tiles to their owners' discard stacks and proceed to place the highway. Owning the right-of-way does not change building cost or building profit of placing the highway.

You can buy right-of-way before or after placing a highway tile. You can place a highway tile on a tile for which you just bought right-of-way in the same turn. You may not use last highway tile in your hand to buy right-of-way.

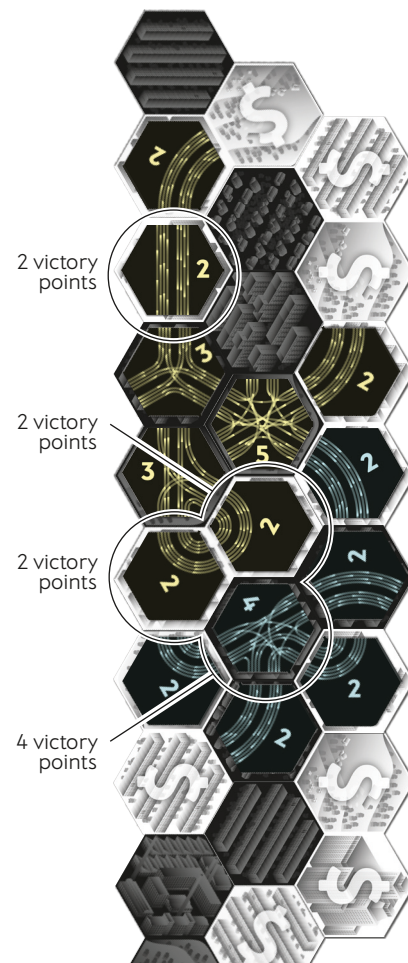
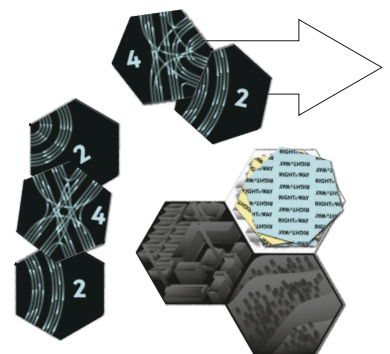
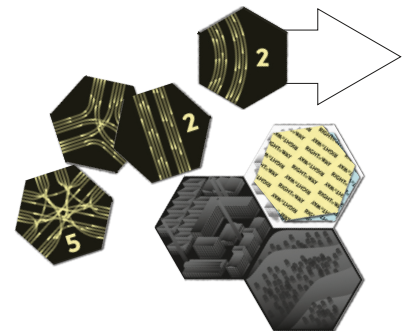
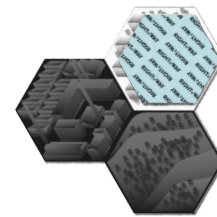
End of game

The game ends when a player uses up all tiles in both her drawing stack and hand, which means old age ended her career. After a player uses up all her tiles, the other players gets one final turn.

If you use up your drawing stack, you still take turns building highways until all tiles in your hand are either placed or discarded. You don't draw tiles as the result of profitable highways anymore.

Victory

The player with the most **victory points** wins. Every fully connected highway tile adds its number of connections to your victory points. Neighbouring highway tiles whose highway connections do not face each other do not count as connected. Victory points are independent of building cost and profit (see „Building Highways“).



Thanks to all wonderful, helpful test players:

Andrea Biasiol	Josephine Falke	Peter Hilmi Rösch
Felix Ruthenberg	Juliane Schmidt	Sebastian Mayer
Ferdinand Bardens	Kai Deller	Sharon Edwards
Frederic Friess	Laura Festl	Steffen Blum
Jenny Gemmell		

Background

Reading „The Power Broker“, Robert Moses' immediate returns on his projects struck me: bond money, popularity and political power. The concept of “building roads to build more roads” seemed so tricky, such a gaming of the administration system that it had to be my starting point.

I wanted players to face Moses' trade-offs between immediate power-grabs through lucrative, popular projects and the long-term good of necessary but unattractive master-plan projects. They should scan the city and see what needs to be built and what can be built, who to connect and who to evict. As a graphic designer by trade, I wanted visual patterns in my game. Dollar city tiles and unmarked city tiles are a sweeping simplification of population, political influence and money, but players can follow the black-white divides to find the building opportunities.

From there „make every decision count“ was my guideline as a first-time game designer. I wanted to keep rules and materials lean and make them carry their weight. To avoid house-keeping, I abstracted all resources (money, good-will, available plans and political support) into the hand of highway tiles.

Roads are the most important infrastructure projects in Moses' history, an easy choice as the player's building projects. The growing networks gave test players a sense of achievement and ownership. They demanded every possible road tile layout to finesse their land-grabs and blockades. The roads added a second visual pattern: the player's strategies.

Connecting tiles in limited space is basically „Tic-tac-toe“, the hand management is influenced „Scrabble“. Those influences show that I'm by no means a board game geek. My test players out me up to „Carcassonne“, which I now love, but am relieved is similar but still different.

Nolan Bushnell's “easy to learn, hard to master” mantra made me combine city tiles into trios, and pare down the game elements. I tried to incorporate parks for their importance in „The Power Broker“, but failed. Rivers, bridges and tunnels were the last painful cut for their New York flavour and monumental memorability. That's for a extension set.