ASLRRA Announces Inaugural Hall of Fame Inductees
2020 Inductees Will Be Honored at Connections Convention May 4, 2020

WASHINGTON, March 11, 2020 – The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) will launch the Short Line Railroad Industry Hall of Fame in 2020 to recognize short line railroad visionaries and stars who through their dedication, commitment and achievement best exemplify the qualities of innovation, entrepreneurialism, perseverance and service that have advanced the short line railroad industry. Each year three inductees will be selected.

“As an industry, we have been blessed to stand on the shoulders of strong leaders who have driven our continued success,” said Chuck Baker, President of ASLRRA. “The Hall of Fame idea came from the membership who wanted to recognize the pioneers of our industry. Each year we will induct three individuals, one of whom will be posthumously, into the Hall of Fame. We will recognize the inaugural class at ASLRRA’s Connections convention this May.”

Each of these individuals began their careers when the modern short line industry was in its infancy. Each had the vision to see what the industry could become and the fortitude to stick with what in the beginning were risky propositions. They were among the first to understand the powerful market forces unleashed by the Staggers Rail Act of 1980 and they used those forces to preserve thousands of miles of
under-utilized and dilapidated rail line. They helped forge a path that hundreds of entrepreneurs followed, and that path has led to the creation of today’s strong and vibrant short line industry.

The 2020 Hall of Fame inductees, selected by a panel of five industry leaders, are:

**Eugene (Gene) H. Blabey, II** – Gene Blabey combined a career in journalism with a 50-year involvement with the short line railroad industry. Blabey, who retired in 1987 as United Press International’s (UPI) Vice President and General Manager for Europe, became intrigued with short lines as a young UPI reporter. He wrote a story about a community’s effort to preserve railroad service and later followed up with an account of how that effort led to the formation of the Livonia, Avon & Lakeville Railroad (LAL). Blabey made a personal investment in the venture and joined the Board of Directors, later serving LAL as Treasurer, Executive Vice President, and Chairman. Government efforts to restructure the rail industry in the 1970’s presented the opportunity to join two colleagues to form the Maryland & Delaware Railroad (MDDE) and the Virginia & Maryland Railroad (V&M), operating light density lines on the Delmarva peninsula. Today, Blabey no longer has a connection with MDDE, but continues as a Director of Arkansas & Missouri Railroad, the V & M’s successor. In 2001, Blabey raised the capital to form Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad, LLC (WNYP), where he continues his involvement as Chairman and Managing Partner. As a former journalist, Blabey has a keen understanding of the value of PR and politics. He helped to use these tools to advance the industry. He has served ASLRRRA as a member of the Board of Directors representing the Eastern Region, on the Passenger and Legislative Policy Committees and the Railroad Industry Working Group (RIWG).

**Mortimer (Mort) B. Fuller, III** – Through the execution of Mort Fuller’s extraordinary vision to acquire a controlling interest in his family business and, over his 40-year tenure as CEO and Chairman, Genesee & Wyoming Railroad, Inc. grew from a 14-mile short line railroad in upstate New York with 1977 revenues of $4.4 million to an owner of 122 freight railroads operating in 41 states in the U.S., in four Canadian Provinces, in Australia where they are the third largest freight operator, in the UK where they are the second largest freight operator, and in Europe with small operations in five countries with 2017 revenues of $2.2 billion. In the 1980’s Fuller was a founding member of an ad hoc group of a dozen short line and regional railroaders, the Regional Railroads of America (RRA), that sought to change a variety of New Deal era laws that treated railroads differently than all other industries. In particular they wanted to eliminate so-called New York Dock Labor Protection which significantly impeded line sale transactions. Related to
that they wanted to codify in statute the 10901 exemption process which up until then was just a regulatory decision and one which was constantly being challenged in court. Fuller and his group launched an intense multi-year lobbying effort and in 1995 secured legislation that eliminated New York Dock for all Class III transactions and significantly reduced it for Class II transactions. Next to the passage of the Staggers Rail Act, this legislative achievement was responsible for the dramatic growth of today’s short line and regional railroad industry. The RRA would later merge with American Short Line Railroad Association to form ASLRRRA. Fuller launched the first Railroad Day on the Hill, initially for short lines, an event which has become one of the most effective railroad industry lobbying events in Washington, DC. Fuller has served the ASLRRRA as a member of the Board of Directors representing the Eastern Region and is the 2018 recipient of ASLRRRA’s Thomas L. Schlosser Distinguished Service Award.

**Marjorie P. (Maggie) Silver** (posthumously) – Maggie Silver’s father, Sam Pinsly, was a legendary short line owner and Silver began her railroad career as an accountant in his company. When he passed away in 1977 his senior executives advised her to sell the business, presuming that a woman could not make it in railroading. Silver would have none of that and went on to have a remarkable 40-year career as the owner and creator of short line railroads, serving as Chairman of the Board of the Pinsky Railroad Company. Unlike many short line pioneers, Silver was running short lines prior to the Staggers Act of 1980 and was trained and operated in the heavily regulated railroad world. The Staggers Act of 1980 revolutionized railroad economics and laid the foundation for the potential creation of new short line railroads. Silver was one of the first short line railroaders to understand this change and embrace it. During Silver’s tenure every old-line railroad inherited from her father in 1977 was sold and replaced with some of the most successful short lines in the United States. Silver was a member of the board of the American Short Line Railroad Association, ASLRRRA’s predecessor organization, and later served on the ASLRRRA Board of Directors, remaining active in association and board activities after her 2007 retirement. She also was a past president of the New England Railroad Club and held a leadership role at the Massachusetts Railroad Association.

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**About ASLRRRA** - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRRA) is a non-profit trade association representing the interests of the nation’s 603 short line and regional railroads and railroad supply company members in legislative and regulatory matters. Short lines operate 47,500 miles of track in 49 states, or approximately 29% of the national railroad network, touching in origination or termination one out of every five cars moving on the national railroad system, serving customers who otherwise would be cut off from the national railroad network. [www.aslrra.org](http://www.aslrra.org)