ASLRA Marks the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day

WASHINGTON, April 22, 2020 – While the coronavirus pandemic and the nation’s response to it continues to take center stage, the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRA) celebrates this milestone anniversary of Earth Day, noting the short line industry’s contributions to providing sustainable, earth-friendly transportation.

Short lines are proud to be doing more than ever to be clean, green, and sustainable. In terminals we are addressing light and sound pollution, limiting waste and recycling fuel, ties and steel. Many diesel-powered locomotives have been replaced with energy efficient switching engines or idle reduction equipment which improves air quality in terminal yards, many of which are in urban non-attainment areas.

Earlier this year, ASLRA President Chuck Baker testified to Congress at a House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee hearing regarding the short line railroads’ positive environmental impact: “Railroads are the most fuel-efficient way to move freight over land—three to four times more fuel efficient than trucks,” Baker noted. “Today, a freight train can move one ton of freight an average of more than 470 miles on one gallon of diesel. The EPA has measured the sources of transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions, and rail is a big success story: Cars and light trucks account for 60 percent,
heavy trucking is 23 percent, air travel is nine percent, and freight rail is only two percent. Further, rail positively impacts highway congestion and the resulting harmful emissions. The short line industry handles more than 12 million carloads annually, the equivalent of taking 40 million truckloads off the highway."

Our many members are doing groundbreaking work to ensure a more sustainable future for our industry, the communities we serve, and our planet.

Knoxville Locomotive Works (KLW) has newly built, repowered, refurbished, remanufactured, and/or upgraded over 600 locomotives since its establishment in 1998. KLW began designing its own line of locomotives in 2008 and has quickly become the preferred near-zero emission single engine locomotive solution, offering low emissions, low fuel consumption, and superior tractive effort performance. Most recently, KLW was awarded EPA Tier 4 emissions certifications for its SE Series four and six axle locomotive designs.

"KLW's strategy was to assimilate a team of industry experts and supplier resources capable of advancing to the stringent requirements of Tier 4 locomotive air quality standards. These locomotives use DEF at a rate of less than 2.5 percent per gallon of diesel fuel while delivering significantly improved fuel savings and tractive effort versus their conventional locomotive counterparts," said Knoxville Locomotive Works' Chairman Pete Claussen.

Anacostia Rail Holdings Company (ARH) has been an industry environmental pioneer. By 2008, its Pacific Harbor Line (PHL) affiliate was the first railroad to have a significant all Tier 2 or Tier 3 locomotive fleet and had tested LNG and the first gen-set and hybrid locomotives. By 2011, after further upgrades, PHL was the first railroad in the county to have a locomotive fleet consisting entirely Tier 3 or Tier 3+ units from Progress Rail and currently operates Tier 4 locomotives as well. PHL also was the recipient of an EPA Smartway award as well as Railway Age magazine’s ‘Short Line Railroad of the Year’ award for its aggressive low emissions program. Likewise, Anacostia’s New York & Atlantic affiliate also operates a fleet of Tier 3+ and Tier 4 locomotives from Progress and KLW. ARH’s other affiliates have retrofitted locomotives with Auxiliary Power Units and idle limiting devices which substantially reduce fuel consumption and emissions. It is not just about equipment; ARH hires innovative young talent that
focuses on providing greener solutions. Kimia Khatami, director of customer service for Pacific Harbor Line, is responsible for environmental regulatory compliance, among other duties. Her efforts in the environmental arena were recognized in 2017 when she was nominated for the Association of American Railroads’ John H. Chafee Environmental Excellence Award for her work in ensuring PHL’s compliance with environmental regulations in the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach, California, which are among the most stringent in the country.

ASLRA’s supplier members are critical in assisting the industry with innovative solutions that provide a positive environmental impact. Purify Fuel produces a unique combustion catalyst that has been able to demonstrate significant fuel savings. Purify Fuel’s revolutionary nanO₂ fuel combustion catalyst achieves the most complete combustion possible resulting in 6% to 10% improvement in fuel efficiency and reduction of harmful emissions by 30% to 60%. At ASLRA’s Southern Region Meeting in 2019 CEO John Carroll and VP of Rail Group Jay Fountain shared a short line railroad case study, demonstrating fuel savings of 8.1% and visible reductions of harmful emissions that can cause stack fires. “Our Purify Fuel team is deeply committed to reducing particulate matter and other pollutants that can increase fire risk and contribute to poor ambient air quality. The health and safety of people and our planet drives us every day,” says Purify Fuel’s Jay Fountain, a 42-year industry veteran.

On this 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, we are proud to be doing more than ever to be clean, green, and sustainable, while ensuring the safe movement of tens of thousands of carloads of essential materials every day – grains, wood pulp, minerals, finished food products, manufactured goods, or chemicals to keep our water supply clean. Sustainable practices will enable our industry, and the planet, to survive the temporary setbacks presented by crises such as COVID-19.

On Earth Day and beyond, we encourage shippers of freight across the country to choose the greenest mode of surface transportation: freight rail!

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About ASLRA - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRA) 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
About Anacostia Rail Holdings Company - Anacostia Rail Holdings Company owns and operates freight railroads in the United States. Combined, our companies handle the equivalent of approximately 2 million carloads per year. We provide freight rail service to major metropolitan centers, as well as smaller communities throughout America, and operate more than 760 miles of track. www.anacostia.com

About Knoxville Locomotive Works - Knoxville Locomotive Works was established in 1998 and has repowered, upgraded, repaired, and/or remanufactured over 400 locomotives, ranging from steam engines to low horsepower switchers to high horsepower line haul units. KLW is also the manufacturer of the KLW Single-Engine (SE) Series line of locomotives that are raising the bar for green locomotives. www.goklw.com

About Purify Fuel - Purify Fuel develops, manufactures and markets combustion catalysts that are custom blended to optimize diesel fuel and biodiesel blends for the rail, marine, fracking, mining, power generation, and biodiesel refining markets. The combustion catalyst increases energy harvested from each gram of fuel while reducing PM emissions and soot created by incomplete combustion. Purify Fuel works directly with large consumers of diesel and biodiesel fuel to help them save money, increase power, and reduce emissions. www.purifyfuel.com