NOTE: ASLRRA will be hosting CONNECTIONS 2018 in Nashville, Tenn. April 4-10. There will be no Inside Track Newsletter on April 11, 2018.

Onsite Registration Available for 2018 ASLRRA CONNECTIONS

Online registration is closed, but the DOOR IS STILL OPEN. Register onsite for ASLRRA’s 2018 CONNECTIONS Convention, offering many opportunities for attendees to engage, network, and have fun! From exciting events and activities in the Expo Hall to a relaxing round of golf at Hermitage Golf Course, CONNECTIONS offers something for everyone!

You can also participate in our silent auction, have dinner at the Grand Ole Opry House, or participate in the annual pinewood derby. Visit [here](#) to learn more and plan your trip to the 2018 ASLRRA CONNECTIONS Convention.

Join us at Gaylord Opryland in Nashville, Tenn. April 7-10. Follow the link to register for the convention.

ASLRRA Members Make Up Almost Half of Progressive Railroading’s Rising Stars

Nine of 20 people chosen as rising stars in the North American railroad industry come from ASLRRA member railroads and companies.

Scott Bannwart, Florida East Coast Railway
Aubyn Bell, HDR
Nick Edelen, R. J. Corman Railroad Group
Jocelyn Hill, Conrail
Victor Meyers, Red River Valley & Western Railroad Co.
Chad Mowery, Central Maine & Quebec Railway
Przemyslaw Rakoczy, Transportation Technology Center Inc.
Joan Smemoe, Railinc Corp.
Ann Waters, Genese & Wyoming Inc.

The Rising Stars Awards program, which is in its sixth year, recognizes those under the age of 40 who are making a positive impact on their company, organization, department or team and are viewed by others as ascending leaders in the rail industry. The honorees will be featured on Progressive Railroading’s website, in the magazine’s September issue and at a dinner in July during the annual American Association of Railroad Superintendents meeting.

Pennsylvania Governor Approves Freight Improvement Projects

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf announced on March 27 the approval of 27 rail freight improvement projects across the state. Many of those projects directly benefit ASLRRA member railroads.

Through the Rail Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) and the Rail Freight Assistance Program (RFAP), the State Transportation Commission allocated $32 million to fund the projects. The projects will help to sustain more than 400 jobs.

Pennsylvania has more operating railroads than any other state, with approximately 5,600 miles of freight lines. The goal of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation is to work with private rail operators to maintain and improve the state’s freight rail lines.

Click here to view the complete list of approved projects, read brief descriptions of each and see the amount of state funding granted.

Legislative Update

**BRACE Act Gains Three New Co-Sponsors**

The Building Rail Access for Customers and the Economy (BRACE) Act, which would make the railroad track maintenance tax credit permanent, gained two more co-sponsors in the House of Representatives.


The short line railroad tax credit leverages private sector investment in rail infrastructure by providing a tax credit of 50 cents for every dollar spent on track improvements, capped at $3,500 per track mile.

**Register Now for the PAC Dinner and Pinewood Derby!**

Don’t forget to register for the 2018 PAC Dinner, “A Night at the Opry,” and the 2018 Pinewood Derby, both to be held as a part of 2018 ASLRA Connections! The ASLRA Political Action Committee (ASLRA-PAC) is excited to welcome our guests to the Grand Ole Opry House on Sunday, April 8. After dining on the main stage, our evening will be capped off with a mini concert of Nashville singers and songwriters. Don’t miss out on this rare opportunity in the company of your railroad industry friends.

On Monday, April 9, ASLRA-PAC will host its 4th Annual Pinewood Derby at the evening reception in the Exposition Hall. The derby is run like a traditional pinewood derby, but with the usual cars replaced by the customized locomotives of our racers.

Participation in both events is open to all member employees whose employer has signed a prior authorization form. Sponsorship opportunities are also available for associate members who are interested in participating in the PAC dinner. ASLRA members desiring additional information about these two events and other PAC activities can contact Will Resch at will.resch@cch-llc.com or (202) 715-2915 to determine eligibility and arrange event attendance.

Regulatory Update
Surface Transportation Board Asks Class I Railroads for Response to Service Complaints

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) sent a letter on March 16 to all Class I railroads requesting their service outlook for both the near term and the rest of 2018. The information request stemmed from concern over data indicating a decline in service, as well as complaints from the National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA) and the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers (Auto Alliance).

The STB cited data showing that system average train speed declined noticeably for several major railroads, while system average terminal dwell time increased. Additionally, letters from the NGFA and Auto Alliance to the STB expressed concern about the reliability of the nation’s freight railroad network, noting a recent decline in rail service.

In each letter, the STB requested a written response from the railroad addressing such issues as locomotive availability, employee resources, demand and communication, in addition to comments on the issues raised by the NGFA and Auto Alliance.

To read the letters from the NGFA and Auto Alliance to STB, the service outlook requests from STB to the railroads, or the responses from each railroad to the STB, visit the STB website here.

RRB Names New Director of Equal Opportunity

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) has appointed Pamela Tate as its Director of Equal Opportunity. In this role, Tate will oversee the RRB’s Office of Equal Opportunity.

The Office of Equal Opportunity manages affirmative action, diversity and equal employment opportunity programs. It also protects rights of RRB employees, seeks to increase diversity in the RRB, and handles questions and complaints about alleged disability discrimination in the RRB’s benefit programs.

Tate was previously an equal employment specialist at the RRB, a position she has held since 2008. She first joined the RRB as a claims examiner in 1985.

New RRB Q&A Compares Railroad Retirement, Social Security Benefits

A newly-released question and answer form helps explain the differences between railroad retirement and social security benefits payable at the close of the previous fiscal year, which ended Sept. 30, 2017.

Those covered by the Railroad Retirement Act pay higher taxes than people covered by the Social Security Act. As a result, railroad retirement benefits are higher than social security benefits. This is especially true for employees with 30 or more years of service.

The average age annuity paid by the RRB to all retired rail employees was $2,730, while the average social security payment was over $1,370 a month. The average spouse benefit was $1,010 under railroad retirement compared to $695 from social security.

The RRB’s Q&A also discusses differences in age requirements and payroll taxes between railroad retirement and social security. Click here to read more.

Member News

Pacific Harbor Line Celebrates 20 Years in Operation

ASLRRA member Pacific Harbor Line (PHL) celebrated 20 years of operation with an anniversary party on February 27. Approximately 70 attendees received a commemorative plaque and an extensive tour of PHL facilities aboard private cars provided by California Zephyr Railcar Charters.
Pacific Harbor Line’s owner, Anacostia Rail Holdings (ARH), organized PHL in 1998 in order to provide railroad switching, track maintenance and dispatching services between the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles. Every day, PHL handles over 35,000 units of carload freight, switches nine on-dock intermodal terminals and dispatches more than 140 intermodal or unit trains.

“PHL has developed an international reputation as the leading port rail operator,” said ARH President and CEO Peter Gilbertson in a press release. “We look forward to working with our employees and stakeholders to continue to improve.”

Alaska Railroad Employees Combine for a Century of Service

ASLRAA member Alaska Railroad (ARRC) honored Charles R. Dillard, Jr. and Harry Ross on March 29, celebrating each employee’s 50 years of service with the company.

Ross and Dillard each received 50-year service award pins and letters of recognition from ARRC President and CEO Bill O’Leary.

Ross is a conductor and brakeman who first joined ARRC as a student brakeman in 1968. He became a brakeman in 1970 and a conductor in 1971, later working as a yardmaster until returning to conductor and brakeman duties in 1985.

A lifelong Alaskan, Ross also enjoys the blues and boating. One of his favorite routes is the Coastal Classic train from Anchorage to Seward, where he keeps a boat.

Dillard is a second-generation railroader originally from Alabama. His father, Charles Sr., was a conductor with Illinois Central Railroad for 39 years.

A short stint in the Army brought Dillard to Alaska for the first time in 1961. He began working with ARRC as an apprentice carman in 1965 before taking a 2-1/2 year break. He returned to ARRC in 1970 as a freight car carman. Dillard has held his current position as carman writer/inspector since 2007.

RSI Names New Director of Membership and Communications

Maureen Markey is the new director of membership and communications for the Railway Supply Institute (RSI). According to a press release, Markey will be in charge of member retention, recruitment and relations, as well as all of the association’s communications.

Previously, Markey worked as a consultant for healthcare and technology associations in Washington, D.C. Her clients included the National Industries for the Blind and the Association for Information Science and Technology. She continues to be involved in the health care industry, serving as board president of the American Association for Safe Patient Handling and Movement.

McClellan, Elkins Appointed to New Positions at Norfolk Southern

Norfolk Southern Corporation’s board of directors has elected Michael R. McClellan and Claude E. “Ed” Elkins to vice president strategic planning and vice president industrial products, respectively. Norfolk Southern is a sustaining member of ASLRRA.

McClellan was named assistant vice president performance planning at Norfolk Southern in 1998, later moving to vice president intermodal and automotive marketing in 2000 and vice president industrial products in 2013.
Elkins joined Norfolk Southern in 1988 as a road brakeman. He also was a conductor and an engineer. Later Elkins moved to the marketing department after receiving an English degree from Clinch Valley College of the University of Virginia (now the University of Virginia’s College at Wise), and he continued to progress up the ranks in the intermodal and automotive group.

Announcements

Updated Compliance Materials Now Available to ASLRRA Members

ASLRRA members can now access a variety of regulatory compliance materials and templates, thanks to the association’s Safety and Training Committee, Engineering Committee, and many more.

Updated materials include the records retention regulatory requirements document, which provides a quick and easy reference for members regarding required records and retention duration. It is divided into sections by railroad department, each containing a list of required records with corresponding CFR Part/Subpart and required period of retention.

Also included is a Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)-approved roadway worker protection program. The program contains bridge worker safety and roadway maintenance machine rules, which are required for railroads.

In addition to the roadway worker protection program, the Engineering Committee developed a sample bridge management program, also approved by the FRA, that helps railroads comply with Part 237.

These documents and many more are available on ASLRRA’s website under the Member Resources tab, compliance templates. Members must log be logged in and will be required to electronically sign a non-transferable license agreement in order to access this and other compliance template documents.

Subscribe to AAR’s Newsletter for More Railroad News

You care about the news and activities surrounding the railroad industry. From spending and traffic to rail projects of national significance to pressing public policy matters, such as the short line tax credit, NAFTA and economic reregulation, the Association of American Railroads (AAR) addresses these matters and more in its newsletter, “The Signal.”

In a recent edition, AAR spotlighted its joint op-ed with the ASLRRA on the need to make 45G permanent, showcased its BRAND NEW look at AAR.org, and released 2017 industry safety data.

The rail industry is strongest when it is united and speaking as one voice.

Help bring us closer to the goal of singing from the same song sheet! Please consider subscribing to AAR’s newsletter today.

Industry Events

FHWA and FRA to Discuss GXDash! in Upcoming Webinar

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) are continuing their joint webinar series with a demonstration of FRA’s new Highway-Rail Crossing Collisions Dashboard GXDash!, and an
overview of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) chapter eight and emergency notification system (ENS) signs.

The webinar will be held Wednesday, April 25. Registration is free, but all interested parties must register in order to participate. The deadline for registration is April 20. Follow this link in order to register.

External users without an @dot.gov e-mail address must request an account before registering. To request an account, click here.

KSRRA's Rail Freight Conference is May 9-10

The Keystone State Railroad Association (KSRRA) will hold its annual Rail Freight Conference May 9-10 in Johnstown, Penn.

Pennsylvania’s Secretary of Transportation Leslie S. Richards will be the keynote speaker, and other presentations include a panel discussion examining the past and future of Pennsylvania’s rail freight industry.

Click here for more information about the conference, or to register.

Michigan Tech Now Accepting Applications for Summer Youth Program

The Michigan Tech Rail Transportation Program, along with the University of Wisconsin-Superior’s Transportation and Logistics Management Program, is seeking applicants for its ninth-annual Rail and Intermodal Transportation Summer Youth Program.

The program, which will be held July 8-14, will teach students about rail and intermodal transportation, discussing topics such as railyard operations and railroad track structure. Participants also have the chance to go on field visits to places like BNSF Railway’s Superior Yard and the Lake Superior Railroad Museum.

All students entering grades 9-12 are eligible to attend. The program is held on the Michigan Tech campus. Applications are due May 1.

Please click here to view a list of upcoming industry events.

Register Today!

Upcoming Webinars

April 18, 2018 - Cybersecurity Part III: Resiliency for Short Lines: In part one and part two of the cybersecurity webinar series, attendees learned about cybersecurity frameworks and security controls. The third webinar in the series will cover the final step in the evolution of your overall security posture: how to be cyber-resilient. Click here to register.

April 25, 2018 - Crisis Communications Fundamentals for Railroaders: The way a railroad handles media, community, government and stakeholder interests in a crisis can make all the difference when it comes to the company’s public reputation and business viability. Corporate Crisis Group’s John Ambler will draw on his decades of experience leading communications for major companies such as BNSF Railway, Texaco and Enron. Click here to register.

May 3, 2018 - McGriff Excess Liability Insurance Program: ASLRRA short line railroad members are invited to participate in a webinar presented by Patrick Maguire of McGriff, Seibels & Williams, to learn about the shared excess liability program developed collaboratively by McGriff and ASLRRA. The presentation is open to ASLRRA’s Class II and III short line railroad members.
ASLRRA Offers On-Demand Webinars

ASLRRA’s expanded educational offerings now include On-Demand Webinars! Visit our website to view a complete list of On-Demand Webinars, presentations and takeaway materials.

Views and News is published by the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact Amy Krouse, Editor, akrouse@aslrra.org, with member news, questions or comments.