2018 ASLRRA CONNECTIONS Attendance Nears Record-Breaking Numbers

The ASLRRA’s annual 2018 CONNECTIONS convention, held April 7-10 in Nashville, Tenn., provided a wide variety of educational, networking and entertainment opportunities to over 1,800 attendees, a number surpassed only by attendance at ASLRRA’s Centennial Celebration in 2013.

“Our CONNECTIONS convention continues to be the premier venue where the short line railroaders come together to get up to speed on relevant and timely topics, share best practices, learn from our supplier members, and network with peers,” said ASLRRA President Linda Bauer Darr in a press release. “The 2018 event also included keynote speakers from outside the short line industry, providing a broader perspective on the changing landscape of technology and transportation writ large.”

Presentations from BNSF Railway Executive Chairman Matthew Rose and Editor in Chief of Wired Magazine Greg Williams bookended the convention. And with thirty-six educational sessions geared specifically to ten different industry tracks, as well as an exhibit hall hosting 240 booths, the return on investment for attendees was higher than ever.

Short Line Achievements Recognized at 2018 CONNECTIONS Convention Awards

ASLRRA honored several members and individuals at its annual CONNECTIONS Convention, recognizing achievement in a number of areas including safety and marketing.

One of the convention’s big winners was the Louisville & Indiana Railroad (LIRC), a subsidiary of Anacostia Rail Holdings, which came away with three honors. Transportation Director Jeremy Kramer was named Safety Person of the Year, while the company also won an ASLRRA Marketing Award and the Veterans Recruitment Award.

The 2018 Safety Professional of the Year was Rio Grande Pacific Corporation’s Director Safety, Training and Regulatory Compliance Mitch Harris. ASLRRA recognized Harris for his efforts to improve the safety culture at RGPC by instituting safety incentives, which has resulted in significantly lower incident and accident statistics.

Two other winners of ASLRRA Marketing Awards were Lake State Railway Company (LSRC) and Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad (R&N).

ASLRRA’s Thomas L. Schlosser Distinguished Service Award honored Mortimer “Mort” Fuller III for his decades-long support for and work with the short line industry. Fuller helped found the Regional Railroads of America (RRA) in the late 1980s, which eventually merged with the American Short Line Railroad Association, forming today’s ASLRRA. He was also one of the organizers of the first Railroad Day on the Hill in 1994.

The winner of this year’s Susan C. Murray Scholarship was Emma Lezburg, the daughter of Robert Lezburg. Robert Lezburg is project manager at Simmons Machine Tool, an ASLRRA associate member company.

Click here for press releases on CONNECTIONS 2018, and the award winners. Click here to view videos of award winners.
A recent article in Progressive Railroading discussed the efforts being made by short line and regional railroads, in conjunction with ASLRRA, to manage data collection and utilize it in a way that maximizes company efficiency.

Learning how to leverage big data has required small railroads to work together, sharing information about different technologies and products to come to a comprehensive understanding of what does and doesn’t work. One popular item is GE Transportation’s suite of digital products, including the RailConnect transportation management system. GE’s customers include almost all regional and short line railroads in the United States.

Beyond the commonalities shared by small railroads when it comes to technology and data, ASLRRA is leading the charge to improve exchanges between short lines, Class Is and shippers. ASLRRA is currently piloting a new platform with Norfolk Southern Railway, Genesee & Wyoming, Inc., Anacostia Rail Holdings and a shipper to provide up-to-date information on loaded and unloaded cars on their networks.

Another way ASLRRA is helping small railroads embrace new technology is its technology committee, which was formed in 2003. Committee members hold monthly conference calls to discuss the latest trends and hosted a technology summit this past June in Maryland, bringing together industry IT leaders and vendor representatives to discuss not only technology, but the role it will play in the future of the railroad industry.

“You have this kind of urgency to gain information quickly,” said ASLRRA President Linda Bauer Darr. “If we don’t stay current on some of this stuff, we’re not going to stay in business.”

**Legislative Update**

**House Passes Bipartisan Rail Data Security Bills**

On April 10 the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed two bipartisan railroad data and information security bills: the STB Information and Security Act and the FRA Safety Data Improvement Act.

The **STB Information and Security Act** directs the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to improve its information security system according to recommendations from the Department of Transportation Office of the Inspector General (DOT IG).

The **FRA Safety Data Improvement Act** would require the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to develop and implement a feasible plan based on DOT IG recommendations to ensure greater accuracy and quality of the safety data FRA collects and reports.

“America’s railways are a critical component of our national transportation system and their safety is of paramount importance,” said Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman U.S. Rep. Bill Shuster (R-Pa.) in a press release. “The bills passed today in the House were overwhelmingly approved by the Committee in February and for good reason. Each will build upon our already safe railroad system by addressing important data and cybersecurity challenges.”

**Regulatory Update**

**NTSB Cites Fatigue as Cause of Fatal New Mexico Train Crash**

According to a National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) press release, fatigue caused a train conductor’s failure to properly line a switch, which resulted in the collision of two Southwestern Railroad freight trains.
As a result of the crash, the NTSB issued a new recommendation to the Federal Railroad Administration to develop a device or technique eliminating the possibility of employees failing to perform critical tasks. The NTSB also emphasized three previous recommendations regarding the installation of technology to notify trains of incorrectly lined switches and record actions of the crew within the cabin.

The report also included the results of post-accident toxicological testing, even though impairment is not considered a factor in the accident’s probable cause. Click here to read a synopsis of the NTSB’s accident report.

**Chao Joins Cabinet Members in Signing MOU**

U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao joined other members of President Donald Trump’s cabinet in signing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that establishes a cooperative relationship between agencies in order to expedite environmental reviews and authorization decisions for proposed major infrastructure projects.

The MOU falls in line with the One Federal Decision policy established by the president’s Executive Order 13807. Under the MOU, the goal is for federal resource agencies to complete the entire environmental review and permitting process within two years.

According to a press release, the agencies signing the MOU will process reviews using four guiding principles. They will establish one lead agency for the entire environmental review and permitting process, commit to the lead agency’s permitting timetable, conduct necessary review processes concurrently, and automatically elevate interagency disputes so they can be resolved.

“The Department has been vigorously implementing the President’s “One Federal Decision” policy since last August to reduce costs and unnecessary burdens that have long delayed infrastructure projects,” said Secretary Chao in the press release. “It is essential for all Federal resource agencies to work together to cut red tape and deliver infrastructure and safety improvements more rapidly and spurring economic growth.”

**Member News**

**ASLRRA’s Keeney Inducted into LRW Hall of Fame**

ASLRRA’s Vice President of Member Engagement and Sales Kathy Keeney became the first person inducted into the League of Railway Women’s (LRW) Hall of Fame, winning its inaugural League of Railway Women Hall of Fame Award.

Keeney joined the LRW (formerly the League of Railway Industry Women) in 1998, a year after it was founded. She has served as the organization’s scholarship director, vice president and president. Keeney used her experience in publishing, sales, marketing and finance to help build the LRW’s profile, placing advertisements for the LRW in the The Pocket List of Railroad Officials and The Official Railway Guide. She also created the league’s first digital newsletter in 2007.

“It is with great honor that I present Kathy Keeney with the first annual League of Railway Women Hall of Fame award,” said LRW President Tanis Petersen in a press release. “Kathy’s tenure with the League of Railway Women has been instrumental to the success of our organization and to the careers of many. We are pleased to acknowledge and thank Kathy for her leadership, vision and inspiration that has created a legacy for women in the railroad industry.”

**Railway Age Presents Short Line Railroad of the Year and Regional Railroad of the Year Awards**

*Railway Age* magazine presented its Short Line Railroad of the Year to Lake State Railway, and Regional Railroad of the Year to Indiana Rail Road Company at ASLRRA’s 2018 CONNECTIONS Convention.

The award is given for outstanding achievement in any of several areas, including turnaround situations, consistent excellence, innovation in operations or maintenance, marketing, customer service, community relations, safety improvement or enhanced productivity. Winners will be profiled in an upcoming issue of *Railway Age*. 
ASLRRA Expo Draws a Crowd

Many thanks to more than 200 companies that exhibited at ASLRRA’s CONNECTIONS last week in Nashville. Your displays gave attendees a prime opportunity to see the railroad industry’s latest technology and products under one roof.

We’d like to acknowledge several companies that reserved their booth space too late to be included in our Official Convention Program.

- AMS Services, LLC, which provides quality construction, derailment, hauling, transportation, and emergency services, 24/7. www.amsservicesllc.com
- Electric Motor Services, Inc., which provides industrial and railroad motor repair/servicing and sales. www.electricmotorservices.net
- K&L Electronics Sales and Service, Inc., which buys or sells as well as repairs the electronic and electrical control equipment used on railroad locomotives. www.kl-elect.com
- Rail Pod, which is developing a robotic track inspection system. www.rail-pod.com
- Shuttlewagon, which is a direct-to-market provider of rail-based car handling solutions. www.shuttlewagon.com

New Facilities Drive Growth for Massachusetts Short Line

ASLRRA member Grafton & Upton Railroad’s (G&U) modest history might not suggest it is at the forefront of logistics development. Thanks to several strategic moves by CEO Jon Delli Priscoli, however, G&U now claims to be the only independent short line in the Massachusetts region to offer a full suite of third-party logistics services.

The company’s most recent accomplishment is the opening of a new propane transload facility in Grafton, Mass. The open facility, which can store up to 320,000 gallons of liquid propane, started operations in January.

Priscoli proposed an open facility to allow multiple wholesalers and shippers access to the facilities. The project was tied up for years in court battles because the town of Grafton argued the transloading of flammable propane was a safety hazard for the surrounding community.

G&U eventually won its cases, building the facility with state-of-the-art safety measures exceeding any local, state and federal requirements. Priscoli believes G&U’s terminal is now the most automated propane facility in the nation.

In 2009, when Priscoli bought G&U, the short line handled only 40 carloads. This year it expects to handle 5,000 carloads, with 1,500 of them from the propane facility.

R.J. Corman Hires Vice President of Transportation

R.J. Corman Railroad Group, LLC. has hired Paul Lauritzen to be its new vice president of transportation. Lauritzen will oversee operations of the R.J. Corman Railroad Switching Company, LLC.

Lauritzen comes to R.J. Corman from Big Ass Solutions in Kentucky, where his 14 years there included positions as vice president of manufacturing, vice president of product management and vice president of international business.

Genesee & Wyoming Adds Two to Board of Directors

Genesee & Wyoming, Inc. (G&W) announced the appointment of Bruce J. Carter and Cynthia L. Hostetler to its board of directors, expanding the board to 12 members.

Carter has been director of G&W’s Australian subsidiary, Genesee & Wyoming Australia Pty. Ltd. since 2011. He is currently a member of the Board of Directors at several Australian companies, including Bank of Queensland Limited and Aventus Capital Limited, and is chairman of ASC Pty. Ltd. and the South Australian Premier’s Climate Change Council.
Hostetler also has extensive public company and advisory board experience. She currently serves on the Board of Directors of Vulcan Materials Company, on the Boards of Trustees of the Invesco Funds and on the Board of Managers of TriLinc Global Impact Fund, LLC.

“Cynthia and Bruce bring tremendous leadership and expertise working in both the private and public sectors, and their deep experience in governance, investments and risk management will be invaluable as G&W continues to build its global business,” said G&W Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Jack Hellmann in a press release.

Patriot Rail Promotes Campian

Alin Campian has moved from his role as senior vice president of business development and commercial strategy at Patriot Rail Company to chief commercial officer of the rail and ports divisions. Patriot Rail is the parent company of several ASLRRA-member short line railroads.

In his new position, Campian will oversee all commercial efforts related to the company’s transportation, services and ports business units. He will manage the “implementation of strategic marketing processes driving new growth and further leveraging strategic organizational capabilities by aligning and refocusing the commercial group,” according to a press release.

Campian first joined Patriot Rail in 2015 as assistant vice president yield management. He has also worked in the telecom and energy industries, and at CSX Transportation and Florida East Coast Railway.

Miner Re-Elected to ASLRRA Board of Directors

ASLRRA congratulates JoAnne Miner, technical product manager for GE Transportation, on her re-election to serve on the board of directors representing Associate Members. This year’s election drew record interest and a very strong slate of nine candidates from different segments of the railway supply industry.

For the second year, voting was conducted via email and on-site during the annual convention and the winning candidate was announced at the associates meeting during the Nashville convention. Many thanks to Bowers & Company, CPAs, PLLC for certifying the election results.

Follow @ASLRRA on Twitter!

Please tag @ASLRRA or send photos to ASLRRA’s Amy Westerman so we can share our members’ stories via social media.

Industry Events

TTAP Offers Railroad Workshops Through Summer, Fall

The Tennessee Transportation Assistance Program will be offering a number of workshops on railroad track issues throughout June and into fall. The program is part of a nationwide Local Technical Assistance Program financed by the Federal Highway Administration, the Tennessee Department of Transportation and the University of Tennessee.

Each of the courses is open to personnel throughout the railroad industry, as well as state and local government officials associated with railroad operation. Fees for each course differ, and attendees are responsible for their own meals and lodging.

For more information about individual courses or to register, click on the links below.

Advanced Track Geometry, June 5-6, 2018 (Chattanooga, TN)
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.

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

Upcoming Webinars

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. Click here to register.

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.