Executive Order to Expedite Infrastructure Projects is Signed

An Executive Order Establishing Discipline And Accountability In The Environmental Review And Permitting Process For Infrastructure Projects was signed by President Trump on August 15th. The purpose of the order is to streamline the federal environmental permitting with a goal of limiting the approval process to about two years for construction of transportation and other large infrastructure projects. The order provides a “One Federal Decision” policy under which the lead federal agency for an infrastructure project is charged with expediting environmental review and authorization. Meanwhile President Trump and Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao held a press conference announcing the order, in which the Secretary noted, “at the Department of Transportation, we are already putting the administration’s principles into action. We’ve identified more than two dozen policies and rules that will streamline project delivery and environmental permitting.” The recently launched INFRA grant program incorporates more funding from state, local and private partners and brings greater accountability to the process of permitting. Short lines applaud the Secretary's commitment to reducing regulatory burdens for small businesses and to increasing the efficiency with which important infrastructure improvement projects can be funded and completed. Please click here to read the Executive Order.

Report on Importance of California’s Rail System is Released

A new report entitled Rail and the California Economy has been published by the University of California, Berkeley, based on research conducted by the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University, which highlights the importance of the many types of freight rail service in California. Trains loaded with intermodal containers moving to and from the ports; unit trains hauling grain or crushed stone going directly from origin to destination; and carloads, where shippers purchase space or provide individual boxcars based on the quantity they need to ship, particularly agricultural products and wine, all contribute to the strength of the state’s economy. ASLRRA member short lines such as the San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento Valley Railroads are mentioned by name, as are the busy ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach. Much of the freight rail traffic in California crosses state boundaries, especially due to California's rank as number one for tons of intermodal cargo entering and exiting the state, a direct consequence of hosting the two largest container ports in the country. “Freight rail also produces numerous indirect benefits. Rail’s emissions profile produces substantially lower levels of greenhouse gases and airborne pollutants than trucks per ton-mile and rail uses less energy - benefits to both the environment and public health sectors with large impacts on the economy.” A discussion of passenger and freight rail interaction is also included. Please click here to download and share the entire report, which tells an amazing story including the mighty role of short lines and regional railroads in California’s large and diversified economy.

Only Five Days Left for Early Bird Registration at Southern Region Meeting

There are only five days left before Early Bird Registration prices expire for our Southern Region Meeting! ASLRRA’s Regional Meetings are the must-attend events of the fall for everyone in the railroad industry, including Short Line and Class I railroad professionals, shippers, industry suppliers, and industry-affiliated stakeholders. You’ll find
plenty of opportunities to connect at the Young Professionals Gathering, the Small Railroad Summit, and the Reception honoring outstanding safety records with the President’s and Jake Awards. Join your fellow attendees for an informal evening with colleagues and help to support ASLRRA. Click here for more information and register today!

Do you know? How many short lines are in the US? What impact do they have on the US Economy? How much are they investing in infrastructure?
Order your Short Line and Regional Railroad Facts and Figures today to find out!

Legislative Update

August is a Great Time to Reach Out About the BRACE Act

Many members of Congress are using August to work in their districts or states, which means that this month is a great time to reach out to your Senator or Representative. Please visit our website for plenty of information, handouts, and maps, and contact our Washington team’s Fred Oelsner if you’d like assistance communicating the importance of extending the 45G Short Line Tax Credit by email, phone call or in person.

Grass Roots Visits

Grass Roots visits are a proven, effective way to tell the short line story to our representatives in Washington DC as well as in our state capitols. Please contact our Washington team’s Lindsey Collins for more information, and plan your invitation and visit today!

U.S. Congressman John Carter Visits Temple & Central Texas Railway

On August 9, Representative John Carter (R – TX31) joined representatives from ASLRRA Member Temple & Central Texas Railway (TC), one of 12 short line railroads managed by Patriot Rail Company LLC, to tour and to discuss pressing rail issues. The tour was led by David Lutz, Operations Manager for TC. “It was a privilege hosting Congressman Carter and sharing our commitment to Central Texas with him,” said Lutz. “TC is committed to providing safe, reliable and efficient rail services to our customers in Central Texas.” Congressman Carter focused his remarks on encouraging economic development in Central Texas, and ensuring that we have a strong, efficient, and safe freight rail system that will support American businesses.

“Freight rail is imperative to economic growth and prosperity, and I am proud to represent one of our nation’s premier short line rail lines supporting our economy in Central Texas,” said Rep. Carter. “It was a pleasure to learn more about the Temple & Central Texas Railway, the services they provide in Texas 31st District, and meet with and listen to the concerns of their employees. Their commitment to providing impeccable rail service in Temple has enabled Central Texas businesses to thrive.”
U.S. Congressman Tim Walz Visits Miller Ingenuity

On August 22, Congressman Tim Walz (D-MN-1) joined representatives from ASLRA Associate Business Member Miller Ingenuity, Operation Lifesaver, Inc., and the Minnesota Regional Railroad Association for a discussion on rail safety programs and continued economic development in Winona.

Tour participants had the opportunity to advocate for full funding of the TIGER and the Federal Transit Administration’s Capital Investment Grants Program for Fiscal Year 2018. The tour was led by Miller Ingenuity President and CEO Steve Blue. The group was also joined by Mayor Mark Peterson, City of Winona. The group visited Miller Ingenuity’s Creation Station to view a live demo of ZoneGuard, Miller’s electronic roadway worker protection system that uses a sophisticated communication network to warn railway workers of approaching track vehicles in an active work zone. Additionally, attendees were given a tour of ZoneGuard’s manufacturing assembly area and discussed the product’s operational features with Miller’s leadership and engineering team.

Also in attendance were Dennis Egan, Minnesota Regional Railroad Association; Christine Nestor, Marketing & Communications Specialist, Miller Ingenuity; Della Schmidt, President, Winona Chamber of Commerce; Randy Skarlupka, Vice President, Operations, Miller Ingenuity; Lisa Stark, Assistant Vice President, Public Affairs, Union Pacific and; Sean Winkler, Director of Advocacy, REMSA.

Regulatory Update

TSA Issues Warning on Hydrogen Sulfide Gas

The Transportation Security Administration has issued a Security Awareness Message for transportation industry partners who transport Hydrogen Sulfide Gas. Please click here to read the bulletin. At this time, the TSA Office of Intelligence and Analysis (TSA OIA) is not aware of any current or credible plots to attack transportation within the United States; however, TSA OIA remains concerned with terrorist organizations’ efforts to conduct attacks against transportation. TSA encourages operators to remind employees and passengers to be aware of their surroundings and to report suspicious activities in accordance with company procedures. Persons whose behavior does not fit their circumstances or surroundings should be brought to the attention of law enforcement - “If you See Something, Say Something.”

Member News

Twin Cities & Western Railroad to Share Track with Passenger Operations

Agreements have been reached clearing the way for BNSF Railway Co. and ASLRA Member Twin Cities & Western Railroad to allow light-rail operations along the same corridor as freight operations. The pacts will enable officials to finalize federal funding applications for the planned $1.9 billion Southwest light-rail project, the Star Tribune reported earlier this week. For about 8 miles of the 14.5-mile route, light-rail trains and freight trains will operate side by side. An extension of Metro Transit’s Green Line, the Southwest route would run from downtown Minneapolis to St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka and Eden Prairie, Minnesota.

Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad Adds 100 Cars to Support Customer

ASLRA Member Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad has added 100 covered steel coil cars to support the shipping needs of ArcelorMittal, South Shore’s largest customer, located in Burns Harbor, Indiana. The 100-ton
capacity cars are being leased from ASLRRA Associate Business member CIT Rail. Noting coil cars are in tight supply, South Shore turned to the railcar market to obtain this specialized equipment. Greg Dougherty, CSS director-sales and marketing, added, “South Shore and ArcelorMittal share a business partnership that has been going strong for more than a decade. Adding equipment to support our biggest customer was the right and timely decision.”

New York Air Brake Consolidating Operations in North Carolina

ASLRRA Associate Business Member New York Air Brake LLC has announced plans to move its peripheral product assembly in Watertown, New York, to Salisbury, North Carolina. The shift consolidates less complex assemblies into the North Carolina manufacturing hub, company officials said in a press release. The Watertown facility will remain the sole location for the design, testing and manufacture of freight-car brakes. Retaining the more complex assemblies enables New York Air Brake to create a “high-tech manufacturing hub,” company officials said. The transition is scheduled to begin in the fourth quarter and conclude in first-quarter 2018. The shift will affect 40 of the 425 workers at the Watertown plant.

WSP Names Construction Services Manager for West Region

WSP USA, formerly Parsons Brinkerhoff and an ASLRRA Associate Business Member, has named Charlie Guess Construction Services Manager for the firm’s West region. Guess will be based in the firm’s Orange, CA, office and will oversee the delivery of construction management and engineering and inspection services in Washington, Oregon, Nevada and California. He has more than 30 years of experience in engineering, construction and design-build management. Guess has directed programming and construction for light-rail and high-speed rail projects, rail connections to ports, municipal treatment facilities and industrial process facilities.

NS Names Cynthia Earhart as New CFO

Following a comprehensive search process, the Norfolk Southern (NS) board of directors has appointed Cynthia C. Earhart as Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, following the retirement of Marta R. Stewart. Earhart joined NS in 1985 and most recently served as Executive Vice President and Chief Information Officer. In connection with her appointment as CFO, Earhart will retain her information technology responsibilities. “After an extensive review of internal and external candidates, the Board is pleased to announce Cindy’s appointment as CFO,” said James A. Squires, NS chairman, President and CEO.

Register Today!


On Wednesday, August 30 at 1:00pm please join David Hankins, HR Director, Anacostia Rail Holdings Co. and Lynda Malmborg, Human Resources Director, A&K Railroad Materials, Inc. to focus on leave for individuals who are covered by laws such as the Uniform Services Employee Rights and Re-Employment Act (“USERRA”) and provisions under the Family Medical Leave Act (“FMLA”). No charge for ASLRRA members. Please click here to register.

Webinar: Registered Apprenticeship - What Is It & Why Should You Do It?

On Thursday, September 7, at 12:00pm please join David Harrison, Executive Director, Fastport National Apprenticeship Program, to learn more about the “earn and learn” training model of a Registered Apprenticeship, outline the benefits of implementing an Apprenticeship Program within your organization and guide your company through the next steps in developing a Registered Apprenticeship Program. Brought to you by the ASLRRA Veteran’s Recruitment Committee. No charge for ASLRRA members. Please click here to register.

Webinar: HR Series Part IV - End of Leave Considerations and Transition
On September 14, please join us for the final webinar of our four-part series. Tracey Donesky, Partner, Stinson Leonard Street LLP, and Bobbi Allen, Director of Human Resources, Iowa Interstate Railroad Ltd. will focus on the many varied, overlapping and at times complicated considerations that come into play when employees return from leave. Topics covered will include legal and practical considerations relating to: return to work; fitness for duty functional capacity evaluations (FCE); reinstatement; leave, transitions, and other alternatives. Please click here to register.

**Webinar: Using Cost Data for Decisions**

On September 19, please join Joseph M. Mocciaro CPA, CMA, Partner, Bowers & Company CPAs PLLC, for a review of practical tools for costing and evaluating service offerings and capital investments for short line railroads. Click here to register.

**Registration is Open!**

**ASLRRA’s Southern Region Meeting**

Don’t miss ASLRRA’s Southern Region Meeting, this year to be held at the Charleston Marriott in Charleston, SC on September 25 - 27, 2017! Early Bird Pricing ends soon. Please click here to find out more and register today!

**ASLRRA’s Eastern Region Meeting**

Registration is open for ASLRRA’s Eastern Region Meeting, this year at the Omni Providence Hotel in Providence, RI on October 23 - 25, 2017. Register today!

**ASLRRA’s Central/Pacific Region Meeting**

Registration is open for ASLRRA’s Central/Pacific Region Meeting, this year at the Intercontinental Kansas City at the Plaza in Kansas City, MO on November 13-15, 2017. Please click here to register today!

**Save the Date!**

**General Counsel Symposium/Finance & Administration Seminar**
Intercontinental Kansas City at the Plaza
Kansas City, Missouri
November 15 - 17, 2017

Views & News is published by the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact Elizabeth Sands, Editor, epetty@aslrra.org, with any questions or comments.