Ed Hamberger and Deb Miller to Keynote at ASLRRA Southern Region Meeting

Association of American Railroads (AAR) President and CEO Ed Hamberger will kick off ASLRRA’s Southern Region meeting on Tuesday September 26 at 8:30 a.m., followed immediately by Surface Transportation Board (STB) member Deb Miller at 9:10 a.m. Hamberger will discuss major policy issues faced by freight rail in 2017 and beyond. He was recently featured in the Washington Times, calling for all users of transportation infrastructure to pay their share to maintain it. Miller will discuss the debate over reform at the STB, an issue followed by and commented on by ASLRRA on behalf of our members.

ASLRRA Supports Nomination of Howard “Skip” Elliott for PHMSA Administrator

On September 8, President Trump announced his intent to nominate CSX executive Howard R. “Skip” Elliott to be Administrator of the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), U.S. Department of Transportation. ASLRRA President Linda Bauer Darr has stated on behalf of ASLRRA Members, “Skip Elliott is a strong choice for this position. He offers a deep understanding of the freight rail industry, and is an innovator in safety practices and risk management reduction around crude-by-rail movement. Our members will benefit from his expertise, particularly his commitment to hazardous materials movement and response to incidents. I look forward to working with him on issues of importance to our members.”

ASLRRA’s Eastern Region Meeting Early Bird Registration Deadline Approaching!

Register before September 25 to take advantage of early bird pricing and save $50 on your registration. Visit our website to preview speakers, activities, and view the full agenda! Book Your Hotel by September 25 to receive the discounted room rate! This year’s event features a general session keynote with CSX’s Fredrik Eliasson; interactive education sessions on marketing, business development, and legislative & regulatory affairs, plus a parallel education track focusing on HazMat and technology; relaxed networking events; and new safety culture training conducted by the Short Line Safety Institute. Register online before rates increase!
Legislative Update

The BRACE Act Needs Your Support!

As Congress returns for the autumn session, attention is turning to tax legislation. It has never been more important for elected officials to hear from short lines and their customers. 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!

Regulatory Update

Historic Preservation Reform and Streamlining For Railroads

ASLRRA member Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) hosted DOT Secretary Elaine Chao and other DOT and FRA officials on an ARRC passenger train August 24. Among topics discussed was implementation of the 2015 Congressionally-passed reforms and streamlining for railroads on historic preservation. Federal historic preservation reviews and mandates are triggered when there is a “federal action,” such as federal funds or a federal permit for a project. The 2015 FAST Act required the Secretary of Transportation, in conjunction with the Advisory Committee on Historic Preservation (ACHP), to implement provisions to give railroads the same protections and exemption provided by Congress for the Interstate Highway System in the 2005 SAFETEALU legislation. In other words, a part of a railroad, or the entire railroad corridor itself, could not be treated as “historic,” except for certain historic stations and historic bridges. ARRC has worked on reforming historic preservation compliance for railroads since 2007, when the House Transportation Committee held a special hearing on the topic requested by Rep. Don Young (R-AK). In 2008, Congress passed legislation requiring an FRA study and report, which was completed in 2013. The FRA report helped lay the groundwork for the 2015 legislation.

While agency implementation of the 2015 reforms for railroads has not been finalized yet, ARRC was informed by FRA officials that on August 31, staff of FRA, FTA, OST, and ACHP met on a draft of the proposed railroads exemption. The draft is being informally reviewed with the National Association of State Historic Preservation Officers, then will be formally issued for public comment in the Federal Register. A crucial issue is how bridges in the right of way will be treated in the final agency provisions. ARRC urges all railroads to be aware of the issues and agency processes now underway. Please click here to read ARRC’s letter to Secretary Chao.

DHS Chemical Facility Program Explains Additional Requirements

U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) program identifies and regulates high-risk chemical facilities to ensure they have security measures in place to reduce the risk of terrorist attack associated with certain chemicals. About one year ago, DHS released the Security Vulnerability Assessment (SVA)/Site Security Plan (SSP) survey. To request a consultation about the requirements for your facility, or if you need additional information, please send an email to CFATS@hq.dhs.gov. The CFATS regulation lists more than 300 chemicals of interest (COI) that, if held in specified quantities or concentrations, trigger reporting requirements under CFATS. Any specific questions that cannot be answered by a visit to the program website may be directed to ASLRRA’s JR Gelnar.
FRA Completes DEIS for Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has completed the Tier II Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the 123-mile section of the Southeast High-Speed Rail Corridor from Washington, D.C., to south of Richmond, VA. ASLRRA is following the process closely as this high-speed rail corridor program could improve service for short lines located in and affected by increased through speeds and decreased congestion. FRA and DRPT are accepting public comments on the DEIS for 60 days. Please contact ASLRRA’s Jo Strang with any comments or concerns.

RRB Unemployment and Sickness Benefits will be Adjusted on October 1

Beginning October 1, U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) will reduce railroad unemployment and sickness insurance benefits by 6.6 percent, down from the current 6.9 percent reduction, as required by law. Reductions in future fiscal years, should they occur, will be calculated based on applicable law.

Member News

Norfolk Southern and Florida East Coast Railway Resume Service

Norfolk Southern Railway has restored service on mainline track throughout Georgia and Florida following the impact of Hurricane Irma. Meanwhile, Jacksonville-based Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) officials announced this morning that the railroad has resumed rail service across its network. With the possibility of train speeds slower than usual.

Pan Am Railways to Connect Port Saint John with Boston Area

ASLRRA member Pan Am Railways and DP World have agreed to form a new direct intermodal service connecting the Boston market to Port Saint John in New Brunswick, Canada. Port Saint John provides connections to more than 500 international destinations. The intermodal service from the port to the Boston market will be provided via the inland container terminal at Ayer, MA, said Pan Am Railways Executive Vice President Michael Bostwick, who also serves on the ASLRRA board of Directors. “We will provide value to importers and exporters via an alternate gateway into the large consumer markets around Boston and central New England that reduces congestion on the highways,” said Bostwick. “As the vessel calls at the port increase, we will be there to grow our service offerings and train capacity to match those needs.”

Montana Rail Link Marks 30th Anniversary

ASLRRA congratulates short line member Montana Rail Link (MRL) on its remarkable story and milestone anniversary. “Bill Brodsky, our first president, instilled in all of us that not only are we in a service industry, we are also a people business,” said MRL President Tom Walsh. “He also instilled James J. Hill’s (Great Northern Railway founder) motto ‘helping our customers grow and prosper.’ Mr. Brodsky set the tone in the early days and we continue to march to that mantra every day.” Nearly 2,800 current and past employees and their families will join in the anniversary celebration this month.

Chesapeake and Indiana Railroad can Continue to Operate Line

The Town of North Judson, IN and ASLRRA short line member Chesapeake and Indiana Railroad Company, Inc., a subsidiary of Indiana Boxcar Company, have reached a settlement agreement that will end months of pending litigation, ensure continued transportation of regional grain to market, and resume Hoosier Valley Rail Museum excursions. “On the whole, this is good for the town, our operations, and the museum - but it is particularly good for the farmers in the region that need that stability of railroad access and smooth operation to get tremendous amounts of grain to major markets each year,” said Powell Felix, president of the Indiana Boxcar Company.
G&W August Carloads Up 10.1 Percent

Genesee & Wyoming Inc. (G&W) has reported an increase of 10.1 percent, or 25,404 carloads, for August 2017 rail traffic compared to August 2016. Carloads totaled 277,472. G&W’s North American operations reported an increase in August traffic of 1.9 percent to 141,221 carloads, including traffic from the acquisitions of ASLRRA members Providence and Worcester Railroad Company and the Heart of Georgia Railroad, Inc.

Passing of Jerry Joe Jacobson, Founder of the Ohio Central Railroad

ASLRRA would like to share the news that Jerry Joe Jacobson has passed away. Jacobson acquired abandoned railroad properties and assembled them into his 550-mile Ohio Central Railroad System, bringing back freight railroad service and creating many jobs. Altogether, the 10 freight railroads employed 220 people, paid taxes and revitalized local economies. In 2008 the Ohio Central was sold when Jacobson retired.

Passing of Gifford Moore, Railroad Executive

ASLRRA would like to express condolences to the family and friends of Gifford Moore. Mr. Moore served as a B&O executive for many years and was President of the Lehigh & Hudson River RR before joining the Genesee & Wyoming where he served as Sr. VP. Mr. Moore's obituary may be found by clicking here.

CSX Opens Pittsburgh Intermodal Rail Terminal

CSX has started operations at its new Pittsburgh intermodal rail terminal, located in McKees Rocks, Pa., providing shippers a new transportation option to move freight to and from western Pennsylvania. The facility, which occupies a 70-acre site that was the former Pittsburgh & Lake Erie rail yard, will allow CSX to connect Pittsburgh to more than 40 markets across North America. The Pittsburgh intermodal terminal is the last component of CSX’s National Gateway Initiative, an $850 million public-private partnership designed to create an efficient network of double-stack rail and intermodal terminals that connect East Coast markets to the Midwest. Through the initiative, more than 95 percent of CSX’s intermodal network is now double-stack cleared.

Greenbrier Achieves Another Production Milestone

The Greenbrier Companies, Inc. has completed production of its 50,000th covered hopper railcar, following its announcement in February of the production of its 100,000th intermodal double stack railcar. Greenbrier currently builds a full line of small, medium and large covered hopper railcars with freight carrying capacities from 3,250 cubic feet up to 6,580 cubic feet.

Rockwell Collins and Amtrak Reach PTC Implementation Agreement

Amtrak has signed an agreement with ASLRRA associate business member Rockwell Collins to implement the company’s ARINC RailwayNet® service on approximately 310 Amtrak locomotives operating across the United States. ARINC RailwayNet is a hosted network, messaging and application platform, designed to assist operators in meeting the Positive Train Control (PTC) requirements mandated by the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008.

WSP Appoints Leaders for Key Rail Programs

WSP USA has appointed Ken Zatarain, who is based in WSP’s Portland office, to lead station access planning for the California High-Speed Rail program. Zatarain will work with state and local jurisdictions to develop plans, policies and implementation strategies for the program’s stations. WSP has also announced that Oliver Ernhofer will be New York Transportation Planning Manager and Senior Supervising Planner. Ernhofer will manage and lead transportation and transit planning projects in the New York metropolitan area and nationwide.
Penn State Altoona - U.S.'s First ABET Accredited Baccalaureate Program in Rail Transportation Engineering (RTE)

Penn State Altoona's Rail Transportation Engineering (RTE) degree program has been sanctioned by the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET, the global accreditor of college and university programs in applied and natural science, computing, engineering and engineering technology. The recent validation makes Penn State Altoona home to the first and only ABET-accredited Rail Transportation Engineering program in the United States. ASLRA’s Jo Strang serves on the RTE program’s Industry Advisory Board.

Register Today!

Please view and register for ASLRA’s webinars by clicking here.

Webinar: Contractor Screening-Considerations for Every Employer

On October 3, you are invited to discuss whether your company would you hire a murderer or violent offender to work for your short line? Probably not! Spend an hour with eVerifile discussing risks and liabilities, Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA), co-employment and drug testing.

Webinar: An Introduction to Economic Indicators for Railroaders

On October 10, please join our expert panel for an Introduction to Economic Indicators for Railroaders: Where to Find Them and What They’re Saying Today. There are lots of economic indicators out there. This webinar will introduce you to several of the most important ones from a railroad’s point of view. We’ll discuss where the indicators come from, what they measure, and what they’re saying about the economy today.

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

On October 12, find out how thousands of employers across the U.S. and among our global competitors use the Registered Apprenticeship training model to recruit, train, and retain workers with the right skills. This webinar will introduce you to 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. Join Fastport’s National Apprenticeship Executive Director, David Harrison, for this informative webinar.

Registration is Open!

ASLRA’s Southern Region Meeting

Don’t miss ASLRA’s Southern Region Meeting, this year to be held at the Charleston Marriott in Charleston, SC on September 25 - 27, 2017! Online Registration is closed but Walk-up Registration on-site begins Monday September 25th.

ASLRA’s Eastern Region Meeting

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

ASLRA’s Central/Pacific Region Meeting

Registration is open for ASLRA’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!
Registration is open for ASLRA’s General Counsel Symposium/Finance & Administration Seminar this year at the Intercontinental Kansas City at the Plaza in Kansas City, MO on November 15-17, 2017. Please click here to register today!

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

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