Inside Track will next be published on Thursday, March 1, 2018.

FRA Accepting Applications for $73 Million in Grant Funding

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) announced February 15 that it would be accepting applications for $73 million in grant funding that, according to a press release, can be used to “strengthen intercity passenger rail, support capital projects and boost safety initiatives.”

Safety initiatives covered by the funding could include implementation of positive train control (PTC) and improved highway-rail grade crossings.

The Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act authorizes the funding, which will be dispersed through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant program and the Restoration and Enhancement (R&E) Grants program.

The FRA’s Notice of Funding Opportunity explains application requirements and procedures for eligible projects under the Restoration and Enhancement Grants Program and CRISI. Applications are due June 21, 2018. To go directly to the Office of the Federal Register website, click here for R&E and here for CRISI.

Amtrak to Suspend Service on Tracks Lacking PTC by Dec. 31, 2018

In testimony to a House subcommittee on February 15, 2018, Amtrak President and Chief Executive Officer Richard Anderson said the company will cease operating on any route segments not in compliance with positive train control (PTC) regulations by the December 31, 2018 deadline.

Additionally, railroads that operate on Amtrak tracks will not be allowed to do so if their equipment is not PTC compliant by the deadline.

These scenarios were two of several Anderson explored in his testimony at a hearing discussing PTC implementation. Anderson’s participation in the hearing was meant to provide lawmakers with an update regarding the steps Amtrak has taken to improve safety in light of recent fatal accidents involving the company’s trains, and convey other ideas for enhancing safety across Amtrak’s route miles.

Also participating in the hearing was Edward Hamberger, president and CEO of the Association of American Railroads (AAR). He spoke to the progress Class I freight railroads have made in developing and implementing PTC technology, and what lawmakers can expect from the industry in the future.

Others who testified included representatives from the Federal Railroad Administration, National Transportation Safety Board and American Public Transportation Association. Follow this link to read their written testimony or watch a video of the hearing.
Legislative Update

Railroad Day on Capitol Hill is March 7, 2018 - Register Now!

Railroad Day on Capitol Hill has proven to be the single most effective way to get our message to Congress. The size of the event, the geographical diversity of the participants, and the unified railroad industry message focuses Congress on our issues. Your participation makes the difference! Click here to register.

Regulatory Update

DOT Releases Video, Poster Clarifying Hazmat Material Labels

The U.S. Department of Transportation’s (DOT) Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), along with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), have produced and released a set of informational materials aimed at clarifying the different labeling requirements for hazardous materials in transportation (DOT) and the workplace (OSHA).

The first resource is a YouTube video titled “USDOT and OSHA HazCom Basics,” which explains each administration’s labeling requirements. The second is a poster offering a more succinct summary of important information. PHMSA’s Hazardous Materials Regulations and OSHA’s Hazard Communication Standard 2012 provide distinct and separate safety standards regarding the appropriate labeling of chemical hazards.

Office of Advocacy to Hold Regulatory Roundtables

The U.S. Small Business Administration’s (SBA) Office of Advocacy will be holding regional regulatory roundtable and NAFTA modernization outreach meetings on February 27 in Houston, Texas, and March 1 in San Antonio, Texas. At both locations, the roundtable meeting will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., with NAFTA outreach from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m.

The regional regulatory roundtables enable small businesses to identify for the Office of Advocacy the regulations they find most concerning. The program began in response to the Trump Administration’s efforts to address the regulatory burden on the private sector. Click here to view the Office of Advocacy’s regulatory reform website.

Another of the Office of Advocacy’s roles is to enable consideration of issues impacting small businesses during international trade negotiations. The announcement by the Trump Administration that it plans to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) prompted the Office of Advocacy to begin collecting input from small businesses regarding the potential effects of a renegotiated NAFTA.

For more information about these events and their background, click here.

Follow the appropriate links to register for the regulatory roundtable or NAFTA meeting in Houston, or the regulatory roundtable or NAFTA meeting in San Antonio.
Member News

Darr Presents the Short Line and Regional Railroad Industry’s 2018 To-Do List

ASLRRA Linda Bauer Darr listed five of the most important concerns facing the short line and regional railroad industry in 2018 in the February issue of Railway Age magazine.

Darr first identified the importance of the 45G short line rehabilitation tax credit, which was recently extended retroactively through December 2017 in the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, but has not been made permanent into 2018 and beyond.

Secondly, Darr applauded the effort of the Trump Administration to reduce regulations, while pointing out the need to be concerned about other pending rules, including mandatory two-person crews.

Advancing the efforts of the Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) to complete safety assessments and promote stronger safety culture is another of ASLRRA’s priorities for the coming year.

Challenging attempts to allow bigger trucks and heavier truck loads on the roads will also be crucial, as will efforts to increase carload traffic.

Darr points out the need for the entire railroad industry to work together to gather and analyze data, and the importance of embracing a digital platform to enable short lines to better compete in today’s economy.

Short Lines Well-Represented in Railway Age’s “10 Under 40”

Short line and regional railroad employees comprise four of Railway Age magazine’s “10 Under 40” winners, earning recognition for their impact in their respective fields and their contributions to their local communities.

The February issue of Railway Age recognizes Ryan Crawford, manager of ballast at Herzog Railroad Services; William Downey, government affairs and economic development manager at RJ Corman; Aage Lindstad, director of automation at Genesee & Wyoming Railroad Services, Inc.; and David Strezo, vice president of network operations and customer service at OmniTRAX.

Also recognized were two people from ASLRRA’s sustaining members, Jacqueline Peets-Graves, manager, strategic planning at Norfolk Southern Corporation; and Ashley Thorne, vice president, investor relations at Kansas City Southern.

This year, award winners will be recognized at Railway Age’s annual Railroader of the Year Dinner on March 13 in Chicago. The 55th Railroader of the Year is also a short line representative: John “Jack” Hellmann of Genesee & Wyoming.

Baker Joins Strato’s Executive Management Team

Strato, Inc. announced the hiring of Todd Baker as vice president of global supply chain in January. Baker will manage Strato’s purchasing and logistics departments and conduct strategic negotiation with international suppliers.

Before joining Strato, Baker worked in the manufacturing, automotive and heavy trucking industries for over 18 years. He also worked procuring material in Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America.
Carload Express Announces Leadership Changes

Mark Rosner is the new president of Carload Express, Inc., and Jim Streett and Russell Peterson have been promoted to chief executive officer and chairman, respectively.

“We are excited to welcome Mark Rosner to our executive team, where his significant industry experience will prove to be tremendously valuable,” said Peterson in a press release.

Rosner has over 30 years of experience in the rail industry.

New Business Venture Allows Wisconsin & Southern to Increase Winter Shipments

Wisconsin & Southern Railroad (WSOR) has expanded its business to include transporting road salt and propane to Wisconsin in the winter. This change helps offset the slowdown in shipments of construction materials and grain WSOR traditionally experiences during winter months.

WSOR began moving salt to Wisconsin in November 2017, and as of early January had unloaded roughly 20,000 tons at a Watco Terminal and Port Services (WTPS) facility in Madison. The facility can hold up to 80,000 tons of salt, which can fill about 800 rail cars.

One key change helping WSOR land the salt-shipping deal was parent company Watco Companies, LLC’s decision to offer customers both rail and transloading services in one package. Since the salt-shipping company had no employees in Wisconsin, the ability of Watco and WSOR to offer a combined rail and transloading option was significant.

In addition to shipping salt, WSOR has added two new propane customers in Wisconsin, bringing approximately 200 to 300 carloads of propane annually to each customer.

North Carolina Railroad to Work to Improve City’s Drainage

North Carolina Railroad Company will partner with ASLRRA member Norfolk Southern Railway and the city of High Point, N.C. to complete $5.1 million worth of improvements to the rail line that passes through the city’s downtown.

The rail running through downtown High Point is located in a cut below street level, with bridges crossing above. Improvements will be made to the railroad slopes and storm water drainage on railroad-adjacent streets. Doing so will help to minimize future erosion and protect track structure.

North Carolina Railroad will fund $3.6 million of the project’s total cost, with construction scheduled to be completed by mid-2018.

Industry Events

NRC to Hold Annual Railroad Equipment Auction

The National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association (NRC) will hold its annual Railroad Equipment Auction on Thursday, April 26 at Blackmon Auctions in Arkansas. The official day for equipment inspection is April 25.

An initial list of available items includes TKO tie inserters/removers, Kershaw tie cranes, Mark II tampers, spikers, TR10s, Gradall earth movers, Pettibone material handlers, rotary scarifiers, pickup trucks, hi-rail welding trucks, and backhoes. The auction is open to the public.

Contractors, suppliers and railroads are invited to sell their equipment or donate items for sale. A percentage of the sale of consigned items and 100% of proceeds from donated items support the NRC Safety, Training and Education Program.
Please see the above link for more details regarding the event, including travel and hotel information, official forms for donating, consigning or purchasing equipment, and a map to the auction site.

Register Today!

2018 CONNECTIONS Convention Offers Education for Industry Professionals

Education is the cornerstone of ASLRRRA’s Annual CONNECTIONS Convention, and this year’s event features a number of sessions specifically designed for industry professionals interested in engineering, maintenance of way, legislative and regulatory issues. Also featured are sessions for young professionals.

Examples include a mentoring session with industry leaders, information on developing and implementing a track inspection program, and advice for working with the Small Business Administration’s Office of Advocacy.

In addition to powerhouse General Sessions, the CONNECTIONS Convention delivers more than 40 individual breakout sessions covering a wide range of industry-specific topics. Click here to view the entire educational lineup!

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

Remember, early bird pricing expires at midnight EST on February 23. Save $100 by signing up early!

Upcoming Webinars

March 1, 2018 - Investment Strategy in an Uncertain Market - Join Bowers & Company’s William Kriesel for a discussion of the current market environment and planning for potential risks. With the markets showing signs of volatility, it is difficult to know what to do. We will explore alternatives for you to consider. Attendees will have an opportunity to participate in Q&A at the end of the presentation. Click here to register.

March 14, 2018 - Cybersecurity Part II: Security Controls for Short Lines - In part two of our three-part cybersecurity webinar series, Rockwell Collins’s Justin Smith will discuss the various sources that provide detailed security controls your organization can implement. From the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to the Center for Internet Security (CIS), there are hundreds of possibilities. You’ll learn where to begin and how to integrate your cybersecurity program and roadmap. Attendees will have an opportunity to participate in Q&A at the end of the presentation. Click here to register.

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. Learn about strategic cybersecurity decision making and leadership and how to apply that to your business. Attendees will have an opportunity to participate in Q&A at the end of the presentation. Click here to register.

ASLRRRA Offers On-Demand Webinars

ASLRRRA’s expanded educational offerings now include On-Demand Webinars! ASLRRRA webinars already provide flexible training to meet busy schedules; now members can access valuable educational content at their convenience. Webinars cover a broad range of topics, including Regulatory Updates, Veteran Recruitment, Finance for Railroads, Social Media, Protecting Roadway Workers, and much more. 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.