FRA Issues Funding Notice for PTC Systems Grants
Applications are Due This Summer!

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) on May 15 for positive train control (PTC) systems grants through the FY 2018 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program.

The due date for funding applications is 45 days from the NOFO’s publication in the Federal Register. Eligible projects include back office systems; wayside, communications, and onboard hardware equipment; software; equipment installation; spectrum; any component, testing and training for the implementation of PTC systems; and interoperability.

ASLRRA has scheduled a webinar to discuss the NOFO and guide members on the application process.

FRA will distribute $250 million under the CRISI Program to help fund PTC system technology for intercity passenger rail transportation, freight rail transportation, and commuter rail passenger transportation. FRA’s decision to issue the NOFO quickly is due to the administration’s desire to further assist railroads in meeting this year’s December 31 deadline for PTC system implementation.

Also on May 15, FRA released the first quarter status update on railroads' self-reported progress toward implementing PTC systems. Fourteen railroads reported installing 100 percent of the hardware necessary for PTC system implementation as of March 31. Data also shows that PTC systems are operational on about 60 percent of freight railroad route miles required to have PTC, significantly more than the 25 percent in operation on passenger railroads.

Click here to view more implementation data for 2018 Quarter 1 or to view individual railroads' PTC annual and quarterly reports.

Register for Region 2 FRA Seminar in Maryland

ASLRRA will host a Region 2 Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Seminar June 12-13 in Annapolis, Md. at the Rockwell Collins Training Facility. David Kannenberg, regional administrator for Region 2, will facilitate the seminar. Space is limited.

Topics Include:
- Use of Personal & Railroad Supplied Electronic Devices
- Railroad Locomotive Safety Standards
- Bridge Worker Safety Standards; Roadway Worker Protection
- Safety, Security, Inspection and Acceptance; Movement Approvals
- Control of Alcohol and Drug Use
- Railroad Accidents/Incidents: Reports, Classification and Investigations
- Hours of Service, Including Signal Personnel
- Grade Crossing Signal Safety - Reporting System Malfunctions & Reports; Grade Crossing Inventory and ENS
- Freight Car Safety Standards
• Track Safety Standards
• Engineer/Conductor Certification
• Operational Testing Program and Procedures

Click here for more information about this FRA Region 2 Seminar, including nearby hotels with discounted rates.

Grassroots Showcase
Congressman Scott Tours Tensar Corporation Facility

Congressman David Scott (D-GA) participated in a tour, product demonstration and transportation public policy discussion at ASLRRA member Tensar International Corporation’s Morrow, Ga. facility on May 2. Representatives from Tensar, Genesee & Wyoming Railroad Services and other transportation companies joined Scott.

Tensar CEO Mike Lawrence and Executive Vice President Global Operations Mark Koepsel led the tour. The group viewed Tensar’s production and research and development facility where the company manufactures geogrids, a product that is used to stabilize foundation materials below roads and other types of infrastructure.

During their public policy discussion, participants advocated for the 45G short line tax credit and highlighted increased funding for various transportation project grant programs.

“We are focused on providing the transportation industry with a reliable product that reduces costs and increases safety on both railways and roadways,” said Lawrence in a press release. “We strongly support sound federal policies that encourage growth and innovation in the transportation sector.”

Tensar is also a member of the Railway Engineering-Maintenance Suppliers Association (REMSA), which coordinated the event.

Legislative Update

Brace Act Receives New Cosponsor
The Building Rail Access for Customers and the Economy (BRACE) Act, which would make the railroad track maintenance tax credit permanent, gained one more cosponsor in the House of Representatives.

Rep. David Scott (D-Ga.), signed on in support of the bill. His signature brings the total number of cosponsors in the House to 260.

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.

ASLRRA Offers Compliance Assessments as a Member-Exclusive Benefit!

Our expert staff is available to conduct comprehensive on-site compliance assessments for member railroads. Ensure your railroad meets FRA compliance guidelines by scheduling your assessment today!

- Identify Deficiencies
- Reduce Risk Violations
- Gain Understanding of FRA Audit Process

Regulatory Update

Railway Union Leaders Submit Comments to FRA on Rail Industry Automation

Five labor unions submitted joint comments to the Federal Railroad Administration in response to the agency's request for comments on automation in the rail industry.

The American Train Dispatchers Association, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, the Brotherhood of Railroad Signalmen, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen Division TCU/IAM and Smart Transportation Division emphasized the need for FRA to make safety “the highest priority” when considering the future of rail automation. The unions’ comments also worked to define automation and affected systems, so as to implement boundaries on the scope of the debate.

Various other railroad entities, including ASLRRA, the Association of American Railroads and Norfolk Southern Railway, submitted their own responses to the FRA’s request for comments. ASLRRA’s response focused on the introduction of technologies that enhance both safety and productivity, such as inspecting bridges with drones and using automation to test track structure.

According to ASLRRA, The U.S. Department of Transportation’s regulatory approach is a particular concern for the short line and regional railroad industry. ASLRRA noted that reducing lengthy processes for waiver and other project approvals is an example of ways the DOT can improve to best support the adoption of technology in transportation.

GCOR Committee Suggests Rule Revision to Comply with FRA Regulation

Recently, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) notified the General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR) Committee that GCOR Rule 2.21 (c) - Railroad Supplied Electronic Devices was not in compliance with regulation 49 CFR Part 220.307(d) - Use Outside Freight Locomotive Cabs.

The current GCOR rule omitted the word "outside" regarding when a job briefing was required. Watco Companies has submitted a proposed rule change regarding the sixth bullet of the second paragraph that would read, “Inside or outside the controlling cab of a locomotive, train or on-track equipment, unless there has been a safety briefing and all crew members agree that it is safe to do so.” This proposal will be voted on at the next GCOR committee meeting on September 12.

Currently, ASLRRA has contacted the FRA asking that discretion is utilized regarding the issuance of violations. The GCOR Committee has suggested railroads revise their rules and provide immediate remedial training to all affected
employees. If you have had an issue regarding this rule with field inspectors or have any questions, please contact Jo Strang or JR Gelnar.

FRA Seminars Will Discuss Amendments to 49 CFR Part 219 and 49 CFR Part 243

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will hold three stakeholder educational seminars discussing June 2017 amendments to 49 CFR Part 219 - Control of Alcohol and Drug Use, and implementation requirements of 49 CFR Part 243 - Training, Qualification and Oversight for Safety-Related Railroad Employees.

The regulations were made in response to statutory requirements established by the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008. FRA's discussion of Part 219 will center around the expansion of FRA's drug and alcohol control regulations to include maintenance-of-way employees but will discuss other issues. The Part 243 presentation will present an overview of program compliance requirements and review important upcoming implementation deadlines.

Participation is free and open to the public, but registration is required as the meeting venues can only accommodate a limited number of people. The first seminar will be held May 17 in Scranton, Pa., the second on June 26 in Sacramento, Calif. and the third on August 30 in Kansas City, Mo. Click here for more information or to register.

OSHA Schedules Meeting on Whistleblower Issues

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) scheduled a meeting for June 12 in Washington, D.C. for railroad and trucking industry stakeholders to submit comments regarding whistleblower issues under the agency’s jurisdiction.

The meeting, which is the first of several seeking public input on OSHA's whistleblower program, will gather input as to how OSHA can offer better whistleblower customer service and improve how it explains the whistleblower laws it enforces.

Individuals interested in attending the meeting, either in person or by telephone, must register by May 29. The meeting is free and open to the public.

According to its website, OSHA “enforces the whistleblower provisions of 22 statutes protecting employees who report violations of airline, commercial motor vehicle, consumer product, environmental, financial reform, food safety, health care reform, nuclear, pipeline, public transportation agency, railroad, maritime and securities laws.” More information about whistleblower protection can be found here.

Member News

AAR President and CEO to Retire in 2019

President and CEO of the Association of American Railroads (AAR) Edward Hamberger announced he will retire in early 2019. His more than 20 years as head of the AAR make him the longest-tenured leader of the organization.

“It has been a privilege to help one of America’s vital industries - freight rail - navigate through a period when the fundamentals of Washington, the economy and our industry have evolved,” said Hamberger in a press release.

“From protecting the economic framework that revitalized America’s railroads to clearing the path to developing and deploying new safety technologies, I am extremely proud of the work we have done together over the last two decades, none of which would have been possible without the leadership of our members and the hard work of AAR’s dedicated staff.”

Hamberger has been called to testify before Congress over 85 times during his tenure at the AAR, working to advocate for effective transportation policy and maintain a balanced regulatory environment. Prior to leading the AAR, Hamberger served in other executive and legislative capacities for over 20 years.

The AAR has retained executive search firm Korn Ferry to help find Hamberger’s successor.
OmniTRAX in Talks to Transfer Control of Hudson Bay Railway Company

A group of Manitoba First Nations has partnered with iChurchill Inc., a private Canadian company, in an effort to acquire Hudson Bay Railway Company and Port of Churchill in Manitoba.

ASLRRA member OmniTRAX Inc. owns Hudson Bay Railway, which has been inoperable since flooding in May 2017 washed out portions of the track.

According to a statement from OmniTRAX Canada President Merv Tweed, the company has received several letters of interest regarding acquisition of Hudson Bay Railway, including the Letter of Intent from iChurchill and the First Nations, although no transaction has to date been completed.

Pacific Harbor Line President Chairs World Trade Week

Otis Cliatt II, president of ASLRRA member Pacific Harbor Line, chaired this year’s World Trade Week in Los Angeles, which began earlier this month.

At the annual kickoff breakfast, Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti recognized Cliatt for his leadership of the event, presenting him with a certificate.

Pacific Harbor Line also supported World Trade Week’s Education Initiative by providing two of thirteen scholarships for local college and high school students.

World Trade Week, which was first established in 1926, features a variety of educational programs and events meant to educate the public on the impact of global trade on the national and local economy. This year, over 30 events will be held during the month of May at various locations throughout Southern California.

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.

ASLRRA Meetings and Trainings

Region 2 FRA Training Seminar Now Open for Registration!

This year ASLRRA will offer four FRA Seminars along with one OSHA training course. Three of these courses will be held in conjunction with regional meetings. Click here to register for Region 2 now.
• Region 2 FRA Training, June 12-13, Annapolis, MD
• FRA Roadway Worker Seminar, July 10-11, Reno, NV
• FRA Drug & Alcohol Training Seminar, September 24-26, New Orleans, LA
• FRA Roadway Worker Seminar, October 8-10, Burlington, VT
• OSHA Review Seminar, November 12-14, San Diego, CA

This training is designed to emphasize hazard identification, avoidance, control and prevention, not OSHA standards.

Industry Events

Railroad Liability Seminar

The Belt Railway of Chicago will be hosting the 2018 Railroad Liability Conference, July 18-20, at the Embassy Suites Chicago. If you know someone who is interested in attending, please contact Jacky Hardy or call 319-338-8909. To reserve a room at the Embassy Suites, call 800-564-7732, using group code RLC.

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

Upcoming Webinars

May 30, 2018 - FRA Presentation on Notice of Funding Opportunity for PTC Systems Grants: The U.S. Department of Transportation’s (DOT) Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will present information on its Notice of Funding Opportunity for Positive Train Control (PTC) Systems Grants that are part of the Department’s ongoing efforts to strengthen our country’s rail safety by helping railroads to more rapidly deploy PTC systems. Click here to register.

ASLRRRA Offers On-Demand Webinars

ASLRRRA’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.