ASLRRRA Selects Companies to Provide Grant-Writing Expertise to Member Short Lines

The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRRA) has tapped three experts, Bergmann; HDR, Inc.; and R. L. Banks and Associates, Inc. to assist its member railroads in the submission of grant applications for programs currently available from the Department of Transportation (DOT), and other sources.

Many of these grants, such as the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) and the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Transportation Discretionary Grants programs, have recently been funded for FY18 and have a very short window for submission of applications.

“The FY 18 transportation appropriations bill provided unprecedented funding levels, with $1.5 Billion in BUILD grants vs. $500M in FY17 and $592 million in CRISI grants vs. $300M in FY17,” said Linda Bauer Darr, President of ASLRRRA. “Our new Preferred Provider Grant Writing Center will ensure that our members are well prepared to take advantage of these funding opportunities, which can be used to maintain safe track and grow services to customers or to meet the mandate to comply with PTC.”

ASLRRRA and AAR Submit Joint Comments on Section 106 Exemption

In response to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation’s (ACHP) “Notice of Draft Program Comment to Exempt Effects of Transportation-Related Undertakings Within Rail Rights-of-Way” ASLRRRA and AAR submitted joint comments to the Federal Railroad Administration and ACHP.

The comments urge FRA and ACHP to adopt a final exemption to grant railroads relief from the “burdensome and time-consuming” obligations of Section 106. The exemption would provide the same reprieve from additional reporting and other requirements that interstate highways currently enjoy.

Additionally, ASLRRRA and AAR object to the inclusion of a provision allowing the matter to expire in 20 years. This provision is inconsistent with the highway exemption, which is permanent.

The ACHP’s program comment would exempt certain activities from Section 106 review if the effect those activities would have on historic properties within railroad and rail transit rights-of-way was likely to be minimal or not adverse. Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act mandates a review process for all federally funded and permitted projects that would impact sites listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Read the comments here.

Truck Size and Weight Amendments Not in Senate Appropriations Bills
Last week, the Senate Appropriations Committee and Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (THUD) Appropriations Subcommittee passed the FY19 THUD spending bill, excluding any language to increase truck size and weight.

The ASLRRA policy team spent several days making visits to the offices of Senate appropriators, attending 23 meetings. ASLRRA’s team worked to inform senators about the short line industry’s opposition to any potential federal mandate increasing truck size and weight.

FRA to Host Symposium on PTC Requirements

The Federal Railroad Administration will host its first-ever positive train control (PTC) symposium June 15 in Washington, D.C. The FRA’s PTC experts will join representatives from the 41 railroads mandated to implement PTC systems to discuss requirements for meeting the December 31, 2018 deadline and answer industry questions.

“The PTC Symposium is the latest effort from FRA to ensure that each and every railroad is aware of their obligations and is equipped to meet the Congressionally mandated deadline,” said FRA Administrator Ronald L. Batory in a press release.

Another FRA-sponsored symposium on July 16 will discuss best practices for PTC system field testing and interoperability testing, while a third on August 20 will cover lessons learned and best practices for PTC safety plans.

EPA to Launch Electronic System for Tracking Hazardous Waste Shipments

On June 30 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will launch e-Manifest, a national system for the electronic tracking of hazardous waste shipments.

According to an e-Manifest fact sheet, the system will “modernize the nation’s cradle-to-grave hazardous waste tracking process while saving valuable time, resources and dollars for industry and states.”

With the program, transporters of hazardous waste can prepare manifests electronically for their clients, although they may continue to use paper manifests after the June 30 launch date. Generators and transporters can create, edit and sign manifests, as well as retrieve copies of manifests and their status information.

The EPA estimates that the electronic system will save state and industry users $75 to $90 million each year. The system was established according to the Hazardous Waste Electronic Manifest Establishment Act, which was signed into law in 2012.
Group Talks with Lawmakers About Reviving Tax Credit Bill

On June 7, more than a dozen members of the Legislative Policy Committee (LPC) joined ASLRA’s legislative advocacy team in Washington, D.C. to speak with lawmakers about reenacting the Short Line Maintenance Tax Credit (Section 45G).

LPC members focused on outreach to senators who are in party leadership, or who sit on key Senate committees such as commerce, science and transportation and finance. The legislative group’s message focused on the importance of having the tax credit reenacted as soon as possible so short line and regional railroads can more effectively plan their track investments for the remainder of 2018. Under current law, the Section 45G tax credit expired on December 31, 2017.

Schumer Calls for Plan to Stabilize Oil Shipments

On June 6, U.S. Senator Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) appealed to the Department of Transportation and Department of Energy to work together to develop a plan to require oil companies to stabilize Bakken crude oil prior to its transportation by rail.

Senator Schumer’s request came after reports that crude oil shipments to the northeast have increased to their highest levels since early 2017. According to a 2014 report from the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Bakken crude oil is more volatile than other types of crude oil, which correlates to increased flammability.

House Passes Water Resources Development Act

The U.S. House of Representatives showed overwhelmingly bipartisan support for the Water Resources Development Act of 2018, passing the bill with a vote of 408-2.

The bill authorizes six new Army Corps of Engineers projects and is the first major infrastructure legislation to get passed under the Trump administration.

ASLRA Events

Webinar: The Road to Retirement / June 28

William Kriesel of Bowers & Company CPAs will help participants start developing or reviewing plans to ensure they can be prepared for retirement. Click here to register.

FRA Roadway Worker Safety Seminar / July 10-11

Registration is now open for ASLRA’s upcoming FRA Roadway Worker Safety Seminar conducted by Joe Riley, Headquarter Specialist, RWP & RMM, Federal Railroad Administration. The seminar will be held July 10-11, in Reno, Nev.
This presentation is designed to cover the requirements and the application of the 49 CFR Part 214, Subpart C Roadway Worker Protection and Subpart D Roadway Maintenance Machine regulations as applied to short line properties. The presentation is interactive by nature. This presentation will be helpful to short line engineering and operations managers at all levels - regardless of their experience and knowledge of the RWP and RMM regulations.

Other topics include:
- Analysis of RWP fatalities - historical perspective and current trends
- Compliance vs. enforcement - role of FRA inspector
- FAMES
- Compliance Manual and its usage
- Subpart A—General
- Subpart C—Roadway Worker Protection
- RWP 8 Deadly Cardinal Sins
- Subpart D—On-Track Roadway Maintenance Machines and Hi-Rail Vehicles
- Appendix A to Part 214—Schedule of Civil Penalties
- Defect Codes

Presenters include Riley, a 45-year veteran of the industry, and Corwyn Foster, an 18-year veteran. Both Riley and Foster have lived the regulation from both the railroad side and the enforcement side. Riley, for the past eight years, has provided overall guidance and interpretation for both regulations for FRA’s inspector corps and the nation’s railroads and has shepherded both the Adjacent Controlled Track On-Track Safety Rule and the 2017 Revision to RWP Rule through the rulemaking process.

Space is limited, don’t delay! Registration is $359 and includes lunch on Tuesday and Wednesday. Online registration available until July 3. Hotel information is now available, and discounted rooms are available in our block at $78/night. Discounted hotel rates are available until June 19.

Click here for more information and the full agenda for ASLRRA’s FRA Roadway Worker Safety Seminar.

**Joint Committees Meeting / August 24-25**

The Joint Committees Meeting will be held August 24-25, with individual committee meetings August 26, in Annapolis, Md. and is open to members of all ASLRRA committees. The Technology Committee is hosting this event and will be conducting several educational sessions on topics like PTC, cybersecurity and business automation. All ASLRRA committees are encouraged to submit educational session proposals here. This event is an excellent opportunity to network and collaborate with committee members with a wide variety of short line railroad expertise.

Click here for more ASLRRA Events.

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**Member News**

**Illinois Announces Millions in Grants for Freight Mobility**

On June 5, Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner announced the state would award $241 million in grants to 23 projects that will improve freight mobility and provide long-term benefits to help relieve congestion and provide economic opportunities.
The Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis intermodal facility, where Rauner made his announcement, will receive $1.93 million to rebuild a track alignment, eliminating conflicts with four nearby grade crossings.

Other projects include $34.3 million to reconstruct and add capacity to the U.S. 30-Interstate 80 interchange and $25 million will help separate vehicle and rail traffic at the Brush College Road/Faries Parkway in Decatur.

The Illinois Department of Transportation is using federal funds to administer the grants, which were awarded to projects that met the goals of the state’s freight plan.

**New Tank Car Facility Opens in Maine**

Katahdin Railcar Services (KRS), a subsidiary of ASLRRRA member Central Maine & Quebec Railway (CMQ) opened a new facility for cleaning, repairing and managing railroad tank cars in Derby, Maine on May 31.

The newly renovated 24,000-square-foot building features an automatic, internal cleaning system enabling KRS to clean all types of tank cars using less water. Fully trained and certified staff members can also repair, replace and qualify all tank-car valves. Additionally, KRS will offer complete tank-car fleet management.

The facility’s grand opening included a tour for local political representatives, state officials and other special guests.

**Buckingham Branch Railroad Company Reaches Safety Milestone**

ASLRRRA member Buckingham Branch Railroad Company (BBRR) reached a significant safety milestone May 15, marking one year without an FRA-reportable injury. With BBRR’s 70 employees, that amounts to 150,000 man hours.

BBRR described the three pillars that helped the company and its employees work safely. The three pillars are, “Teach Sound Rules,” “Enforce the Rules” and “Make Safety #1.”

“The BB reached this important goal by making safety our top priority, dedicating the necessary resources to it, and keeping the importance of working safely in front of our people day after day after day,” said CEO Mark Bryant in a press release.

**Grassroots**

**Congressman DeFazio Tours Knife River Corporation Facility**
Congressman Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.) joined transportation stakeholders for a tour and transportation public policy discussion at ASLRA member Knife River Corporation’s Harrisburg, Ore. precast facility.

Representatives from the National Railroad Construction & Maintenance Association (NRC) and the Railway Engineering-Maintenance Suppliers Association (REMSA) organized the tour, which was led by Knife River’s Loren Later.

In addition to the tour, the group’s public policy discussion expressed support for the Building Rail Access for Customers and the Economy (BRACE) Act.

Knife River is the largest producer of construction aggregates, asphalt and ready-mix concrete in Oregon. The company employs over 1,000 people in the state and 5,000 nationwide.

**Industry Events**

**National Railroad Employer Training Seminar / August 8-10**

The National Railroad Employer Training Seminar (NRETS) will take place August 8-10 in Chicago. The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB), in conjunction with the Management Members Office, is hosting the event.

The NRETS is intended for people who work in or manage areas related to service, compensation and contributions reported to the RRB. The training consists of a general opening session, daily breakout sessions and an optional luncheon with a keynote speaker. All training materials will be available in an electronic format, making them easier to share, print and download.

[Click here](#) for more industry events.

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Views & News is published by American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact Amy Krouse, Editor, with any questions or comments.