ASLRA URGES CONGRESS TO TAKE ACTION ON SHORT TERM TAX POLICIES AND ELIMINATE UNCERTAINTY FOR BUSINESSES & INDIVIDUALS

Following yesterday’s House Ways and Means Select Revenue Measures Subcommittee hearing on “Temporary Policy in the Internal Revenue Code,” Chuck Baker, president of the American Short Line and Regional Railroads Association (ASLRA) submitted comments urging Congress to take action on the so-called “tax extender” policies which includes the Short Line Tax Credit.

“The right tax policy can be enormously beneficial to the American economy by incentivizing the capital investment businesses need to grow, innovate and create jobs. Those benefits are significantly reduced when tax policy starts and stops in a temporary short-term fashion. Forward planning is impossible and expensive multi-year projects are difficult to undertake,” noted Chuck Baker in his written comments.

“Particularly in the railroad industry the most meaningful benefits with regard to service and safety come when we can rehabilitate an entire corridor not just a mile here and a mile there. For us, piecemeal investment is only as good as the size of the pieces and one year and sometimes even retroactive extensions are small pieces indeed.”

Small business railroads since 2005 have relied on the Short Line Tax Credit (45G) to elevate their ability to invest in rehabilitation of short line rail, which provides the critical first and last mile of the U.S. freight rail system and ensures that small town and rural American is connected to the U.S. economy.

Baker Leads Short Line Panel at Railway Age’s NEXTGEN Freight Rail Conference

Chuck Baker moderated a panel entitled, “The Evolving Power of Short Lines” on March 12 in Chicago, IL showcasing how our industry is changing to meet tomorrow’s challenges. Special thanks to ASLRA members Peter Touesnard, Chief Commercial Officer, OmniTRAX Inc., Peter Gilbertson, President & Chief Executive Officer, Anacostia Rail Holdings Company, and Josh Sabin, Director of Administration, Iowa Northern Railway who provided their expertise and insights.

Scholarships Available to Help Members Attend ASLRA CONNECTIONS Convention

To increase participation in its CONNECTIONS Convention, ASLRA is awarding up to four scholarships to railroad members, with an emphasis on those who have never before attended the convention. The scholarships will pay for convention registration, up to three nights’ stay at the Orlando World Center Marriott Hotel, and travel expenses up to $300.
Scholarship applications are due this Friday, March 15. Applicants must submit a form describing their background in the railroad industry and their reason for wanting to attend the CONNECTIONS Convention. ASLRA will decide upon and inform scholarship recipients next week. More details, as well as contact information, are included in the application link above.

**SLSI Looking for New Director of Research**

The Short Line Safety Institute is looking for someone to fill its newly created director of research and organizational development position.

The job involves designing, developing, overseeing and analyzing key SLSI programs. This person will also generate reports based on the results of these programs.

“We are looking for a candidate that has a passion for safety, and expertise in applying systematic approaches to programmatic design and execution,” said SLSI Executive Director Tom Murta in a press release.

Click here to read the full job description and requirements. Interested applicants must submit a cover letter and resume by 5 p.m. Eastern time, March 18.

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**Canadian Transportation Agency Releases Rail Regulation Report**

The Canadian Transportation Agency has released its What We Heard Report, which summarizes information gathered from rail industry stakeholders about the best ways to update and clarify existing rail regulations and CTA guidelines and tools.

The public consultation process, which took place over four months, included representatives from Canadian and U.S. passenger and freight railway companies, rail tourism operators, industry associations, grain shipper associations, associations representing logistics and freight management, private companies who are users of rail and other industry experts.

Key issues discussed included administrative monetary penalties and insurance filing for freight rail operations. Based on the results, the CTA will determine how to update rail regulations.

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**ASLRA’s Member Discount Program Now Includes Grant Writing Services!**

Click to learn more about these Preferred Providers:
White House Outlines Plans for Infrastructure in 2020 Budget

Along with the recently released 2020 budget, the White House has issued an infrastructure fact sheet that outlines the Administration’s plans to invest at least $1 trillion in infrastructure.

The plan includes a desire to pass a long-term surface transportation reauthorization bill. Also noted are several targeted investments, such as $2 billion for the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program and $1 billion for the Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant program, formerly known as TIGER grants.

U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao recently suggested, however, that it might make more sense to combine a surface transportation reauthorization bill with an infrastructure bill instead of trying to pass each bill separately.

Subcommittee Hearing Shows Lawmaker Support for Tax Credit

On March 12 the Committee on Way and Means, Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures held a hearing on temporary policy in the internal revenue code. ASLRA was invited to submit testimony for the record and was pleased to hear multiple members of the subcommittee voice their support for the 45G short line railroad tax credit. The path forward for 45G permanency remains somewhat fluid but Tuesday’s hearing was a good reminder that 45G is still a priority for many members of the House Ways and Means Committee.

We are happy to report that progress on both the bills - H.R. 510 & S. 203 - that would make the 45G short line tax credit permanent continues. As of this writing H.R. 510 has 137 cosponsors and S. 203 has 27, which is the earliest introduction and fastest accumulation of cosponsor support that 45G has ever experienced. Thank you to everyone who has taken the time to send a few emails or make a few phone calls in support of these bills - the sustained effort continues to pay off in a big way!

As always, please also consider inviting your representative to your railroad. If your representative is new to Congress take some time to tell him or her about your operations. Members of Congress enjoy hearing from the businesses they represent and many would appreciate an opportunity to learn more by visiting your railroad. Feel free to reach out to your team in D.C. if you are interested in hosting an event. We are here to help. Contact Will Resch at Will.resch@cch-llc.com with questions.
ASLRRA Announcements

ASLRRA Partner Elavon Offers Members Preferred Pricing on Payment Processing Program

ASLRRA has partnered with Elavon, a leading payment processor providing short line railroads and suppliers with innovative payment solutions to enhance their business. Elavon’s simple, cost effective payment processing program is backed by the highest standard of customer service. Additionally, ASLRRA members receive preferred partner pricing.

Visit ASLRRA’s website to learn more about the advantages of choosing Elavon for all your payment processing needs, and visit Elavon in booth #605 at ASLRRA’s 2019 CONNECTIONS Convention next month in Orlando.

ASLRRA’s CONNECTIONS Convention Features Talks from Industry Leaders

Attendees at ASLRRA’s CONNECTIONS Convention, held April 6-9 in Orlando, Fla., can hear from short line railroad industry leaders like ASLRRA’s Board Chair Judy Petry and President Chuck Baker. There are also chances to participate in question and answer sessions with keynote speakers Surface Transportation Board Vice Chairman Patrick Fuchs and Association of American Railroads Senior Economist Luisa Fernandez-Willey.

And, like education sessions, discussion panels are geared toward specific areas. This includes the technology focus panel featuring representatives from Carload Express, Genesee & Wyoming, Norfolk Southern, BNSF Railway and Watco Companies. Follow this link to learn more or to register.

Support the Short Line Education Fund with a Donation to the Silent Auction

ASLRRA’s Short Line Education Fund addresses a variety of interests, including developing better online tools for webinars, training and communication; supporting research into the short line railroad industry’s local and national impact; and developing curriculum for leadership programs. Without member support for events like the silent auction at ASLRRA’s annual CONNECTIONS Convention, it would be more difficult to achieve the Association’s goals.

In addition to donations from members, ASLRRA is hoping to have 100 percent board participation. The Education Fund is a 501c3 nonprofit organization and donations from individuals and corporations are tax deductible. There are no limitations on donations.

Industry products and services are always a big hit and popular items include the latest technology and gadgets, video gaming consoles, digital cameras and recorders, vacation getaways, jewelry and luxury items, and of course anything train related. Cash donations are always welcome and can be used to sponsor consignment items. Complete the 2019 Donation Form to make a donation, or contact Sabrina Waiss with any questions. Thank you for your support!

Register Now for Railroad Day 2019

Railroad Day on Capitol Hill provides members of the railroad industry the chance to travel to Washington, D.C. and speak with legislators about issues that matter to them. This year’s Railroad Day is May 8.

The size of the event, geographical diversity of participants and unified nature of the railroad industry’s message make this day the most effective way to communicate the importance of railroads to federal, state and local legislators. ASLRRA encourages its members to participate.
The day opens with an informational session, followed by appointments on Capitol Hill from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and closing with a reception at Union Station, which will be attended by hundreds of representatives from the railroad industry as well as various government agencies. Follow the link above for more information or to register.

New Members

ASLRRA is pleased to welcome the following new members:

**AllTranstek, LLC.**, based in Downers Grove, Ill., is North America’s largest provider of railcar fleet management, technical services, and strategic consulting with 300,000 railcars currently under contract. Our contact is **SVP & Chief Commercial Officer Richard Kloster**.

**Dyer & Peterson, P.C.**, based in Parsippany, N.J., provides legal services to short line and Class I railroads. John Fiorilla, who recently joined the firm, has more than 40 years’ experience in the area having served as in-house and local counsel for railroads. Our contact is **Chair - Transportation Practice John Fiorilla**.

**Hoyt Corporation**, based in Englewood, N.J., is a leading manufacturer of contacts for contractors, electrical starters, traction motors, on board electrical systems and controls. Since 1955, the company has been providing electrical contacts to transit agencies, mass transit and locomotive industries. Our contact is **President Michael Bradford**.

**J. Lanfranco Fastener Systems USA Inc.**, based in Durham, N.C., is a manufacturer of safety critical bolted joints. Its lock nuts have been tested in the harshest climates, high shock and vibrations applications. Whether it’s high-speed trains, metro systems, transit or freight cars, there is always one common focus: Keep it moving and keep it safe. Our contact is **Sales Manager Marc Lamarche**.
ASLRAA Events

Webinars

Sleep Apnea Diagnosis, Protocol, Compliance and Regulation - 3/14/2019
Join Dr. Alan Lankford of SleepSafe Drivers for a discussion of sleep apnea diagnosis and compliance for safety sensitive employees in the rail industry, including clarification of today’s common misconceptions.

SLSI Security Plans Webinar - 3/27/2019
In a webinar hosted by the Short Line Safety Institute, join Safety Specialist Lisa Matsinger of the Federal Railroad Administration to discuss security plans, awareness and other critical components.

Click here for more ASLRA events.

Industry Events

Click here for a listing of industry events.

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