May 8, 2019

ASLRA OFFICES ARE MOVING FRIDAY, MAY 10 – There may be a delay in communications during the day as we are relocating to the 5th floor.

Please update your mailing records to:
50 F Street, NW Suite 500*
Washington, DC 20001
*Suite number is new

Today Is Railroad Day on Capitol Hill!

Today, more than 400 railroad industry stakeholders will participate in meetings with 350 lawmakers’ offices focused on educating lawmakers about the issues that impact our industry. More than 550 registered to take part in some aspect of Railroad Day.

This year, participants will focus on conveying the importance of the short line tax credit, which would enable small railroads to invest more money in infrastructure. Another key topic is the rail industry’s opposition to any legislation allowing increases in truck size and weight, and a desire for balanced economic regulation of rail.

“This is the single day that the whole industry comes together to exercise our first amendment rights, to petition our government on issues that are important to us and to the customers and communities we serve,” said ASLRA President Chuck Baker in a press release. “Freight rail is critical to America's continued growth and prosperity, supporting millions of jobs at agricultural, manufacturing, and energy facilities across the country. Our issues are ones that Congress should care about - spurring economic growth, proving safe and environmentally friendly transportation, and ensuring every industry and geography has access to the U.S. and global economy.”

Railroad Day began 20 years ago, and has become one of the most organized and comprehensive industry days in Washington. Representatives connected to all aspects of the railroad business will be in attendance, including industry, labor, Class I railroads, short line railroads, shippers and manufacturers.

Pennsylvania Announces Approval of Rail Infrastructure Projects – Nine ASLRA Member Projects Selected

On April 29 Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf announced the approval of 27 freight rail improvement projects, along with the amount of money awarded to each project. The projects are expected to create and sustain 225 jobs statewide.
“Keeping goods and services moving across Pennsylvania’s more than 5,000 miles of freight track is vital to the state’s economy,” said Governor Wolf in a press release. “These investments in our rail infrastructure will continue to support business development and create new jobs throughout the state.”

Nine of the 27 projects will benefit ASLRRA member railroads, with state funding ranging from $2.8 million to $210,000. See a list of ASLRRA member projects below.

**Allegheny Valley Railroad** -- $1.9 million to raise, line and resurface approximately 34 miles of track on the W&P subdivision.

**Delaware Lackawanna Railroad** -- $683,200 for rehabilitation and extension of two yard tracks, construction of a retaining wall and purchase of unloading equipment.

**East Penn Railroad** -- $210,000 to rehabilitate about two miles of Bristol Line track and extend a rail siding, and $500,000 for new ties and rail to improve approximately 27 miles of track on the Octoraro Line.

**Lycoming Valley Railroad Company** -- $531,727 to replace ties and surface roughly 3.5 miles of track.

**Nittany and Bald Eagle Railroad** -- $309,880 for construction of a 500-foot double-ended side track.

**RJ Corman** -- $2.8 million to rehabilitate roughly 56 track miles on the WBV subdivision, including replacing ties and bridge timbers and resurfacing track.

**Southwest Pennsylvania Railroad** -- $1.5 million to install continuous welded rail and realign and surface approximately 2.6 miles of track on the FM&P subdivision.

**Union County Industrial Railroad** -- $253,500 for construction of a 1,700-foot siding and two turnouts.

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**Association of American Railroads Issues Amended Circular OT-55-Q**

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) issued an amended version of Circular No. OT-55-Q, making changes in line with those made in the Canadian Transportation of Dangerous Goods Regulations (TDGR).

The amended circular deletes the Canadian-only “T” code section from appendix A and B. Changes became effective May 1, and supercede all previous versions of OT-55.

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**STB Releases Rate Reform Task Force Report**
The Surface Transportation Board (STB) released a report from its Rate Reform Task Force making recommendations for changes to the rate review methodologies and processes used by the STB.

The STB formed the task force in January 2018 to examine existing rate review processes and propose new ones based on the climate of the current transportation world. Changes were made based on informal meetings with various stakeholders, including shipper and carrier representatives, academics and practitioners.

In addition to other key recommendations, the task force suggested ways to reduce the cost and complexity of small rate disputes, simplification of the existing Stand-Alone Cost test and increasing the accessibility of the Three-Benchmark comparison approach.

**FMCSA Website Provides Information Regarding Federally Mandated Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse**

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has released information about its drug and alcohol clearinghouse on a new website, which provides resources helping CDL drivers and their employers prepare for their roles in the Commercial Driver’s License Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse.

Creation of the clearinghouse was mandated by Congress in 2016. Starting in fall 2019, users can start creating accounts allowing access to the clearinghouse once it becomes operational on January 6, 2020. Once the site is active, employers will be required to report and search for information regarding driver drug and alcohol program violations.

Information on the website can be useful to railroads who employ workers with a CDL. Those who visit the website can also sign up for email updates. Anyone with further questions can also email clearinghouse@dot.gov.

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**Railroad Day Bolsters Leads to More Tax Credit Bill Co-Sponsors**

With the conclusion of Railroad Day on Capitol Hill, ASLRRA hopes in-person meetings between lawmakers and rail industry representatives will garner more legislative support for two bills meant to permanently extend the tax credit for railroad track maintenance, also known as the 45G tax credit.

The House bill, H.R. 510 or Building Rail Access for Customers and the Economy (BRACE) Act of 2019, is closing in on the simple majority. As of May 3, there were 177 bipartisan co-sponsors out of the necessary 218.
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The Senate version of the House bill, S.203, has 33 bi-partisan co-sponsors.

ASLRAA Events

Webinars

Tax Reform Traps and Issues - 5/15/2019
This webinar will discuss some of the tax traps and pitfalls related to the 2017 Tax Reform Act and explain how to deal with them.

Shaping Your Grant Application for the USDOT Reviewers - 05/16/2019
This webinar focuses on tips to improve the competitiveness of your FY 2019 BUILD application.

Click here for more ASLRAA 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.