ASLRRAs’s Short Line Connector Magazine is Now Available Online

The summer 2019 issue of ASLRRAs’s magazine Short Line Connector is now available for viewing or download. The issue, which is the Association’s last, provides in-depth coverage of the 2019 CONNECTIONS Convention, an overview of Railroad Day 2019, an update on the ASLRRAs Education Fund and more.

In the CONNECTIONS Convention wrap-up, ASLRRAs profiles the winners of its annual awards, including the Business Development Awards, Safety Awards, Distinguished Service Award and Veterans Recruitment Award. A review of the convention Expo Hall gives readers a close look at how exhibitors and participants were able to engage each other and network, while an article about the convention’s education sessions highlights the many opportunities participants had to learn about issues in various areas related to railroads and railroad companies.

Another article describes the mission of the Association’s Short Line Education Fund and current projects and goals. Additionally, the Partner Perspectives feature looks at Operation Lifesaver Inc. and the organization’s efforts to educate the public about rail safety.

Interviews with ASLRRAs’s new president, Chuck Baker, and incoming Board Chairman Doc Claussen help readers become more familiar with some of the Association’s leaders, and a new member feature introduces the companies that have recently joined ASLRRAs.

ASLRRAs is discontinuing its magazine to focus on communicating with its members through more widely distributed and timely venues, such as the weekly Views & News newsletter, webinars, social media, ASLRRAs’s website, press releases, and through industry trade magazines.

Separate Business Deals Result in New Ownership for Pioneer Railcorp and Regional Rail

A series of recent business moves has seen several short line railroad companies changing hands. On May 17 BRX Transportation Holdings, an entity formed by Brookhaven Rail Partners and Related Infrastructure, announced an agreement to acquire Pioneer Railcorp, which owns over a dozen ASLRRAs member railroads, other short lines and several railroad businesses.

According to the merger agreement, BRX will acquire Pioneer Railcorp for $18.81 per share in cash, and the deal should be finalized in the third quarter of this year. Brookhaven Rail Partners is an affiliate of Denver-based Brookhaven Capital Partners, a privately held, real estate and infrastructure investment and management firm.

In a separate deal, Los Angeles-based firm Levine Leichtman Capital Partners announced it had completed the sale of Regional Rail, LLC to 3i Group plc. Regional Rail operates two ASLRRAs-member railroads and supplier member Diamondback Signal, as well as another short line.
“We have truly enjoyed our partnership with the team at LLCP, who helped support our growth initiatives,” said Regional Rail CEO Al Sauer. “We will truly miss working with them but are excited to enter our next phase of growth under 3i.”

ASLRRA Submits Comments on Special Permit Request to Ship LNG by Rail, Comment Period Extended by PHMSA

ASLRRA and the Association of American Railroads (AAR) have submitted comments in response to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration’s draft environmental assessment for a special permit request for transporting liquefied natural gas (LNG) by rail.

The comments make clear that support for the permit is based on several points made by ASLRRA and AAR to clarify statements made in the draft environmental assessment. These points include correcting inconsistent information, such as different measurements for outer shell thickness in separate places in the draft.

ASLRRA and AAR also note that the AAR’s Tank Car Committee has formed a task force to study the DOT-113 specification for LNG and review the LNG tender standards for natural gas as a locomotive fuel, and the Tank Car Committee will report the results of that review to PHMSA as soon as recommendations are available.

PHMSA has extended the comment period for the draft environmental assessment by thirty days, a move in response to a letter from Chair of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Peter DeFazio (D-Ore.), and Representative Tom Malinowski (D-N.J.) requesting the extra time. The comment period will now close on August 7.

Reminder: Small Business Administration Hosts Regional Regulatory Roundtables

The Small Business Administration’s Office of Advocacy will host four Regional Regulatory Reform Roundtables in July, with the first taking place today in Anchorage, Alaska.

Other roundtables will take place July 16 in Bangor, Maine; July 17 in North Conway, N.H.; and July 19 in Burlington, Vt. All meetings are free and open to the public.
The purpose of the meetings is to enable small businesses to discuss which federal agency regulations are burdensome and should be considered for reform or elimination. The Office of Advocacy is looking to identify regulatory issues for small businesses, gather information on businesses’ first-hand experiences with troublesome regulations and educate participants as to the ways the Office of Advocacy and Small Business Administration can help small businesses.

Follow the link above for more information or to register for the meetings. Those unable to attend the roundtables can still submit comments and concerns through a form on the website.

**Mobile Apps from the FRA and PHMSA Help Users Access Important Information Quickly and Easily**

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) both have mobile apps designed to help users access important information on cellular phones and other devices.

The FRA’s apps include the Rail Crossing Locator, which helps locate highway-rail grade crossings and explore detailed information from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s grade crossing databases. PATT provides a post-accident toxicological testing decision guide to help railroads and contractors decide whether an accident qualifies for testing under 49 CFR Part 219 Subpart C, enabling employers to quickly decide whether testing is necessary and protect employees from erroneous testing.

Another FRA app, HOS Manual, helps users navigate the hours of service requirements found in 49 CFR Part 228, based on information organized according to various railroad user groups. Fourth is the FRA’s Compilation of State Laws and Regulations Affecting Highway-Rail Grade Crossings publication in app form, providing all laws and regulations for 50 states and the District of Columbia that address highway-rail grade crossings.

Similarly, PHMSA provides its 2016 Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG) as a mobile app. The ERG 2016 app provides first responders with a go-to resource to help deal with hazmat accidents during the critical first 30 minutes. It contains an indexed list of dangerous goods and the associated ID number, the general hazards they pose and recommended safety precautions.

All the above apps are available for download for Apple devices in the App Store. Availability is limited for Android devices, although PHMSA’s ERG 2016 can be found in Google Play.
Farm Bureau Supports Railroad Tax Credit in Letter to Senate Finance Committee Task Force

The American Farm Bureau Federation has sent letters to the various task forces set up by the Senate Finance Committee to look at 42 temporary tax provisions that have expired or will expire by the end of the year. In writing to the Cost Recovery Task Force, which covers 45G, the Farm Bureau urged task force members to recommend making the railroad tax credit permanent.

In the letter, American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall wrote, “Short line railroads are first- and last-mile carriers that connect small towns, farms and factories to the national rail network, creating jobs and stimulating economic growth in thousands of local communities.”

Other tax incentives the bureau addressed included some related to renewable fuel and energy. It also called for the repeal of the Health Insurance Tax.

Delaware Senator Tom Carper Visits ASLRRa Member Delmarva Central Railroad Company

Senator Tom Carper (D-Del.) visited ASLRRa member Delmarva Central Railroad Company (DCR) on July 1, touring the company’s operations headquarters in Harrington, Del., viewing and riding locomotives and participating in a policy discussion with DCR’s leadership team.

During their meeting, representatives from DCR spoke with Carper about several issues important to short line railroads, including the 45G railroad infrastructure tax credit.

The group also discussed rail safety, and Carper learned about the importance of freight rail to the Delmarva Peninsula and the impact of rail on the region’s economy.

Lake State Railway Hosts Congressman Dan Kildee for Tour and Discussion of Transportation Public Policy

On June 28, 2019, Congressman Dan Kildee (D-MI-5) joined representatives from the Lake State Railway for a tour and transportation public policy discussion at Lake State Railway Headquarters in Saginaw, Michigan.

Lake State Railway has invested millions of dollars rehabilitating the railroad to better serve customers and improve safety and the 45G Short Line Railroad Tax Credit has provided an important part of that
investment. Since his election in 2012, Congressman Kildee has been a leading advocate of the credit and the railroad. Lake State employees and shippers are very grateful for his support.

“Railroads are an important part of Michigan’s economy and play a critical role in connecting businesses and farmers with markets around the world. I’m grateful for the opportunity to once again meet with Lake State Railway and receive an update on their work to boost mid-Michigan’s economy. I will continue to work in Congress to invest in Michigan’s infrastructure and make our region more economically competitive,” said Congressman Kildee.

The tour was led by John Rickoff, President and CEO of Lake State Railway and Shasta Duffey, V.P. Marketing and Sales for Lake State Railway Company. The group toured Lake State Railway facilities and viewed one of several Lake State Railway locomotives.

The group discussed the challenge of finding sufficient funds to maintain America’s freight railroad network and advocated for support of the Building Rail Access for Customers and the Economy (BRACE) Act. The BRACE act will allow the nation’s small, local freight railroads to increase their reinvestments to upgrade and expand the “first and last mile” of transportation infrastructure, benefitting Michigan communities and shippers that depend on affordable and competitive access to rail-based freight shipping.

The group also highlighted the needs for increased funding for the Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD), and the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Improvements (CRI$) grant programs as part of the Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations package. Together, these grant programs fund both public and private transportation projects that are of regional significance and enhance user safety.

In Michigan, 21 small railroads operate over 2,800 track miles and employ nearly 500 people.

Representative Kildee aboard an LSRC locomotive.
ASLRRRA Welcomes New Member

ASLRRRA is pleased to welcome Rail Power Services, LLC, operating as RPS Locomotive Services, is a Seattle, Washington-based firm that provides locomotive maintenance and repair services, modification, overhauls and upgrades. It also provides PTC installation services, LDVR installs and minor/major repairs. Painting services and wreck repair are also available.

Our Contact: Owner/President Rob Barrow

ASLRRRA Announcements

Final Days to Register for the GCOR Training Seminar in Iowa

There are only a few days left to register online for ASLRRRA and Iowa Northern Railways’ General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR) training July 16-18 in Waterloo, Iowa.

This comprehensive three-day training seminar is intended for railroads who have adopted the GCOR as their operating rules and may be used to meet operating rules training as required by 49 CFR Part 240, 242 and 214 Subpart C. The seminar will be taught by ASLRRRA’s Vice President of Safety & Compliance, JR Gelnar, and Iowa Northern Railway’s Assistant General Manager, Mark Vaughn.

Visit the registration page for registration and agenda details and to access the online hotel registration link.

ASLRRRA Webinars

Check Out ASLRRRA’s Top Rated On Demand Webinars

ASLRRRA has a wealth of educational webinars available online at the click of a mouse. Visit the On Demand Webinars resource library on the ASLRRRA website to access dozens of relevant and timely webinar recordings on a wide range of topics, including some of our most popular Marketing & Business Development titles:

*Not in my Backyard: Responding/Reacting to NIMBYism in the Community*
Presented By: Janet Gilbert, Partner, Fletcher & Sippel LLC
Using Social Media as a Business Development Tool
Presented By: Stacey Mansfield, Director of Public Relations, Norfolk Southern

A Practical Guide to the Railroad Industry Agreement (RIA)
Presented By: Keith Borman, ASLRRA SVP & General Counsel & Mike Ogborn, Ogborn Consulting Group, LLC

Access these popular recordings and dozens more covering Finance, Communications, Human Resources and Technology - by visiting ASLRRA’s On Demand Webinars resource library. On Demand Webinars are available FREE to ASLRRA members and by subscription to non-members.

How Short Line and Regional Railroads Can Shift to Digital - 7/31/2019
CloudMoyo’s Ashok Madhavan will outline the need for a cultural shift in railroads to adopt a safety-first approach and show how the railroad industry can leverage technology in an effort to build a strong safety culture.

Marijuana and CBD - New Drug Testing Issues - 8/7/2019
Many state laws legalizing marijuana and cannabidiol (CBD) use have created confusion, and states’ laws are now impacting non-DOT testing programs. This presentation will review the federal regulations, current issues around marijuana and CBD, and address evolving state measures.

Click here for more ASLRRA events.

Industry Events

FRA Administrator Ron Batory is Keynote Speaker at 2019 Michigan Rail Conference

Federal Railroad Administrator Ron Batory is the keynote speaker at this year’s Michigan Rail Conference held August 7-9 in Lansing, Mich. The theme for 2019 is Think Global, Act Local.

CN’s Vice President, Southern Region Derek Taylor will provide the conference’s opening remarks. Conference sessions are based on categories such as new technology in rail, crossing safety, international connections and local opportunities and impacts. Pre-conference activities include a golf outing fundraiser, while field visits comprise post-conference events.

Registration the event has been extended until July 12, after which late registration fees will apply. Follow the link for more information or to register.

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.