ASLRRA Joint Committee Meetings Drive Association’s Work Forward

ASLRRA’s Engineering, General Counsel, Mechanical, Technology, Supplier, Safety & Training and Young Professionals Committees met August 20 – 22, 2019 at the Cummins, Inc. Conference Center in Columbus, Ind. In addition to presentations from industry leaders, the Committees each shared an update of their work, and held closed meetings to plan for the balance of 2019. Tours were arranged for participants of the Cummins Technology Center, the Seymour Engine Plant, and the Columbus History Restoration Center. It was also announced that Barry McClure, executive vice president, Ironhorse Resources, Inc., was elected as chair of the ASLRRA Finance and Administration Committee. ASLRRA wishes to thank Cummins, Inc. for their generosity of time and effort as the hosts of the meeting.

South Dakota DOT Announces Intent to Sell Short Line Railroad Properties

The South Dakota Department of Transportation has released an Invitation For Proposals (IFP) to purchase several rail lines and is accepting proposals until November 21, 2019. Interested parties can access an official version of the IFP, IFP attachments, addenda, question and answer forum, and link to the South Dakota electronic bidding system and required forms by visiting the following Department website and clicking on the item “November 21, 2019, Proposal to Purchase RR Lines.”

Questions about the South Dakota electronic bidding system may be directed to Becky Hoffman, the Department’s Bid Letting Engineer, at (605) 773-8386 or Becky.Hoffman@state.sd.us. The Department will not accept any other telephone or oral requests. All questions, comments, and requests for additional information should be submitted in writing to the Department’s Q&A forum.

Position Available: Director, Office of Safety Analysis

The FRA is looking for an executive to serve as the Director, Office of Safety Analysis for the Office of Railroad Safety. The Director is the principal program advisor to both the Deputy Associate Administrator and the Associate Administrator in advancing the mission of FRA railroad safety. More info: https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/538902000
USDOT Proposes New Process for Environmental Review

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is seeking public opinion on two “interim” policies: One calls for limiting the number of pages in environmental impact statements (EIS) and the other would coordinate federal reviews for infrastructure projects under the “One Federal Decision” executive order with the goal of completing environmental review within two years.

According to notice published in the Federal Register, the USDOT is proposing to limit the text of draft and final EIS to 150 pages, but recommends that such statements not exceed 75 pages.

The department is proposing the rule because lengthy EIS documents, “containing extraneous detail and needless data,” have added to the costs and time necessary to complete the environmental review process, according to the notice.

Meanwhile, the department is proposing a rule stemming from an executive order signed two years ago that mandated federal agencies to use a “One Federal Decision” process for major infrastructure projects, or those that require authorizations by multiple federal agencies. The proposed rule calls for the environmental review to be coordinated by one lead federal agency.

The order establishes the goal of completing the review of such projects within two years. In addition, all federal authorization decisions should be completed within 90 days of the record of decision.

Comments on the proposed rules are due Sept. 23. The ASLRRRA policy team is reviewing these policies for impact on short line railroads.

ASLRRRA, NRC Submit Request to Amend Part 243 and Delay Implementation Dates

On July 31, 2019, ASLRRRA and the National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association (NRC) submitted a petition to delay the implementation dates of the so-called “training rules” until a response is provided to their June 28, 2019. The June 28 petition called for the amendment of 49 CFR Part 243 in order to relieve short line and regional railroads and railroad contractors of substantial and unnecessary regulatory burdens without reducing safety. Specifically, Petitioners seek a two year delay of the implementation dates in sections 243.101(a)(2) (change the implementation date from May 1, 2021 to May 1, 2023), 243.201(a)(2) (change implementation date from May 1, 2023 to May 1, 2025), and 243(e)(2) (change implementation date from May 1, 2023 to May 1, 2025). Alternatively, Petitioners seek a suspension of these implementation dates pending the FRA’s consideration of the June 28, 2019 Petition.

FRA to Host Webinar for CRISI Grant Applications on September 4

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) is providing a webinar on FRA’s FY 19 CRISI Grant Program, authorized by the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act with over $244 million in Federal funds available for projects that will strengthen intercity passenger and freight rail, support capital projects, and boost safety initiatives including the implementation of positive train control, improved highway-rail grade crossings, and congestion mitigation.
During the webinar, FRA will provide information about the grant program, new FY 19 updates and requirements, and how to apply for grant funding. Additionally, FRA will share expertise on preparing Benefit-Cost Analyses for proposed CRISI projects. When registering for the webinar, registrants are encouraged to submit questions for the webinar’s Q&A session.

ASLRA members - contact one of our Preferred Providers to assist in your grant process.

Position Available: Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Railroad Safety
The FRA is looking for an executive to serve as the Deputy Associate Administrator (DAA) for the Office of Railroad Safety. The DAA is the principal advisor to the Associate Administrator in advancing the mission of FRA railroad safety. More info: https://www.usajobs.gov/GetJob/ViewDetails/538901700

Congressman Finkenauer, 45G Co-Sponsor, Visits ASLRA Member Iowa Northern Railway
On August 27, 2019 U.S. Representative Abby Finkenauer (IA-1) continued her infrastructure tour through Iowa’s 1st congressional district at Iowa Northern Railway Company. Alongside officials from Iowa Northern and GoRail, the congresswoman toured the railroad’s operations center and rail yard, as well as trying her hand at a locomotive simulator. Iowa Northern, a short line railroad that runs diagonally through Iowa from Manly to Cedar Rapids, handles over 60,000 cars per year.

“Railroads, from the short line operators like Iowa Northern to the largest Class I companies, are critical connectors for our state’s exports—from Iowa corn and farm products to ethanol and manufactured goods,” said Rep. Finkenauer, who serves on the House Small Business Committee in addition to the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.
Rep. Finkenauer is a co-sponsor of the bipartisan-backed House bill (H.R. 510) to make the Short Line Tax Credit permanent. Commonly referred to as 45G, this tax credit has enabled short line railroads like Iowa Northern to privately invest over $4 billion since its inception. The credit, which has been expired since December 31, 2017, not only bolsters safety by helping small railroads upgrade rail lines, it also helps them boost efficiency while providing crucial first- and last-mile service.

The Iowa Northern is an industry leader in prioritizing safety, hosting the Short Line Safety Institute’s new Leadership Development Program for 12 short line railroads earlier this year, and earning an American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) Jake Award for safety performance in 2018.

“We’re proud of the work we do every day to connect the Iowa economy to markets across the state, nation and beyond,” said Daniel R. Sabin, president of Iowa Northern. “With three Class I rail interchanges, our customers—including 20 grain elevators, two ethanol plants, two mineral processing facilities and many other commodity shippers—have access to the entire North American rail network.”

Rep. Finkenauer (IA-1) and State Rep. Bob Kressig (Cedar Falls) learn about Iowa Northern’s day-to-day operations from General Manager Bill Magee.

ASLRRA Out and About

ASLRRA Staff Visit Convention 2020 Site in Grapevine, Texas

Kathy Keeney, ASLRRA’s Vice President of Membership and Business Development and Amy Westerman, ASLRRA’s Vice President of Meetings, and Barbara Hutchinson, Meeting Consultant attended a comprehensive site visit in preparation for ASLRRA’s Annual Connections Convention 2020. ASLRRA is excited to be returning to the Dallas area for our annual convention at the Gaylord Texan May 2-5, 2020.
ASLRRA New Members

ASLRRA is delighted to welcome the following new members:

**Making Tracks Media, LLC**, based in Lyndhurst, Ohio, develops and presents training (safety, operations, locomotives, freight cars, 49 CFR 243, etc.) for the railroad industry.

Our Contact: President Michael Fitzpatrick

**Rail Fortus, LLC**, based in Columbia, Kentucky, provides new and remanufactured locomotive components and assemblies. In addition to specialty items, it manufactures seats, toilets, wiper motors, compression and equalizer valves, and custom tools.

Our Contact: President & Owner Josh Sutherland

**Rogue Valley Terminal Railroad Corporation**, based in White City, Oregon, owns and operates about 14 miles of track in Oregon. Traffic on the RVT includes aggregates, chemicals and forest products. It also offers transloading and railcar storage and repair services. We thank Heather Anckner of Rockwood Steel for recommending the railroad join ASLRRA.

Our Contact: President & General Manager Scott DeVries

ASLRRA Announcements

**F & A and General Counsel Symposium to Focus On Hot Topics**

The 2019 Finance & Administration Seminar and General Counsel Symposium takes place October 9-11, immediately following ASLRRA’s Eastern Region Meeting in Columbus, Ohio. Don’t miss engaging sessions that will benefit human resources, finance and legal professionals at all levels of your organization. Hot topics include a review of state marijuana laws and their impact on railroads, active shooter safety plans, Supreme Court decisions affecting sales and use tax, cybersecurity prevention and mitigation, PTC vendor review and more. [Register](#) and book your hotel room today!
ASLRRA Webinars

9/17/2019 - Leveraging Analytics & Automation for Effective Crew Mgmt. Sr. Railroad Consultant and Program Manager Shannon Bloxom, CloudMoyo, will outline the challenges that crew managers face in their day-to-day jobs and look at how to automate processes for crew managers, streamlining workflows and leveraging the power of crew analytics to drive efficiencies in crew management functions.

10/2/2019 – Effective on the Job (OTJ) Training Strategies- The daily challenge of handling large trainee counts, infrastructure for training for specific job roles, and the management of training requirements in 49 CFR 243 is real. Organizations are often left wanting for effective, performance-based strategies that deliver effective training while meeting compliance at the same time. Sr. Railroad Consultant Ashok Madhavan, CloudMoyo, will cover strategies which can make your OJT programs simple, effective, and compliant in today’s rail transportation industry.

Click here for more ASLRRA 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.