Registration is Open for ASLRRA’s 2019 CONNECTIONS Convention

ASLRRA has opened registration for its annual CONNECTIONS Convention, held April 6-9 at the Marriott World Center in Orlando, Fla.

This year’s convention includes a variety of speakers and educational sessions, social events and networking opportunities, and an expo hall full of exhibitors and activities. Federal Railroad Administration Administrator Ron Batory will speak, as will ASLRRA Chair Judy Petry. There will also be an ASLRRA PAC event at SeaWorld, a golf outing and Young Professionals mentoring session.

Those who register early receive a $100-dollar discount. Additionally, anyone interested in booking a room in the Orlando World Center Marriott at the special convention rate should do so soon, as availability is limited.

It’s Not Too Late for ASLRRA Award Nominations!

Business Development Awards

ASLRRA’s Business Development Awards, formerly known as the Marketing Awards, recognize Class II and III railroads who have designed and enacted innovative and successful marketing initiatives in the small railroad industry.

Criteria for the business awards can be found here. Please submit nominations to Cara Boyle no later than February 1.

Veterans Recruitment Award

The 2018 Richard Timmons Veterans Recruitment Award will recognize an industry company (railroad or supplier) that exhibited successful Veterans Recruitment efforts through their hiring and retention practices.

Completing this survey will put your company in consideration for this award. Contact Amy Westerman for more information.
Second Round of PTC Grants Benefit Passenger Rail

The Federal Railroad Administration announced December 21 that it had awarded $46.3 million in grants through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program for positive train control (PTC) systems. All of the 11 projects receiving funds involve passenger rail.

Roughly one-third of the grant money will go to rural projects, one of which involves ASLRRA member Alaska Railroad Corporation. Alaska Railroad Corporation will receive up to $2.5 million to improve the global positioning system (GPS) in its locomotives and on-track equipment and implement functions for its Interoperable Electronic Train Management System (I-ETMS).

Other rural projects receiving money include improvements to the New Mexico Rail Runner Express system’s Wi-Fi network, and a collaboration between the Colorado Department of Transportation, Kansas Department of Transportation and BNSF to design, install and test I-ETMS PTC wayside technology.

ASLRRA Submits Exemption Request to FMCSA

The Association of American Railroads and ASLRRA have requested a limited exemption to hours-of-service regulations set by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).

Both ASLRRA and AAR contend that the FMCSA limitations on maximum driving time requirements affect railroads’ abilities to respond to emergency situations.

The associations liken railroad employees to utility employees who use utility service vehicles to repair and maintain services in emergency situations and are exempt from HOS rules in such situations. Railroad employees use vehicles in similar ways when addressing an operational emergency.

Senate Confirms Two to Surface Transportation Board

On January 2, the Senate confirmed Patrick Fuchs and Martin Oberman as Surface Transportation Board (STB) Commissioners.

“ASLRRA is pleased that Congress has made progress toward a five-member Surface Transportation Board with the confirmations of Patrick Fuchs and Martin Oberman,” said ASLRRA Chair Judy Petry. “The STB has many important matters in front of them, and we look forward to working with Commissioners Fuchs and Oberman on economic and regulatory policies that will allow revenue growth alongside continuous safety improvements for short line railroads.”

Fuchs, who had worked for the Senate Commerce Committee on surface transportation and maritime issues, will serve a five-year term. Oberman, the former chairman of Metra, will serve the remainder of a five-year term that ends Dec. 31, 2023.
Reyes Leaves FRA

The Federal Railroad Administration’s Chief Counsel Juan Reyes has left the agency as of January 4. He will be returning to Seyfarth Shaw LLP, a law firm where he previously worked, focusing on development permitting and zoning.

Reyes was appointed to his position at the FRA in October 2017, and was briefly the acting deputy administrator prior to the confirmation of current administrator Ron Batory.

Congressman Pence Tours Madison Railroad Headquarters

On December 18, 2018 Congressman Greg Pence (R-Ind.) participated in a tour and transportation public policy discussion at Madison Railroad headquarters in Indiana.

Madison Railroad CEO Cathy Hale led the tour, which included company facilities and the nearby Graham Creek Bridge. The ASLRRRA member railroad had submitted a plan for the bridge’s removal and reconstruction in bids for Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure & Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation. It did not receive any grants during this round of funding.
ASLRA Events

CONNECTIONS Convention Silent Auction is OPEN for Donations

ASLRA’s 2019 CONNECTIONS Convention will once again feature an exciting silent auction benefitting the Short Line Education Fund. We need your support to make it a success.

The Education Fund is a 501c3 nonprofit organization and funds raised will support industry training and certification initiatives. Donations are tax deductible! To make a donation, simply complete the 2019 Donation Form or contact Sabrina Waiss to discuss a donation. Thank you for your support!

Click here for more ASLRA events.

Industry Events

University of Wisconsin-Madison Offers Spring Railroad Courses

The Engineering Professional Development department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is offering three courses this spring that might interest ASLRA members. Attendees can earn continuing education units and professional development hours. Follow the link above to find out more about each class and to enroll.

Railroad Track Construction Project Management – March 19-20 in Orlando, Fla.

Introduction to Railroad Engineering and Operations – April 29-May 1 in Chicago, Ill.

Fundamentals of Railway Bridge Engineering and Management – April 30-May 1 in Chicago, Ill.

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 any questions or comments.