ASLRRA’s 2019 Annual Report Now Available

ASLRRA has released its 2019 Annual Report, detailing the many ways ASLRRA ensures its members have a “seat at the table.” From regulatory to legislative issues, ASLRRA members and staff make sure that the short line voice is heard with policy makers and legislators. ASLRRA membership ensures that railroads and suppliers alike have access to outstanding education and training available in multiple formats - conferences and regional meetings, live and on-demand webinars, and easy-to-use downloadable templates. In 2019, new Association programs were implemented to support industry challenges such as positive train control (PTC) implementation and disaster preparedness and response support.

Click here to view the report’s online version.

Raise Your Company’s Profile at ASLRRA Connections Convention

ASLRRA Connections offers a wide range of sponsorship opportunities to fit nearly every budget. Your sponsorship investment is a prime way to promote your company, reinforce your brand vs. your competition, build your presence and raise your industry profile at the only convention dedicated to the short line and regional railroad industry.

Your company’s name and/or logo will appear in our meeting promotions before, during and after the convention and will be included in high-profile signage during the meetings and in the Expo. At the event, individuals from sponsoring companies will be recognized with a “Sponsor” ribbon to display proudly on their badges. A sponsorship commitment guarantees valuable exposure before approximately 1800 attendees and is an investment that will pay dividends long after the trade show ends.

Please contact Kathy Keeney at (202) 585-3439 for more information.

Advertising in the official convention program is another prime opportunity to get your company’s name and message in front of short line decision makers. Ad pricing starts at under $1,000 for the color, glossy program, which is distributed to all attendees. Please contact Danielle Richards at (202) 585-3443 for details.

ASLRRA’s Gelnar to Offer Various Training Seminars in Iowa this Spring, Summer

ASLRRA’s Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar will travel to Iowa several times this year to present various education and training seminars.

In April, Gelnar will help present a three-day seminar titled “Advanced Designated Supervisor of Locomotive Engineers (DSLE) and Labor Relations Training.” The seminar is developed in partnership with Iowa Northern Railway. Iowa Northern’s Assistant General Manager Mark Vaughn and Mid-America
Rail Consultants President Larry Hicks will join Gelnar in teaching the course. The seminar will provide railroad managers with training on a complex designation that they address daily.

In May, Gelnar will present the regulatory module of ASLRRA’s Leadership Development Training program developed collaboratively with the Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI). This module covers critical regulatory information for short line and regional railroad managers to strengthen the understanding and application of certain regulations, thereby enhancing the railroads’ overall safety practices and culture.

Gelnar will return to Iowa Northern’s training facility in June for another seminar, again presented in conjunction with Vaughn. The Comprehensive General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR) 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.

Vaughn and Gelnar’s third seminar will take place in August, and is titled “Part 232, Air Brakes Training.”

For more information for each seminar, and to register, please follow this link. Registration is not yet open for the August seminar.

Association Offers Input to DOT for ROUTES Initiative

ASLRRA recently submitted comments in response to a request for information issued by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT). The call for input stems from a DOT plan to develop and implement the Rural Opportunities to Use Transportation for Economic Success (ROUTES) initiative.

The goal of the information request was to gather comments explaining the transportation infrastructure needs of rural communities, as well as rural transportation experiences and issues.

ASLRRA’s comments largely focused on different funding programs. To help combat fatalities at grade crossings, the Association suggested keeping funds for the Section 130 railway-highway grade crossings program as a “budgetary set-aside” separate from other highway monies.

The Association also called for the establishment of a disaster aid program specifically for short line railroads, as they are not eligible for current disaster relief programs under the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. While some funding is available in the form of loans, grants for immediate disaster response, particularly for critical infrastructure like bridges and track, do not exist.
Last, ASLRA’s comments discussed improvements to the new RRIF Express loan program, the INFRA grant program and the Port and Intermodal Improvement Program. The suggestions pointed out ways these programs can be made more inclusive for small and rural railroads and small railroad and freight projects.

**National Transportation Safety Board Closes Eight Most-Wanted Safety Recommendations**

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) **closed** eight safety recommendations from its 2019-2020 Most Wanted List.

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) **received a safety recommendation** after a 2012 derailment resulted in the release of vinyl chloride into Matua Creek in New Jersey. The NTSB recommend that an amendment be made to the United States Hazardous Materials Instructions for Rail to require train crews to immediately provide hazardous materials information and a train consist to emergency responders when an accident occurs. The AAR made the recommended change.

Six recommendations were issued to the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) regarding pipeline safety. All six were classified as closed, acceptable action taken, meaning that PHMSA took satisfactory steps to address the NTSB’s recommendations.

Another recommendation went to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) after an investigation into two helicopter emergency medical services flight crashes. An FAA rulemaking changed equipment requirements for all helicopters in air ambulance operations.

**Democrats, Republicans Identify Key Goals in Infrastructure Plans**

House Democrats unveiled their five-year, $760 billion **infrastructure plan** on Jan. 29 to improve the nation’s transportation system by making major investments in highways, rail and transit systems, airports, ports and harbors, wastewater and drinking water infrastructure, brownfields and broadband.

Much of the plan’s focus is on improving infrastructure with an eye toward making more environmentally friendly decisions that will help boost the economy and increase long-term resiliency.

Priorities of the Democrats’ framework include bringing existing infrastructure into a state of good repair, taking steps toward a transportation sector that emits zero carbon pollution, providing safe and clean water and wastewater services, creating jobs and supporting U.S. industries.
A day before the Democrats released their plan, Republican members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee shared their key infrastructure principles. While emphasizing a desire to produce a bipartisan bill, the Republican version focused on fixing the Highway Trust Fund, encouraging technological innovation and improving the nation’s existing federal surface transportation programs.

**New York and Wyoming Introduce Bills to Mandate Two-Person Train Crews**

State lawmakers in New York and Wyoming are attempting to pass measures mandating minimum crew sizes for trains operated in each respective state.

New York State Senator Timothy Kennedy recently introduced [State Senate Bill S7151](#), which would require any Class I freight railroad, Class I railroad or Class II railroad for transporting freight that operates a train or locomotive in New York to have a minimum crew of two people. State Assemblyman William Magnarelli introduced a companion bill in the New York State Assembly.

In Wyoming, State Representative Stan Blake introduced [HB0079](#), a bill that would require all trains and light-rail engines operating on Class I railways in the state to have a minimum of two crew members. A similar bill submitted in 2019 passed the state House but was rejected by Wyoming’s Senate Transportation Committee in a 3-2 vote.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) last year withdrew a proposed rule that would have mandated two-person crews, saying no conclusive data proved a minimum crew size offered a notable safety benefit.

ASLRRRA opposes any legislation mandating crew size.

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**ASLRRRA New Members**

ASLRRRA is delighted to welcome three new associate business members.

**F&H Solutions Group**, headquartered in Washington, D.C., is a national labor relations consulting firm. It has more than 175 years of labor relations, advisory, strategic, and negotiating experience. Senior Labor Relations Consultant [Charlie Woodcock](#) is our primary contact.

**Reidler Rail Graphics**, a division of Reidler Decal Corporation, rejoins us as the oldest and largest fabricator of railroad graphics and signage. Reidler supplies all required locomotive and car decals, including FRA 224 delineator striping. Their team manufactures all types of signage using AAR-approved material fabricated to 3M specifications. Our primary contact is [Cheryl Sweigert](#), director of the rail division.
Voestalpine Nortrak rejoins us as a global market leader for intelligent railway infrastructure solutions. They provide in-house design and manufacture of system solutions including custom engineering, premium rail, special trackwork, concrete ties, direct fixation fasteners, rail pads, insulators, ballast mat, switch machines, castings, and plastic moldings. Deborah Butschler, executive assistant in human resources and business administration, is our primary contact.

ASLRRA Announcements

Posner Foundation Grant Helps Operation Lifesaver Continue Its Safety Initiatives

The Posner Foundation of Pittsburgh has awarded more grant funding to Operation Lifesaver to help fund rail safety education in 2020. The money will be used to continue and expand programs started in 2019, in part with money from Posner Foundation grants.

This year’s funding will help expand distribution of a public-service announcement meant to curb incidents involving pedestrians near railroad tracks. It will also provide supplemental funding for state programs and create a discretionary fund to enable state programs to purchase educational and promotional materials for outreach efforts.

Posner Foundation of Pittsburgh trustee Henry Posner III is chairman of ASLRRA member Iowa Interstate Railroad, Ltd.

Complete All 2019 FRA Accident/Incident Reports to be Eligible for this Year’s ASLRRA Jake Awards

ASLRRA is gearing up to announce 2019 Jake Award winners! To be eligible for a Jake Award, railroad and switching members must complete the required Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) accident/incident reports for every month of 2019.

To ensure Jake Awards are given in a timely and fair manner, any reports submitted after Feb. 29 will not be considered. For more information, please see the FRA’s guidance on accident/incident reporting or contact Fred Oelsner at foelsner@aslrra.org.
Room Reservation Period Extended for Railroad Day on Capitol Hill

Participants in Railroad Day on Capitol Hill now have through the end of the week to book a hotel room at the Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill using the ASLRRA block room rate. Rooms are available for March 3 and 4.

Railroad Day is scheduled for March 4. The day begins at 7:30 in the morning and participants are encouraged to stay for the evening reception at Union Station. Appointments with lawmakers will take place between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

FRA Regional Administrators to Speak at ASLRRA’s Annual Connections Convention

Seven Federal Railroad Administration Regional Administrators will join Regional Director of Operations Michael Long during a presentation at this year’s Connections convention. The FRA presentation, scheduled for May 5, will will include time for audience Q & A.

The administrators’ talk is only one of the many informative sessions that form the backbone of ASLRRA’s annual convention. Federal Railroad Administrator Ronald Batory will be one of the event’s keynote speakers, and participants will have the opportunity to choose from other education sessions geared toward their interests or specific duties.

Registration is now open for the Connections convention, which will be held May 2-5 at the Gaylord Texan Resort and Convention Center in Grapevine, Texas. Attendees can also take advantage of the ASLRRA’s block hotel room rate. The offer ends April 3, but available rooms are expected to sell out before then.

Submit Nominations Now for ASLRRA’s Annual Awards

Nominations are now being accepted for all of ASLRRA’s annual awards. Nominations for business and safety awards are due Feb. 14, while veterans award entries are due Feb. 28. Scholarship applications are due March 13. Winners will be recognized during this year’s Connections Convention, held May 2-5 at the Gaylord Texan in Grapevine, Texas. Follow the link to read about each award and learn how to submit nominations.

ASLRRA Out and About

Association’s Gitchell Attends Events to Discuss Short Line Issues, Priorities

ASLRRA’s Assistant Vice President of Legislative and Regulatory Policy Crystal Gitchell has been busy recently, attending events in Washington, D.C. on behalf of the Association.

At a Surface Transportation Stakeholder Roundtable hosted by Congressman Dan Lipinski and Congressman Rodney Davis on January 28, Gitchell represented short line legislative priorities for Surface Transportation Reauthorization.

Today, Gitchell attended a hearing on grade-crossing safety held by the U.S. House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials. The hearing, titled “Tracking Toward Zero: Improving Grade Crossing Safety and Addressing Community Concerns,” featured testimony from stakeholders regarding issues concerning grade-crossing safety, trespassing and suicide incidents and occupied grade crossings. Participants also discussed steps being taken to address these concerns.

Oelsner Presents ASLRRA Priorities at Union Pacific Meeting
Fred Oelsner, ASLRRA’s assistant vice president of data and technology, represented the Association at Union Pacific’s Short line Advisory Group meeting Jan. 28 in Omaha, Neb. Oelsner’s presentation focused on ASLRRA’s current legislative priorities.

**ASLRRA Webinars**

**Upcoming Webinars**

**Recruiting and Retaining Veterans and Transitioning Military** - Feb. 18, 2020

SPRING President Michele Malski and FASTPORT Executive Director of Military Engagement and Apprenticeships Dave Harrison will explain the benefits of establishing a federally registered apprenticeship program and how to start one.

**FRA Penalties and Violations** - Feb. 19, 2020

ASLRRA’s Senior Vice President of Safety and Regulatory Policy Jo Strang, along with Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar, will discuss options available to short lines concerning how to prepare for and interact with inspectors during an audit, and available options when a violation has been received. Most short lines are considered a small business, requiring special actions from the FRA.

**Emergency Docket Waivers** - March 11, 2020

The FRA administrator can activate an emergency relief docket if extreme conditions constitute an emergency event to railroad operations. This webinar will explain emergency dockets and provide instruction on how to file a waiver petition for temporary relief from certain safety regulations. ASLRRA’s Senior Vice President of Safety and Regulatory Policy Jo Strang and Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar will conduct the webinar.

[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.