Additional Coronavirus Relief Bill Passes Senate, Advances to House

The Senate yesterday approved a nearly half-a-trillion-dollar coronavirus aid bill, H.R. 266, the Paycheck Protection Program and Health Care Enhancement Act, and the House is scheduled to follow suit on Thursday, putting it on President Trump’s desk on Friday.

The bill includes $381 billion for small businesses, $75 billion for hospitals and $25 billion for disease testing. The bill increases funding for the Paycheck Protection (PPP) and Emergency Economic Injury Disaster (EIDL) Grants programs. These increases include:

- $321 billion in appropriated funds for PPP, with $60 billion set aside for small lenders
- $10 billion in Emergency Economic Injury Disaster (EIDL) Grants
- Extends EIDL grant and loan eligibility to agricultural enterprises (as defined by sec. 18(b) of the Small Business Act) with fewer than 500 employees
- Additional SBA appropriations:
  - $2.1 billion for salaries and expenses
  - $50 billion for Disaster Loans Program account for direct loans, authorized under section 7(b) of the Small Business Act

Find the bill text here; a summary of the paycheck protection and EIDL section here; and a summary of the hospitals and testing section here.

FRA Issues Notice of Funding Opportunity for CRISI Grants

The Federal Railroad Administration has issued a notice of funding opportunity for grants under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program.

The program offers $311,772,500 in grant funding for freight and passenger rail projects that improve transportation safety, efficiency and reliability. Of that funding amount at least 25% will be made available for rural projects. Additionally, $45 million will go to projects that include the acquisition of rights-of-way, track, or track structure projects to support the development of new intercity passenger rail service routes.

There are no minimum or maximum award requirements for the grants, and applicants are encouraged to propose projects or components of projects that have operational independence and that can be completed and implemented with CRISI funding as a part of the total project cost together with other, non-federal sources.

Applications are due June 19. The FRA has provided additional information on CRISI grants on its website, and members may find the details of FY19 Award Winners helpful in developing projects.
ASLRRA encourages members to consult with Preferred Providers of Grant Writing Services in the association’s Member Discount Program. These companies can help members complete and submit grant applications. ASLRA’s on-demand webinars also provide helpful offerings, including one titled “FRA Presentation on Notice of Funding Opportunity for CRISI Grants.” On-demand webinars are free to ASLRRA members and available by subscription to non-members.

**ASLRRA Members Named as Progressive Railroading’s 2020 Rising Stars**

ASLRRA congratulates those from its member companies who have been named this year’s Rising Stars according to Progressive Railroading magazine. Each year, the magazine identifies 25 people under the age of 40 who are considered up-and-coming leaders in the railroad industry.

This year, seven of the 25 honorees are employees of ASLRRA member companies. They were chosen based on “their contributions to railroading, as well as their career achievements, demonstrated leadership, professional association activity or community involvement.”

Award winners will be profiled on the magazine’s website and in their September issue, and will be honored at a celebratory dinner during the American Association of Railroad Superintendents’ 2020 annual meeting July 20 in Chicago.

ASLRRA is pleased to honor:

- Sean Cronin, Metra
- Scott Harris, Chesapeake & Delaware LLC
- Daniela Jaramillo, Florida East Coast Railway
- Joe Stephens, Herzog
- Nicole Teska, Bowers & Co. CPAs PLLC
- Harrison Wadsworth, Siemens Corp.
- Brad Walker, Watco Cos. LLC

ASLRRA also congratulates its Class I supporting member employees:

- Olivia Daily, Kansas City Southern
- Marcelo Estrada, CSX
- Seth Friend, CSX
- Elizabeth Graham, Union Pacific Railroad
- Ashley King, Norfolk Southern Railway
- Lacy Kreger, BNSF Railway Co.
- John McNeil, Norfolk Southern Railway
- Karen Monroy Lopez, Kansas City Southern de Mexico
- Melissa Smith, Kansas City Southern
- Brandon Whitaker, Union Pacific Railroad
Share Short Line Good News with ASLRRA

Our short line railroads are essential to the front-line management of COVID-19, keeping critical goods moving to needed locations across the country. Our industry is proud to do our part, while keeping our employees safe. Share your story with ASLRRA, and be featured on our new Short Line Stories webpage!

Here are several ways we can all join in highlighting our industry during COVID-19:

- Use our new Facebook Frame - Select “Update” on your Facebook photo, click on “Add Frame” and search “Thank a Railroader”. Apply frame and adjust. Select the duration you would like to use the frame for and click on “Use as Profile Picture”.

- Use our twitter hashtag #shortlinesRfrontlines to show support to our industry

- Send an email to our Vice President of Communications Amy Krouse at akrouse@aslrra.org and let her know what your railroad is doing to keep America moving. Adding a photo, even if you took it on your phone, would be icing on the cake.
ASLRA is proud of the efforts our members are taking to support local communities and the national economy, whether through official duties or by volunteering outside of work. Thank you for all your efforts.

**ODAPC Will Allow Remote Evaluations by Substance Abuse Professionals**

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of Drug and Alcohol Policy and Compliance (ODAPC) has issued supplemental information regarding the performance of remote evaluations by substance abuse professionals (SAP) during the COVID-19 emergency.

Because the current health situation makes mandatory face-to-face assessment and evaluations impractical, the ODAPC will allow SAPs to conduct remote evaluations of employees who have violated DOT drug and alcohol regulations. The exception remains in effect through June 30 or until the official public health emergency determination is rescinded, whichever is sooner.

The ODAPC also makes allowances for re-qualification of certain service agents, including collectors, medical review officers (MRO), screening test technicians (STT), Breath Alcohol Technicians (BAT) and SAPs. The office is offering flexibility for service agents unable to meet re-qualification requirements by their due dates as a result of COVID-19 restrictions.

**TSA Issues Temporary Exemption Regarding Certain Worker ID Credentials**

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has issued a notice of temporary exemption from requirements in 49 CFR Part 1572 concerning expiration of certain Transportation Worker Identification Credentials (TWICs).

For the duration of the exemption, from April 10 through July 31, the TSA will extend the expiration date of TWICs that expired on or after March 1 by 180 days. The move allows TWIC holders to continue providing key services without interruption.

The exemption will help those railroads that operate in facilities requiring employees to have a TWIC card. The TSA will continue to run various security checks on TWIC holders throughout the duration of the extension period.

**CISA Releases Updated Version of Critical Infrastructure Workers Guidance**

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) has released the third version of its essential critical infrastructure workers guidance. The document helps state and local governments and private entities identify and manage essential workforces during the COVID-19 crisis.

Version 3.0 clarifies and expands critical infrastructure workers in some categories, and changes all references to “employees” or “contractors” to “workers.” Additional information was also provided as a consideration for governments and businesses.
New Deal Reached to Fund Small Business Loan Program, Hospitals

As reported above, lawmakers have reached a deal with the White House on a new, $484 billion relief package that would add money to the depleted Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), as well as provide funding for hospitals and COVID-19 testing.

The measure, which the Senate passed Tuesday afternoon, provides $321 billion to the PPP, which provides loans to small businesses to help them retain employees.

Once the PPP is re-funded, banks can continue to make the loans to small businesses to help keep them afloat. ASLRA urges its members to pursue PPP and EIDL Funding immediately, as funds will be limited. Helpful webinars regarding these programs are available in our On-Demand Library, free to members, and by subscription to non-members.

ASLRA member Bowers & Company is available to assist members calculate, apply and obtain their PPP loan. They have contacts at many institutions if you do not have a bank or your bank cannot meet your needs. Please contact them for more information at info@bcpllc.com

ASLRA Announcements

Proposals Being Accepted for Members Interested in Becoming Tier II Preferred Providers

ASLRA is accepting proposals from prospective partner companies interested in serving as a Tier II Preferred Provider in the Association’s Member Discount Program.

More specifically, ASLRA has prepared a request for information (RFI) seeking associate member companies who can supply personal protective equipment (PPE), including masks and face coverings, and/or cleaning and disinfecting equipment and materials to association members throughout the United States.

Associate members who would like to receive a copy of the RFI and an overview of ASLRA’s Tier II Member Discount Program should contact ASLRA’s Senior Vice President of Education and Business Services Sabrina Waiss at swaiss@aslra.org.
Participation in ASLRRA’s Member Discount Program is limited to member companies. Non-member companies interested in learning more about the benefits of membership may contact ASLRRA’s Vice President of Membership Kathy Keeney at kkeeney@aslrra.org.

Preferred providers in ASLRRA’s Member Discount Program offer products and services like background screening, drug tests, railroad tie inspections and payment processing at special rates, saving members time and money. Visit ASLRRA’s website for details and to learn more about ASLRRA’s Tier I and Tier II Preferred Providers, including grant writing services and PTC products and services.

ASLRRA’s Member Discount Program Includes Grant Writing Services! Visit aslrra.org to learn more!

ASLRRA Webinars

Learn About Various Legal Issues Through Our On-Demand Webinars

ASLRRA has a wealth of educational webinars available online at the click of a mouse. Visit the On-Demand Webinars resource library on the ASLRRA website to access dozens of relevant and timely webinar recordings on a wide range of topics, including the following selection of popular legal titles:

- **Hot Off the Press: What’s New at the STB**
  Presented By: Crystal Zorbaugh, associate attorney, Baker & Miller PLLC

- **Crossings: The Necessary Evil We Must Contend With**
  Presented By: Michael Barron, junior attorney, Fletcher & Sippel LLC

- **Not in my Backyard: Responding/Reacting to NIMBYism in the Community**
  Presented By: Janet Gilbert, partner, Fletcher & Sippel LLC

- **A Practical Guide to the Railroad Industry Agreement (RIA)**
  Presented By: Keith Borman, former ASLRRA senior vice president and general counsel, and Mike Ogborn, Ogborn Consulting Group

View these popular recordings and dozens more covering finance, communications, human resources and technology by visiting ASLRRA’s On-Demand Webinars resource library. Access is free to ASLRRA members and by subscription to non-members.

In addition to on-demand webinars, ASLRRA is always working to provide its members with top-notch education, bringing industry and subject-matter experts right to your desk. Find out about our upcoming live webinars below, using the links to learn more or register.
Upcoming Webinars

**Service Excellence with Integrated Crew & Safety Management** - April 23, 2020

Shannon Bloxom and Ashok Madhavan, senior railroad consultants at CloudMoyo, will outline how an integrated, technology-driven approach to duty assignments, safety testing, and crew training will help railroads optimize crew operations and meet safety requirements in a simplified and efficient manner. They will also discuss how railroads can leverage in-depth insights with latest analytics technologies to better optimize crew, meet FRA and regulatory requirements, and track operational metrics.

**Reviewing the Tax Provisions from the CARES Act** - April 29, 2020

Join Bowers & Company’s David Ayoub, CPA and Partner-in-Charge: Tax Department, for a review and discussion of the tax provisions included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and implications for both individuals and businesses.

**Performance Management: Employee Counseling and Discipline** - May 5, 2020

This webinar, led by F&H Solutions Group Senior Labor Relations Consultant Charlie Woodcock, will give managers and supervisors an overview of how to deal with this situation and address performance problems, with emphasis on unionized settings. Subjects covered include setting performance expectations, counseling employees and, where required, assessing discipline.

**45G - What to Do Now That It’s Renewed** - June 2, 2020

45G has been renewed for five years, and the renewal comes with some special rules relating to retroactivity, accrual versus cash-basis taxpayers, 45G expenditures versus income tax expenditures, and more. In this webinar, David Ayoub and Rick Tidd, partners-in-charge at Bowers & Company, CPAs, will explain these rules and discuss how short lines can take advantage of this important credit.

Click here for more ASLRRA events.

Industry Events

**FHWA’s Thursday Webinar Discusses Communication, Coordination with Railroad Officials on Projects**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is hosting a webinar focused on railroad crossing coordination between local agencies on April 23. It is part of the administration’s Innovation Exchange Webinar series.

The webinar is meant to help local agencies coordinate road improvement and construction projects with railroad companies. Registration is required. Click here to register.

**Operation Lifesaver Announces Date for Annual Leadership Conference**

Operation Lifesaver will hold its 2020 Leadership Conference Nov. 18-19 in Omaha, Neb. The theme for this year’s conference is “2020 Vision on Rail Safety.”
April 22, 2020

The conference will also include two invitation-only pre-conference sessions, one for Operation Lifesaver state coordinators on Nov. 17, and a special training session for Operation Lifesaver coaches and trainers the morning of Nov. 18.

Click here for a listing of industry events. Cancellations due to COVID-19 restrictions will be noted as information becomes available.

Views & News is published by American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact Amy Krouse, editor, with questions or comments.