U.S. DOT Secretary Elaine Chao Thanks Railroaders Via Video Message

Secretary Chao thanks the rail industry for their hard work and dedication, keeping supply chains moving, facilitating the movement of critical supplies to Americans across the country, helping our country get through this crisis and prepare for economic recovery.

ASLRRA encourages our members to share the video released yesterday with their employees, and via social media channels. Read more about how our members are delivering during the pandemic on our website.

Congratulations to ASLRRA’s 2020 Business Development Award Winners

Four ASLRRA-member railroads have won Business Development Awards this year, recognizing outstanding business development activities designed to grow the short line railroad business.

“The Business Development Award recognizes the essence of the short line story - working closely with customers to deliver real value, excellent service, and win-win opportunities,” said ASLRRA President Chuck Baker. “This year we had a record number of submissions, a testament to the ingenuity, flexibility and commitment that the short line industry shows again and again.”

To win, a railroad must demonstrate one or more of the following approaches: utilizing the railroad’s unique operating characteristics to deliver value; partnering with other development authorities, Class 1s, or companies; delivering economic success to both the railroad and the community it serves.

“Each of the 603 short line railroad operations in the country is unique, and these four award winners demonstrate the best of how short lines grow with their customers,” said Baker.

This year’s winners are:

Ann Arbor Railroad (AA) - The company’s analysis of the auto industry’s sales and production trends, coupled with the identification of an under-utilized facility in Toledo, Ohio led to a partnership opportunity with Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) to create a new distribution center for finished automobiles - the Silver Creek Vehicle Distribution and Homologation Center. Breaking ground in 2018, and beginning operations in time for the Jeep Gladiator launch in July of 2019, the facility supports FCA’s Toledo and Detroit assembly production with an 1,800 car through-put capacity per day, has created 102 new jobs, and has helped stabilize the local economy.

Delmarva Central Railroad (DCR) - Discussions with existing customers uncovered that certain liquid ingredients, vital to the manufacture of chicken feed, were being trucked in from beyond the Delmarva
May 6, 2020

Peninsula. DCR approached the market leaders and partnered with these suppliers via long-term agreements to ship railcars of liquid feed ingredients to the eastern shore of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia for transloading at their previously acquired facility in Seaford, Del. Significant investments were made to the site to allow for the efficient handling of this new rail traffic that was a 100 percent conversion from long-haul trucks. The result has created long-term value for all stakeholders including the community by taking traffic off the road.

The Indiana Rail Road Company (INRD) - The INRD forged a partnership with Indianapolis-based trucking company Venture Logistics to build a 406,000 square-foot, state-of-the-art, rail-served distribution center in Indianapolis, Ind. The Venture Rail Warehouse, which features 58 truck docks and 15 indoor rail car spots, is the most modern rail-served facility in central Indiana. In 2017, the warehouse’s first full year of operation, the INRD moved more than 1,200 carloads into the Venture Rail Warehouse. The rail business more than doubled to 2,600 carloads in 2019. The $21 million investment has allowed the INRD to diversify, provided a much-needed modern facility in the logistics hub of Indianapolis, and will drive continued growth with a partner that was formerly considered solely a competitor.

Reading Blue Mountain and Northern Railroad (RBMN) - The railroad has continued to pursue its strategy of working closely with customers to provide unique transloading opportunities to grow current customer business and to provide new customers with efficient rail service. RBMN opened two new transload facilities in 2019, in West Hazelton and Ransom, Pa. In addition, in 2019 RBMN brought the trucking piece of transloading in house at all four of their transload locations. The addition of truck-loading services provides a competitive advantage over other operators, allowing for control of all aspects of the operation and providing customers with a timely and seamless flow of goods and material. Collectively, transload efforts have resulted in nearly 900 carloads in 2019, contributing to the company’s overall carload traffic growth of 6 percent. RBMN handled a record breaking 34,000+ carloads in 2019.

Please continue to check www.aslrra.org/COVID-19 for up-to-date information on legislative, regulatory, small business, and railroad specific updates.

New ASLRRRA Website Offers Information and Resources for Reopening Businesses and Resuming Operations

From the first guidelines regarding workplace hygiene to current legislation providing economic relief, ASLRRRA has worked to help its members navigate the constant changes occurring during the COVID-19 crisis. Now that states are moving to lift some restrictions and open up businesses, the Association wants to further aid railroads and suppliers as they determine the best and safest ways to fully reopen.
To that end, ASLRRA has developed a new page on its website, which provides resources, links and articles to help companies develop reopening policies and protocols.

The website summarizes the current “phased reopening” approach to loosening restrictions and ideas employers may have to consider before bringing employees back to the workplace. Also included is an easy-to-reference list of considerations for workplace and employee guidelines, such as how to limit worker interaction, enhance workplace cleanliness and manage employee health.

ASLRRA also takes into account legal considerations, with links to enable members to adhere to established general and COVID-specific Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines.

Besides links to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and EEOC websites, the Association’s page offers other helpful resources, such as recent news articles and copies of National Association of Manufacturers’ “American Renewal Action Plan,” the National Governors Association’s “Roadmap to Recovery: A Public Health Guide for Governors Part II,” and White House Coronavirus Task Force’s “Guidelines for Opening Up America Again.”

While the current situation will continue to evolve, we hope that this new webpage serves as an effective planning tool for members at all stages of the reopening process. Please check back frequently, as we will update the page with new information as it becomes available.

Three COVID-19 Webinars: Effects on Railroads, RRB Benefits and Tax Provisions in the CARES Act

In ASLRRA’s newest COVID-19-related webinar, on May 26, participants will learn about the effect of COVID-19 on the rail industry.

Joseph Bryan, vice president of freight and logistics advisory services at ASLRRA member WSP USA will explore the lasting effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the railroad industry, looking at the acceleration of existing trends as well as new developments. The cost is $15 for ASLRRA members and $25 for non-members. Follow the link to register.

Also, register by midnight TODAY for tomorrow’s webinar with the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB), which discusses unemployment and sickness benefits available to railroad employees during the COVID-19 pandemic. Registration for this webinar is free for all participants.

Rick Easterday and Kimberly Price of the RRB will review the basic eligibility for sickness and unemployment, COVID-19 benefit guidelines and benefit amount, and application process, as well as how employees’ benefit claims affect the employers’ contribution rate determined annually.

Then, on May 20, Bowers & Company’s David Ayoub will review and discuss the tax provisions included in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, and implications for both individuals and businesses. Registration is free for ASLRRA members and $25 for non-members.

Support Our Industry in Social Media and Through Our Website

Use our new Facebook Frame – search “thank a railroader”

Use our Twitter hashtag #shortlinesRfrontlines to get the good news out!

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.
May 6, 2020

STB Announces Three Decisions Regarding Demurrage Issues

On April 30 the Surface Transportation Board (STB) issued several decisions regarding demurrage and accessorial rules and charges, based in part on the many comments received during the notice-and-comment process.

In the Policy Statement on Demurrage & Accessorial Rules & Charges, Docket Number EP 757, the STB identifies principles it would consider when judging reasonableness of demurrage and accessorial rules and charges. The policy statement is intended to help facilitate private negotiations, prevent disputes and more quickly resolve disputes that arise.

Two decisions can be found in Docket Number EP 759, Demurrage Billing Requirements. First is a final rule requiring Class I carriers to directly issue demurrage bills to the shipper when the arrangement has been agreed to by the shipper and warehouseman.

The second decision is a supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking inviting comment on changes to proposed requirements for minimum information to be included on or with Class I carriers’ demurrage invoices.

The STB’s policy statement is effective May 30, while the final rule is effective June 20. Comments on the supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking are due June 5, with replies due July 6. ASLRRA will review the decisions and submit comments as necessary on behalf of its members.

Apply for CRISI Grants and Get Help from ASLRRA’s Preferred Providers

Applications for the U.S. Federal Railroad Administration’s Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants are due June 19, and ASLRRA urges its members to consider applying for funding.

CRISI grants support safety enhancements and general improvements to infrastructure for both intercity passenger and freight railroads. Short line and regional railroads generally fare well in CRISI grant selection. For fiscal year 2019, 14 of 32 awards went directly to ASLRRA members or funded projects affecting them.

Boosting CRISI funding, as well as the portion devoted to rural projects, is an ASLRRA legislative priority and one of several recommendations to legislators in charge of finding the best path to economic recovery following the COVID-19 crisis.
A certain percentage of CRISI funding is also reserved for projects in rural areas, and last year 11 of 15 winning rural projects benefitted ASLRRA members. For fiscal year 2020, at least 25 percent, or about $81 million, will be made available for rural projects.

The grant-application process can be daunting, which is why ASLRRA has dedicated an arm of its Member Discount Program specifically to grant-writing services. The Association’s carefully selected preferred providers can help ASLRRA members draft and submit applications for CRISI grants and other grant programs, offering exceptional service at competitive pricing.

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

ASLRRA Webinars
Get Up to Speed Quickly on COVID-19 and its Impact on Railroads Through Our On-Demand Webinars

As the COVID-19 crisis continues to affect both business operations and daily life, ASLRRA’s On-Demand Webinar library offers several recordings focused on helping railroad employers and employees understand COVID-19 legislation and other issues related to the pandemic.

The COVID-19-related on-demand webinars are:

- CDC Guidance and Strategies for Employers
- Railroad Employer’s Guide to the FFCRA Legislation
- CV3: Reviewing the CARES Stimulus Package
- CV2: Reviewing the Families First Coronavirus Response Act

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

**RRB Unemployment and Sickness Benefits** - May 7, 2020

Information for this webinar is featured in this week’s top COVID-19 stories.
May 6, 2020

**Reviewing the Tax Provisions from the CARES Act** - May 20, 2020 - NOTE NEW DATE!

Information for this webinar is featured in this week’s top COVID-19 stories.

**Effects of COVID-19 on the Railroad Industry and Shipping** - May 26, 2020

Information for this webinar is featured in this week’s top COVID-19 stories.

**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 ASLRRRA events.

### Industry Events

ASLRRRA member Bowers & Company has provided a recorded webinar free of charge, covering the following topics:

- Market Update: presented by Bill Kriesel CPA/PFS, CFP®, AEP® and Kevin Visconti, CFP®
- Paycheck Protection Program Update: presented by Nate Carroll, CPA
  - Loan Forgiveness Update
  - Taxation of Loan Forgiveness

This video lasts about 40 min and can be accessed [here](#).

[Click here](#) for a listing of industry events. Changes 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.