Paycheck Protection Program Loan Deadline Extended

On July 4, President Trump signed a bill to extend the application deadline for Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans. Small businesses now have until Aug. 8 to apply.

The program was set to expire on June 30, with roughly $130 billion still unused. The Senate passed the extension by unanimous consent hours before the program expired, and when the House received the legislation the next day, legislators also passed the bill by unanimous consent.

ASLRRA urges its members to pursue PPP funding if they are eligible and have not yet applied. Helpful webinars regarding these programs are available in our On-Demand Library, free to members, and by subscription to non-members.

The Association’s COVID-19 website also features a Small Business Resources page with more information on PPP loans and other programs meant to help small businesses at this time.

ASLRRA Announces Keynote Speakers for 2020 Connections Convention

Planning for ASLRRA’s virtual 2020 Connections Convention is moving forward at full speed, and the Association is pleased to announce this year’s general session keynote speakers: Federal Railroad Administrator Ronald Batory, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administrator Howard “Skip” Elliott, Surface Transportation Board Member Patrick Fuchs, and ABH Consulting Senior Transportation Analyst Anthony Hatch.

This year’s convention will be held in an online format Oct. 5-9. Batory, who has more than 45 years of experience in the railroad industry, including time spent as president of The Belt Railway Company of Chicago, will speak on Oct. 5. Hatch will speak Oct. 7. He has been a senior transportation analyst on Wall Street for over 20 years, with a focus on freight transportation.

Prior to leading PHMSA, Elliott, the Oct. 8 speaker, spent 40 years in the freight railroad industry, most recently as vice president of public safety, health and environment for CSX Transportation. Fuchs will speak Oct. 9, and was a senior professional staff member working on surface transportation and maritime issues for the U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation before being appointed to the STB.

Strand Consult Report Highlights Strengths of Private Networks, Like Railroads, in Face of COVID-19 Pandemic

A report summary from telecommunications company Strand Consult discusses lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic’s effect on telecommunications, transportation and energy networks.

Strand Consult notes that the current deregulatory environment seems to “have worked well” for these networks, and network providers have continued to provide service during this crisis despite the
potential ability to scale back service or “harm their customers.” Moreover, private network owners, like railroads, were ready and able to meet operational demands these past months, helping ensure “society can continue under duress.”

Additionally, the performance of telecommunication and freight rail networks during the crisis showed that, without additional regulation, the two can support climate goals by allowing people to work from home and move goods via rail rather than with trucks on highways. Ultimately, Strand Consult’s report suggests policymakers should take note of how, during this particular period, private network owners have been able to perform well and meet social goals despite the opportunity to do the opposite.

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**ASLRRA Comments on STB’s Demurrage Invoice Supplemental Notice of Proposed Rulemaking**

ASLRRA filed comments with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) regarding a supplemental notice of proposed rulemaking (SNPRM) on demurrage invoices, supporting the STB’s final rulemaking, in which Class II and III railroads would not be subject to the recommended requirements.

In a notice of proposed rulemaking issued in October 2019, the STB proposed changes to existing demurrage regulations. ASLRRA commented then, saying the rules should not apply to Class II and III railroads – an assertion to which the STB agreed.

After the STB’s rule became final on April 30, the board issued the SNPRM with additions to the requirements in the NPRM. Four of 17 comments to the SNPRM contend that Class II and III railroads should have to submit the same information on demurrage invoices as required of Class Is.

ASLRRA’s comments rebut those arguments and argue that the additional requirements should not apply to small railroads.

**RRB Addresses RUIA Benefits for New Benefit Year in Q&A Article**

July 1 marked the beginning of a new benefit year for railroad employees receiving Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA) benefits. To help employees understand RUIA, the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) made this topic the focus of its most recent question and answer article.

The RRB explains eligibility requirements for unemployment and sickness benefits, as well as the new daily benefit rate. Also discussed are how to apply for benefits and how long it takes to receive a payment. The RRB also addresses how the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, affects the agency’s administration of benefits under the RUIA.
House Appropriations Committee Releases FY21 THUD Appropriations Bill

On July 7, the House Appropriations Committee released its fiscal year (FY) 2021 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies (THUD) Appropriations bill, which provides funding for the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), including the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and federal transportation grant programs. On July 8, the THUD Subcommittee reported the bill favorably by voice vote. The full House Appropriations Committee will markup the bill next week. The bill text can be found here and a summary can be found here.

In addition to regular yearly appropriations, the bill includes emergency supplemental funding to support the economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The emergency funding section of the bill provides some insight into what House Democrats believe should be included in a COVID-19 recovery bill. It is very encouraging that they included high funding levels for both the BUILD and CRISI grant programs - a sign that surface transportation is being considered as part of the recovery effort and short line railroads can play a role in getting the economy back on track. Below are some highlights from both the regular FY 2021 appropriations and the emergency funding:

Regular FY 2021 Funding Highlights:

- **No truck size and weight provisions**
  - BUILD: $1 billion
  - CRISI: $500 million
  - Sec. 130: Additional $50 million (on top of what is provided out of the Highway Trust Fund)

- **Surface Transportation Block Grants**: Additional $632.22 million (on top of what is provided out of the HTF)

- **FRA R&D**: $41 million
  - Funding for Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) activities will be included in the accompanying report released next week

- **Highway-Rail Grade Crossing Safety Awareness**: $10 million
  - NHTSA-FRA joint paid-media campaign

COVID-19 Recovery Funding Highlights:

- **BUILD**: $3 billion
  - 60/40 urban/rural split
  - Minimum award size: $20 million
  - Minimum rural grant award size: $5 million

- **CRISI**: $5 billion
  - $3.5 billion will be set-aside for specific (intercity passenger rail) capital projects costing over $500 million
  - $1.5 billion will be available for all CRISI-eligible projects
  - No preferential treatment for projects that overmatch

The full House Appropriations Committee will consider the bill and release the accompanying report, which includes the SLSI funding level, next week. After that, the bill can be considered on the House floor. On the other side of the dome, the Senate has yet to release an appropriations mark-up schedule or any appropriations bills, and the path forward is less clear. Once the House and Senate have each
taken action on appropriations bills, they can negotiate or “conference” a compromise, pass it, and send it to the president’s desk to be signed into law. If the House and Senate are unable to complete work on full-year appropriations before the current fiscal year ends and federal funding runs out on Sept. 30, Congress will need to pass short-term funding legislation, commonly referred to as a continuing resolution (CR). ASLRRA staff will continue to monitor the appropriations process and provide updates.

ASLRRA Announcements

ASLRRA’s Training Seminars Offer Instruction in DSLE, Leadership Development and GCOR

ASLRRA and its partners are offering several different training seminars in August, September and October discussing topics related to regulations and compliance. All seminars will take place at ASLRRA member Iowa Northern Railway’s training center in Waterloo, Iowa. Follow each of the links below to register today.

The Advanced Designated Supervisor of Locomotive Engineer (DSLE) and Labor Relations Training Seminar will be held Aug. 11-13. Although registration is full, those interested in attending can register to be added to a wait list.

The Association’s regulatory module of the Leadership Development Training program, developed in collaboration with the Short Line Safety Institute, will be presented Sept. 23-24. This module covers critical regulatory information for short line and regional railroad managers to strengthen the understanding and application of certain regulations to enhance railroads’ overall safety practices and culture.

Positions Available – Office of Intermodal

SHORT LINE & FREIGHT RAIL DEVELOPMENT MANAGER: Under broad supervision of rail & safety oversight program manager serves as the department’s primary point of contact for all short line & freight rail development activities and works with considerable independence to perform complex assignments while demonstrating a high-level of initiative and judgement. This position is responsible for supervising a professional staff and managing all activities including but not limited to: development, oversight and FRA compliance of 540 miles of state-owned leased short line railroad; development, contracting and implementation of railroad and bridge rehabilitation projects. More info: https://ga.taleo.net/careersection/ga_external/jobdetail.ftl?job=tra0272&tz=gmt-04%3a00&tzname=

RAIL DEVELOPMENT SPECIALIST: Under limited supervision in the division of intermodal – rail & state safety oversight program, the rail development specialist performs work of moderate to considerable difficulty in the development of rail capital program of projects. The rail development specialist serves as the department’s multimodal engineer and a central POC for public and private sector railroad fixed capital improvements. The rail development specialist reports to the short line & freight rail development manager. More info: https://ga.taleo.net/careersection/ga_external/jobdetail.ftl?job=tra0273&tz=gmt-04%3a00&tzname=
A third event, the Comprehensive General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR) Training Seminar, will take place Oct. 27-29. The seminar is intended for railroads that have adopted the GCOR as their operating rules, and training will emphasize the revised rules and transition guide. This seminar may be used to meet operating rules training as required by 49 CFR Part 240, 242 and 214 Subpart C.

ASLRA New Members

Know a company that would benefit from joining ASLRA? Please contact Kathy Keeney, ASLRA’s Vice President of Membership & Business Development, on (202) 585-3439.

ASLRA Welcomes Two New Members

HalenHardy LLC, based in Bellwood, Pa., helps railroad operations & maintenance professionals simplify spill and sediment control with rail-ready products and an effective outdoor clean-up plan. Its main focus areas are petroleum leaks and spills in the outdoors, oil and sediment in stormwater runoff, and removing oily sheen from secondary containment stormwater. Our primary contact is Partner Troy Beaver. Many thanks to Peter Scholtens from Integrity Rail Products for the assist with this new membership.

Rail Explorers Corp. (USA), based in Portsmouth, R.I., operates custom-built, pedal-powered bikes on railroad tracks in three locations in Rhode Island, Las Vegas and the Catskills. More than 150,000 people have taken Rail Explorers’ tours since the company launched in mid-2015. It operates socially distanced tours exclusively on rails that do not have train traffic and is looking to expand to new, scenic short line locations. Our primary contact is CEO Mary Joy Lu.
ASLRRRA Webinars

On-Demand Webinars Feature Human Resources Topics

Employees are just as crucial to a railroad as its locomotives and tracks, and ASLRRRA’s recorded webinars cover topics useful to those in the human resources department. Our featured human resources webinar titles include:

- Performance Management: Employee Counseling & Discipline
- Employer Training Resources: Registered Apprenticeships
- Marijuana & CBD Drug Testing Issues
- Sleep Apnea Diagnosis, Protocol, Compliance and Regulation

Recordings of these webinars and more are available on-demand through ASLRRRA’s [On-Demand Webinar library](#).

On-demand webinars are free to ASLRRRA members and available by paid subscription to non-members. In addition to these webinars, users can access over 100 other recordings covering a wide variety of topics, from human resources and communications to retirement benefits and legal issues. Follow the link above to browse ASLRRRA’s offerings today.

Upcoming Webinars

**Best Practices for Qualification Tracking and Assessments - July 16, 2020**

Ashok Madhavan, senior railroad consultant at CloudMoyo, will talk about how to help ensure safe and compliant railroad operations through a comprehensive, digital qualification tracking system. This webinar will also feature a question and answer segment with Jeff Black and Mike Prince of the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis (TRRA), who will talk about how they use a qualification tracking system at TRRA. This webinar is free for ASLRRRA members.

[Click here](#) for more ASLRRRA events.

Industry Events

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