Linda Darr Says Autonomous Vehicles Not a Threat, But a Challenge for Short Line Industry

ASLRRRA President Linda Bauer Darr reflected on the impact automated vehicle technology could have on the railroad industry, emphasizing the ability of short line railroads to adapt to changing environments in order to compete with the development of self-driving trucks.

Darr discussed these topics in an article in January’s edition of Progressive Railroading magazine. When examining the issue of autonomous trucks, Darr emphasized the need for railroads to embrace innovation and invest in technology in order to maintain a competitive edge in the shipping market.

The article described the use of data as one example of short lines’ efforts to use technology to their advantage. A pilot program, currently in development with ASLRRRA and some of its members, experiments with using a digital tracking platform to provide real-time delivery data. Using such technology is meant to allow all parties to track freight as it moves through shipping networks.

In the same article, Nick Chodorow, chair of ASLRRRA’s Technology Committee, pointed out that railroads have an advantage over the trucking industry because regulations like the required implementation of positive train control (PTC) mean that many railroads are already familiar with and utilize the kinds of technologies that will help the industry improve and grow.

Ultimately, the railroad industry will need to be aware of developments in the trucking industry and adjust accordingly.

“The language of freight transportation is changing,” said Darr in the article, “and we need to make sure we speak the same language as other industries as technology continues to change.”

Heitkamp Introduces Legislation for Two-Person Crews

U.S. Senator Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) introduced a bill to require freight trains carrying cargo such as crude oil to have two crewmembers on board while the train is operating. The legislation is intended as a way to improve rail safety, and was developed in response to the derailment of crude oil trains in 2013 and 2015 in North Dakota.

While Heitkamp and others see the bill as a way to prevent accidents, ASLRRRA opposes Heitkamp’s legislation, as there has been no proven safety benefit from this action presented to date.

ASLRRRA intends to work with its Washington, D.C. lobbying firm Chambers, Conlon & Hartwell, LLC to monitor Heitkamp’s bill as it progresses through the Senate.
Legislative Update

Fatal Accidents Increase Calls for Batory Vote

The second fatal Amtrak crash in less than a week has led to increased urgency for government officials seeking a confirmation vote on Ron Batory, the Trump Administration’s pick to head the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). Both ASLRRA and Short Line Safety Institute have supported the nomination of Batory, and have called for swift congressional action on his nomination.

Republicans are calling for Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) to end his hold on Batory, saying that the recent wave of rail accidents makes having an administrator leading the FRA even more important. Additionally, rail industry officials and others are eager to have the FRA position filled due to an expected influx of petitions from railroads for positive train control (PTC) implementation extensions.

ASLRRA Continues Push for 45G Short Line Tax Credit

ASLRRA continues to promote the 45G short line railroad rehabilitation tax credit, which supports critical infrastructure maintenance and improvements, despite its absence from the recently passed tax reform bill and the government spending extension.

The bill’s champions in Congress continue to show strong support for 45G, helping us find a way forward as Congress is set to consider spending bills for fiscal year 2018, including a tax extenders package and other must-pass legislation. ASLRRA is working to support their efforts in any way possible, and the Legislative Policy Committee is fully engaged.

The short line railroad tax credit leverages private sector investment in rail infrastructure by providing a tax credit of 50 cents for every dollar spent on track improvements, capped at $3,500 per track mile. If extended, this credit will provide more certainty for ASLRRA’s small business members so that they can plan and budget for track, grade crossing and bridge work in 2018 and beyond.

For support in reaching out to your elected representatives, please contact our Washington team’s Fred Oelsner. Also, please visit www.aslrra.org/BRACE to learn more about this important tax and infrastructure legislation.

Regulatory Update

Denham Schedules Hearing Regarding PTC

U.S. Representative Jeff Denham (R-Calif.), who is chairman of the subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials for the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, announced a plan to hold a hearing with Ranking Member Michael Capuano (D-Mass.) on February 15 regarding positive train control (PTC) implementation.

The hearing will convene representatives from organizations including Amtrak, the Federal Railroad Administration, private rail operators and public transit officials to discuss nationwide efforts to install PTC systems.

“PTC implementation is crucial to the safety of rail transportation for passengers, motorists and pedestrians alike,” said Dunham in a press release. “I look forward to hearing how efforts are progressing nationwide.”
All Aboard for Spring Blockbuster Edition of Short Line Connector

Ad reservations are due next week for ASLRRA’s quarterly magazine, Short Line Connector. The glossy magazine tells the compelling short line small business story and reinforces and advances the short line brand.

This blockbuster edition will include the Association’s annual report and insightful features on latest technology and business trends. The edition has a bonus distribution at the annual convention in Nashville.

Advertising in the magazine is a cost-effective way to get your marketing message in front of more than 1,000 ASLRRA short line and supplier members, raise your profile in the industry and show support for your Association.

The commitment deadline is also next week for the Official Program for our Nashville annual convention. With options that start at under $1,000, an ad in the program is a great way to drive traffic to an exhibit booth at the convention and reinforce your brand.

Contact ASLRRA Vice President Kathy Keeney on (202) 585-3439 with questions or to reserve your space.

Follow @ASLRRA on Twitter!

Please tag @ASLRRA, or send photos to ASLRRA’s Amy Westerman, so we can share our members’ stories via social media.

Member News

NYA First Short Line to Start Sleep Apnea Program

New York & Atlantic Railway (NYA), an ASLRRA member, started its new Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA) program January 23, and will screen nearly 40 locomotive engineers and conductors in New York City and Long Island, N.Y. for OSA.

NYA is the first short-line freight railroad in the United States to formally institute a program for OSA screening and treatment.

To conduct the program, NYA’s medical services and safety teams will work with Rocky Mountain Sleep Disorders Center, another ASLRRA member. Those employees identified as needing treatment will receive it under the care of NYA’s medical team.

“The detection and remediation of OSA will positively impact employee health and improve employee alertness for safety sensitive jobs,” NYA President James Bonner said in a press release.

Loram and GREX to Merge

Loram Maintenance of Way, Inc. (Loram) and Georgetown Rail Equipment Company (GREX), both ASLRRA associate member, have announced a merger that is expected to be finalized in mid-February. Under the merger agreement, Loram will acquire all of GREX’s outstanding shares.

“Combining forces with Loram allows a continuation of GREX’s vision of developing innovative solutions to meet real world problems,” said GREX Executive Chairman Chris Aadnesen in a press release. “GREX is recognized throughout the rail industry for its innovative technology, unmatched productivity, and providing superior value. We are confident our mission will continue, and remain a point of pride for the GREX family and its enduring legacy.”

GREX will continue to operate out of its Georgetown, Texas headquarters. Loram is based in Minneapolis, Minn.

North Shore Railroad’s Stotter One of Top 100 People in Central Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Business Central, a monthly business journal, named Jeb Stotter one of its top 100 people in central Pennsylvania. Stotter is president and CEO of North Shore Railroad Company & Affiliates (NSHR), an ASLRRA member. He is the only member of the railroad industry to win this award this year.

Pennsylvania Business Central’s top 100 people recognizes those in business and economic development who have had a significant impact on their companies and communities. Winners come from all levels of business.

Stotter joined NSHR in 2001, moving up in various roles before being named president and CEO in 2017. He is also vice chairman of NSHR’s board of directors, and president of the Keystone State Railroad Association.

**Chicago South Shore to Lease Track from CN**

Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad (CSS) will lease five miles of track from CN rail in Gary, Ind. to improve interchange between CSS and CN.

By leasing the track, which is on the northeast side of Gary, CSS plans to offer a higher frequency of service in order to provide customers with improved shipping options.

“We see this as part of our longstanding commitment to customers by ensuring efficient interchange with all our Chicago-area connections,” said Eric Jakubowski, vice president and chief commercial officer for CSS owner Anacostia Rail Holdings. “Gary has long been a great place for us to do business and this lease will make it possible for us to do an even better job.”

**Delgado Joins TNW Corporation**

Luis Delgado is TNW Corporation’s new market development manager. In this position, Delgado supports Wade Hoffman, who is TNW’s vice president of sales and marketing. TNW’s Texas North Western Railway is an ASLRRA member.

Delgado’s role includes contributing to TNW’s overall strategic planning and managing sales initiatives and programs. He is also largely responsible for day-to-day interactions with customers, prospects and partners.

Before joining TNW, Delgado was a senior sales consultant at Union Pacific Railroad.

**Alaska Railroad Names New Vice President Engineering**

The Alaska Railroad (ARRC) promoted Brian Lindamood to vice president, engineering. The move, which was effective January 31, took Lindamood from his previous position as director of project management.

In his new position, Lindamood will oversee evaluation, planning and construction of ARRC’s infrastructure, which includes bridge maintenance and construction and capital project management.

Lindamood joined ARRC in 2006 as capital projects manager and became director of project management in 2012. Before ARRC, Lindamood held senior positions in national engineering firms, where he specialized in railway design and operational analysis.

**FreightCar America Hires New Director of Sales**

FreightCar America, Inc. announced it has hired Kristen Wright as director of sales. Wright, who will be based in FreightCar America’s Chicago offices, will help market and sell items from the company’s railcar product line.

Wright’s previous industry experience includes leasing, fleet management, marketing, sales and transaction management.
“We are extremely pleased Kristen has agreed to join our company,” said FreightCar America’s Chief Commercial Officer Ted Baun in a press release. “I am confident that her experience and knowledge of the railcar industry will contribute significantly to FreightCar America’s continued commercial success.”

**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS**

ASLRRA has experienced a surge in membership applications this year, with many companies joining that will exhibit at our annual CONNECTIONS convention in Nashville. We are pleased to welcome the following companies:

**Commtrex**, based in Houston, TX, runs the Commtrex Exchange - a marketplace serving the needs of commodity shippers, railcar owners and operators who need to connect with new opportunities to purchase, sell, lease, store or service their railcars in today’s ever-changing rail environment. Trusted by hundreds of shippers and more than half of short line railroads for their purchase, storage and service needs, Commtrex provides access to over 2,000 service provider locations throughout North America. CEO & Founder Martin Lew is our primary contact and can be reached on mllew@commtrex.com or (713) 280-7987. Special thanks to Heather Anckner from Rockwood Steel for urging them to join.

**R.J. Corman Railroad Services**, based in Nicholasville, KY, is a full-service railroad construction, maintenance-of-way and emergency response company with multiple divisions strategically located across the nation. Nick Edelen, vice president of operations, is our primary contact and can be reached on nick.edelen@rjcorman.com. Please plan to visit them in booth #425/524 at our annual convention in Nashville.

**R.J. Corman Signaling**, based in Nicholasville, KY, excels in the development of signaling solutions to meet a variety of customers’ needs. They engineer, wire, and construct highway crossing warning systems and wayside signal projects providing a full-service signaling solution to customers. Our primary contact is President Ray Sipes, who can be reached on ray.sipes@rjcorman.com. Please plan to visit them in booth #425/524 at our annual convention in Nashville.

**Encore Rail Systems**, based in Broomfield, CO, has for nearly 20 years dedicated its talents exclusively to extending the life of crossties. Its ongoing investment in research has provided innovation to the industry making it the single-source provider of tie-plugging and rail seat abrasion prevention compounds and equipment. Our primary contact is Vice President & General Manager Greg Spilker, who can be reached at gs@encorers.com or (303) 956-3796. Many thanks to REMSA for their assistance with this return membership. Look for them in Booth #319 at our April annual convention in Nashville.

**Mountain States Contracting, Inc.**, based in Phoenix, AZ, provides railroad design, construction, maintenance, repair services throughout the Western United States. President Vern Van De Loo is our primary contact and can be reached at vern@mscrr.com or (602) 595-1575.

Ospre, based in Jacksonville, FL, provides services that support railroads with the installation of third-party utilities. Ospre’s skilled and experienced staff works directly with the railroad and with the utility customer to provide a well-scheduled, safe and productive project. Manager David Elder is our primary contact and can be reached on delder@lja.com. Many thanks to FEC Railway’s Bob Ledoux for recommending they join ASLRRA. Look for them in Booth #1228 at our April annual convention in Nashville.

Progressive Rail, based in Lakeville, MN, is a short line operating over more than 50 miles of track. Commodities hauled include aggregates, brick & cement, chemicals, coal, crude by rail, food & fuel, forest products, metallic ores & minerals, steel & crap. Dave Fellen, owner and president, is our primary contact. The company can be reached at 1-888-PRO-RAIL. Many thanks to Twin Cities & Western’s Mark Wegner for the assist with this return membership.

**Quandel Consultants, LLC**, based in Chicago, IL, has provided engineering solutions for the railroad and rail transit industry for four decades. Services provided include program management; engineering; planning; operations analysis; construction management; bridge: inspection, program management, load ratings, bridge & construction design and planning services including new bridge design and existing structure repairs/rehabilitation plan generation, and construction oversight. Jeffrey Bucholc, principal with the firm, is our primary contact and can be reached on jbucholc@quandel.com or (312) 634-6200.
Railroad Consultants, PLLC, based in Murfreesboro, TN, is a full-service railway, structural and civil engineering company. It has professionals licensed in over 45 states, with decades of combined experience. President Derek B. Godwin, PE, is our primary contact and can be reached on dgodwin@railroad-consultants.com or (615) 663-1142. Look for them in Booth #928 at our April annual convention in Nashville.

Southeast Vegetation Management, based in Brierfield, AL, offers on- and off-track vegetation control services for railroad rights of way. President Scott Dailey is our primary contact and can be reached on scott@southeastvm.com or (205) 626-9026. Many thanks to Genesee & Wyoming’s Kristine Storm for encouraging them to join our Association.

Look for more new member welcome announcements in next week’s newsletter.

Register Today!

Railroad Day on Capitol Hill is March 7, 2018 - Register Now!

Railroad Day on Capitol Hill has proven to be the single most effective way to get our message to Congress. The size of the event, the geographical diversity of the participants, and the unified railroad industry message focuses Congress on our issues. Your participation makes the difference! Click here to register.

2018 CONNECTIONS Convention Offers Legal, Finance Sessions

Education is the cornerstone of ASLRA’s Annual CONNECTIONS Convention, and this year’s event features a number of sessions specifically designed for finance and administration and legal professionals.

Finance and administration sessions include Best Practices in Finance; Economic Update; The Road to Retirement; and Hot Topics in Finance.

Legal sessions, which are sponsored by Fletcher & Sippel, LLC., include Standing Up to Railroad Discrimination: The 4-R Act; and FELA 101: Best Practices for Handling an Employee Injury. Follow the link above to view more sessions and read individual descriptions of each session.

In addition to powerhouse General Sessions, this meeting delivers more than 40 individual breakout sessions covering a wide range of industry-specific topics. Click here to view the educational lineup!

Join us at Gaylord Opryland in Nashville, Tenn. April 7-10. Follow these links to register for the convention or book a room in ASLRA’s room block at the Gaylord Opryland Resort.

Feb. 8, 2018 - Emergency Notification Systems Review

Join the Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) and expert James Dahlem from the Office of Railroad Safety at the Federal Railroad Administration to discuss emergency notification systems (ENS), including a review of what it is, how it works and how it can benefit railroads. Click here to register.

ASLRA Offers On-Demand Webinars

ASLRA’s expanded educational offerings now include On-Demand Webinars! ASLRA webinars already provide flexible training to meet busy schedules; now members can access valuable educational content at their convenience. Webinars cover a broad range of topics, including Regulatory Updates, Veteran Recruitment, Finance for Railroads, Social Media, Protecting Roadway Workers, and much more. Visit our website to view a complete list of On-Demand Webinars, presentations and takeaway materials.

Views and News is published by the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact Amy Krouse, Editor, akrouse@aslrra.org, with member news, questions or comments.