



July 7, 2021



ASLRRRA Continues to Work with Congress on Infrastructure Bill

The U.S. House of Representatives passed its Investing in a New Vision for the Environment and Surface Transportation (INVEST) in America Act last week, but [ASLRRRA believes](#) the bill could do more to support short line and regional railroads.

“For short line railroads specifically, work remains to ensure that any final legislation helps accomplish the worthy goals put forward - supporting long-term economic growth, improving transportation safety, and protecting the environment. For small business freight rail, there are a few beneficial provisions in this bill, such as a robust CRISI authorization level and significantly increased multimodal flexibility in the state freight formula program, but, as we have noted before, there are also a number of troubling provisions that will constrain short line growth, efficiency, and investment opportunities,” said ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker. “These problematic provisions include new CRISI eligibilities and set-asides which will limit short line success in this crucial program, a crew size mandate that would negatively affect the efficiency of scores of short lines, a blocked crossing provision that would impede freight rail service, an unjustified ban on the safe movement of LNG by rail, the removal of small project eligibility in the INFRA/PNRS program, and improvements to the RRIF program that would not apply to short line applicants.”

ASLRRRA is much [more pleased](#) with the Senate’s version of transportation legislation, which has passed through key Senate committees.

Now that the House has passed its portion of the bill and the Senate legislation moves toward consideration before the full Senate, there will soon be an opportunity to combine these bills - and ASLRRRA will continue to vigorously engage in that process. ASLRRRA urges its members to reach out to their elected representatives to share short line priorities. ASLRRRA’s government affairs team is happy to help! Contact ASLRRRA’s [Government Affairs Team](#).

State of FL Executive Order and RAN Issued for Tropical Storm Elsa

ASLRRRA has been alerted that the Governor of Florida has issued an [amended Executive Order](#) regarding Tropical Storm Elsa, which has made landfall today. Florida’s State of Emergency Response Team (SERT) has also issued a situational awareness [update](#) as of 9 a.m. this morning.

Details of the amended order include:

Amended Emergency Declaration: As of Monday, July 5, Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida issued an amended version of **Executive Order 21 - 151**, which revises the counties covered by the State of Emergency declared due to the projected strength, track, and effects of likely Hurricane Elsa.


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- **Added** as counties for which a State of Emergency is in effect are the following: Alachua, Columbia, Dixie, Franklin, Hamilton, Gilchrist, Jefferson, Lake, Lafayette, Madison, Marion, Sumter, Suwannee, Taylor, and Wakulla.
- **Removed** from the emergency declaration are: DeSoto, Hardee, and Miami-Dade counties.
- **Remain covered** by the emergency declaration due to earlier orders: Charlotte, Citrus, Collier, Hernando, Hillsborough, Lee, Levy, Manatee, Monroe, Pasco, Pinellas, and Sarasota counties.

Among a series of measures to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of actions to prepare for and respond to the tropical storm, the **emergency declaration** issued by the Florida governor **authorizes**:

- **Waiver of collection of tolls** and other fees and charges on public highways;
- **Reversal of the flow of traffic and closure of any roads, highways, and portions thereof** to provide emergency assistance and facilitate evacuation;
- **Suspension of enforcement of registration requirements for commercial vehicles entering Florida to provide emergency services, supplies, or equipment;**
- **Waiver of hours-of-service requirements** for these commercial vehicles; and
- **Waiver of size and weight restrictions** for any vehicles transporting emergency equipment, services, supplies, and agricultural commodities and citrus.

A [Railway Alert Network Awareness Message](#) has also been issued, which predicts that the Tropical Storm will make landfall up the coast through Wednesday.



Save the Date for ASLRRRA's Annual Convention

2021 Phoenix Convention Center Phoenix, AZ November 17-19	2022 St. Louis Convention Center St. Louis, MO May 1-4
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Visit aslrra.org/events to learn more



Two ASLRRRA Members Receive INFRA Grants; ASLRRRA Expects CRISI Grant NOFO Out Soon

Two ASLRRRA member railroads will benefit from the \$905.25 million awarded to [various projects](#) under the [Infrastructure for Rebuilding America \(INFRA\) grant program](#).

The money was awarded to 24 projects in 18 states. ASLRRRA member Palmetto Railways, a division of the South Carolina Department of Commerce, will use its \$25 million grant to help pay for roughly 22.7 new track miles and related facilities. The new track will connect

the Camp Hall Commerce Park to the CSX rail network.

ASLRRRA member The Belt Railway Company of Chicago will benefit from a \$19.1 million grant awarded to the Illinois Department of Transportation, which will create a rail bridge over Archer Avenue to remove a grade crossing.

In addition to railroad-specific projects, the City of Dubuque received money to fund rail-related improvements at the Port of Dubuque, and the South Jersey Port Corporation's grant award will help refurbish a multi-modal rail connection. The Georgia Ports Authority also received a grant to build an inland container port linked to the Port of Savannah by 324-mile freight rail service.

The Association also expects a notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) to be released soon for [Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements \(CRISI\) Program](#) grants. These grants are a significant source of potential funding for ASLRRRA members, and the Association encourages railroads to pursue these grants when the application period opens.

Members needing assistance with the grant process, for CRISI or any other federal or state programs, can get help through ASLRRRA's Member Discount Program. Preferred Providers Bergmann, HDR and GTS offer grant-writing services at competitive pricing to aid in the preparation and submission of applications.

Visit aslr.org/discounts to learn more about grant-writing services and other benefits available to members through the Member Discount Program.

Railroad Retirement Board Q&A Discusses Unemployment and Sickness Benefits

Each July 1, a new benefit year begins for qualified railroaders receiving unemployment or sickness benefits from the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). The RRB's most recent [question and answer](#) (Q&A) installment discusses these two types of benefits, eligibility requirements and how to claim them.

The questions deal with the year's new daily benefit rate, waiting periods for claiming benefits, how payments are made and more. Although at the time the Q&A was published there were benefit flexibilities in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the flexibilities are not covered in the Q&A because of they are temporary.

For information regarding unemployment and sickness benefits as related to COVID-19 issues, please visit RRB.gov/coronavirus.



ASLRRRA Encourages Members to Communicate Rail Priorities to Washington Representatives

As Congress works to finalize a transportation bill, it will be critical that lawmakers understand short line freight rail priorities. Over the next week or two, be in contact with your representatives in Washington.

Offer site visits, and communicate our needs, including well-funded and small railroad accessible Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants and Infrastructure for Rebuilding

America (INFRA) grants, no truck size and weight increases, and no mandatory crew size requirements. Please contact ASLRRRA's [Tom Lynch](#), [Zach Radford](#) or [Crystal Gitchell](#) for support in scheduling meetings, or with talking points.

WEBINARS AVAILABLE ON DEMAND

With more than 150 recordings available, there's a webinar to meet the needs of everyone on your team. Visit aslr.org/webinars to view a complete list of available recordings.



ASLRRA New Members

Know a company that would benefit from joining and participating in ASLRRA? Please contact ASLRRA's Vice President of Membership and Business Development [Kathy Keeney](#) via email or on (202) 585-3439.

ASLRRA Welcomes a New Supplier to Its Membership Rolls



TekTracking

ASLRRA is pleased to welcome [TekTracking LLC](#) to its membership rolls as an Associate Business Member (supplier). Based in Fairport, N.Y., TekTracking is an asset management

technology provider serving passenger and freight rail operators in North America. It has developed a comprehensive suite of mobile applications designed to meaningfully reduce railroad operating costs. The TekTracking suite of applications addresses track and bridge inspection, signal testing, timekeeping and hours of service. Our primary contact is CEO & Founder [Gregory Fogarty](#), who can also be reached on (585) 455-8276.

ASLRRA Announcements

Recent Cyber Attacks Highlight Need to Secure Computer Networks

Over the Fourth of July weekend a ransomware attack on software supplier Kaseya affected at least 200 U.S. companies. The potential impact on companies of all sizes underscores the importance of taking steps to secure computer networks.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) have issued [guidance](#) to multiple managed service providers (MSPs) and their customers affected by the Kaseya attack. [Updates](#) are also available from Kaseya on their ongoing efforts to mitigate the exploited vulnerability.

In a separate release, CISA, the FBI and the National Security Agency (NSA) have also released a [cybersecurity advisory](#) discussing malicious cyber activities by Russian military intelligence against organizations in the U.S.

ASLRRA strongly recommends that members work with their IT teams to secure their systems, and for those teams to [subscribe](#) to National Cyber Awareness System (NCAS) Alerts from CISA.

Other resources available to ASLRRA members include access to the Association of American Railroads' [Railway Alert Network \(RAN\) notices](#) concerning cyber issues, and various CISA notifications.

[ASLRRA's On-Demand Webinar library](#) also features a three-part series on cybersecurity, presented and sponsored by Collins Aerospace. Look for the following titles using the webinar link.

- Part 1: Introduction to Cybersecurity for Short Line Railroads
- Part 2: Security Controls for Short Line Railroads
- Part 3: Resiliency for Short Lines

Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company is Latest Member to Join SmartWay

Congratulations to Twin Cities & Western Railroad Company who has joined the SmartWay program as a Rail Carrier! Now shippers will see the environmental benefits of adding rail to the transportation mix. For more information on this program, how to join, and ASLRRRA recorded webinars regarding the benefits - click [here](#).

Employee Health Insurance Through HUB International Offers a Solution for Healthcare Needs

The [Coalition Health Plan](#) is specifically designed for ASLRRRA members looking for a solution to reduce their medical premiums and simplify the healthcare experience for their employees. As the fifth-largest broker in the world with over 500 locations in North America, HUB International is well equipped to provide ASLRRRA members with a vast network of benefits experts and best-in-class resources no matter where you are in the US.

When you partner with HUB, you're at the center of a vast network of experts who will help you reach your goals through risk services, claims management, and compliance support. Visit aslrta.org/discounts and select Employee Health Insurance to start saving today!



Employee Health Insurance
The Coalition Health Plan is available exclusively to ASLRRRA members, designed to reduce medical premiums and simplify the healthcare experience for employees. [Click to learn more...](#)



ASLRRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

View Recorded Webinars Presented by ASLRRRA's In-House Experts

ASLRRRA's [online resource library](#) offers more than 150 webinar recordings on a variety of topics. From industry-specific finance, human resources and legal issues to business development and regulatory compliance, there is a session to meet the needs of every

member of your team.

All recordings are available on demand at the click of a mouse by visiting aslrta.org/webinars. Check out the sessions featured below, presented by ASLRRRA subject-matter experts and found in the Regulatory category:

- “Emergency Docket Waivers,” Presented by ASLRRRA’s Jo Strang, senior vice president safety & regulatory policy and JR Gelnar, vice president safety & compliance
- “FRA Penalties and Violations,” Presented by Jo Strang, JR Gelnar and Sarah Yurasko, ASLRRRA’s general counsel
- “FRA Regulatory & Program Requirements for Short Lines, Part 1,” Presented by JR Gelnar

- “FRA Regulatory & Program Requirements for Short Lines, Part 2,” Presented by JR Gelnar

Visit aslrta.org/webinars and select the On Demand Webinars button to view a complete list of all available recordings.

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

Industry Events and Announcements

July 8 and 13 – Railinc Webinars Discuss Replacement for Early Warning System

Railinc is hosting two webinars on July 8 and 13 to discuss the [Equipment Advisory System](#). Railinc suggests users of its Early Warning System participate in the webinar, because the Equipment Advisory System replaces the Early Warning System.

The webinar will give an overview of the Equipment Advisory System and explain how it is different from Early Warning. It will also talk about user roles and offer tips and references.

Registration for the webinar is free but required. Click [here](#) to register for the July 8 webinar, and [here](#) to register for July 13.

Operation Lifesaver Accepting Applications for Rail Transit Safety Program Grants

Operation Lifesaver is now accepting applications for its Rail Transit Safety Education Grants. A total of \$220,000 is being made available for transit agencies and government entities to fund rail transit safety education and public awareness initiatives.

Grant awards are capped at \$20,000, and projects must benefit communities with operating or planned rail transit systems. Applications are due by July 31 and must be submitted through the Common Grant Application online grant processing program. Click [here](#) for more information and links to the Common Grant Application site.

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

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