



In This Issue:

- **ASLRRRA Welcomes Two New Members** – The Association is pleased this week to welcome to our membership rolls a short line and a supplier. Learn more about our newest members in our [ASLRRRA New Members](#) section below.
- **Railway Age Nomination Period Opens** – *Railway Age* magazine is accepting nominations for its Short Line and Regional Railroad of the Year competition and its Fast Trackers 25 under 40 awards. Learn more in our [Industry Events and Announcements](#) section below.

Headlines

The Association's Busy Week Includes FRA's Crew Size Mandate Discussions and Board, Member Meetings



(L to R) ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker, Board Chair Stefan Loeb, Senior Vice President Membership and Business Development Kathy Keeney, Senior Vice President Education and Business Sabrina Waiss and Senior Consultant Mike Ogborn provided updates on Association operations and other business during ASLRRRA's annual board meeting in Washington, D.C. This meeting was one of several important events this week for ASLRRRA and its members.

ASLRRRA staff are participating in several important events this week, two held by federal agencies and two Association meetings.

On Monday the [Small Business Administration \(SBA\)](#) held a [roundtable discussion](#) with stakeholders to discuss the potential ramifications of the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) proposed minimum crew size rule. ASLRRRA staff participated in the discussion, helping the SBA better understand how the FRA's rule will impact its small-business short line members.

On Tuesday, ASLRRRA staff and members of the Association's Board of Directors met in Washington, D.C. for ASLRRRA's annual board meeting. Board

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ASLRRR board members pose for a group photo during their annual meeting.

members received an update on the Association's operations from respective staff, as well as committee reports and more.

Today, ASLRRR President Chuck Baker, Senior Vice President of Safety, Regulatory and Environmental Policy Jo Strang and Senior Vice President of Law and General Counsel Sarah Yurasko, along with six other short line representatives, testified during [a public hearing](#) held by the FRA to discuss the agency's train crew staffing notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM).

And on Friday, ASLRRR will hold its 2022 Annual Membership Meeting online. Participants will be able to meet new board members, receive comprehensive Association updates and more. All those who are eligible to attend should have received an email with a link to join the meeting at 2 p.m. EST. Members who have not received this information should contact Julie Duriga at jduriga@aslrra.org to join the call.

To learn more about ASLRRR's role in the FRA hearing, please see "ASLRRR Testifies at FRA Hearing" in our [Regulatory Section](#) below.

Register to Attend FRA Drug and Alcohol Training (Part 219)

Jan 31-Feb 1, 2023 | Phoenix, Arizona

Space is Limited - Register Today!



Regulatory Update

ASLRRA Testifies at FRA Hearing on Proposed Rulemaking Concerning Train Crew Size Safety Requirements

ASLRRA staff and members testified today at a [hearing on the notice of proposed rulemaking](#) (NPRM) from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) concerning mandatory minimum crew sizes. ASLRRA President Chuck Baker, Senior Vice President Safety, Regulatory and Environmental Policy Jo Strang and General Counsel and Senior Vice President Law Sarah Yurasko represented the Association.

In his testimony, Baker noted that the NPRM grossly underestimated the number of short lines that currently operate one-person crews and therefore the burden of this regulation on the industry. The proposed rulemaking does not demonstrate any safety benefits for short lines operating with two-person crews versus one-person crews.

The exceptions and special approval processes provided in the NPRM for small short lines and legacy operations are quite limited and narrow and would force many short lines using one person crews to either hire additional staff or make costly operational adjustments such as adding dispatching, breaking up trains, restricting train speed and adding alerters.

Implementation of this rule as written would risk short lines' ability to service customers, provide an economic engine to the communities in which they operate, and inadvertently cause modal shifts that would not serve the American public well, all for no safety benefit.

ASLRRA urged the FRA to withdraw this NPRM or completely exempt short line railroads from any crew size and crew location mandate.

Also testifying at the hearing were ASLRRA members Mitch Harris of the Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, Robert Bullock of the Florida East Coast Railway, John DeWaele of the Grafton and Upton Railroad, Scott Conner of Transtar LLC, Adam Robillard of the Madison Railroad, and Dewayne Swindall of the Indiana Rail Road Company.



Above: (R to L) ASLRRA's Chuck Baker, Sarah Yurasko and Jo Strang speak at a Federal Railroad Administration hearing on a proposed mandatory crew size rule.

Below: (R to L) ASLRRA members Mitch Harris of the Rio Grande Pacific Corporation, Robert Bullock of the Florida East Coast Railway and Adam Robillard of the Madison Railroad joined Baker in speaking at the FRA hearing. Other member representatives participated via video call.



Two RRB Articles Focus on Representative Payees and Information Concerning Next Year's Taxes

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) issued a pair of news releases for December, their monthly [Question and Answer \(Q&A\) column](#) and [railroad retirement and unemployment insurance tax information for 2023](#).

The Q&A discusses the appointment of a representative payee who can act on behalf of an annuitant who might be incapable of properly handling benefit payments. The RRB has the authority through the Railroad Retirement Act to determine whether a representative payee is in the annuitant's best interests and then appoint such a payee. The payee can be someone other than the person's legal representative.

The RRB goes on to explain how the agency selects a representative payee and describe payee responsibilities, such as paying for the annuitant's day to day needs. The RRB notes it does not recognize an annuitant's power of attorney when identifying a representative payee.

In the tax article, the RRB says that the amounts of compensation subject to railroad retirement tier I and II payroll taxes will go up in 2023 and tax rates on employers and employees will stay the same. Employers' unemployment insurance contribution rate will have a 1.5 percent surcharge, down from 3.5 percent in 2022.

Legislative Update

Lawmakers Closer to Passing Final 2023 Spending Bill

Congress is still trying to come to an agreement on an omnibus spending bill to keep the federal government funded past the current Dec. 16 deadline. Lawmakers are expected to pass another continuing resolution extending that due date for a week to allow both sides to come to an agreement on the bill.

While the potential for an agreement seemed out of reach only days ago, Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) [announced](#) on Monday that House and Senate representatives had reached a bipartisan framework for the bill. House Appropriations Committee Chair Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.) [issued](#) a similar statement that same day.



**EXCLUSIVELY FOR ASLRRRA MEMBERS:
Drug & Alcohol Educational Materials**

Download posters, forms, brochures and webinars to educate contractors and employees on required drug and alcohol compliance practices and testing.



ASLRRRA New Members

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

ASLRRRA Welcomes a New Short Line Member and New Associate Business Member



Buffalo Southern Railroad

[Buffalo Southern Railroad](#), based in North Collins, New York, operates a 32-mile line segment. The BSOR serves several crucial industries in Western New York, including agricultural, energy, manufacturing, entertainment, and forestry. Its connections include Buffalo & Pittsburgh, Canadian Pacific, CSX, and Norfolk Southern. We are delighted to welcome them back as a member.



METEORCOMM®

[Meteorcomm, LLC](#) (MCC), based in Renton, Washington, is a new Associate Business Member. The company is a trusted source of innovative

wireless communications and train control technology, creating efficient and reliable railroad solutions. MCC delivers products and services that enable Positive Train Control (PTC) compliance, signaling and improve operational efficiencies. Points of contact are Michael Rodriguez (Sr. Manager, Business Strategy & Special Projects mrodriguez@meteorcomm.com / (253) 216.8208) and John Danyluk (Sr. Manager, Product Management jdanyluk@meteorcomm.com / (469) 514-9845).

Announcements

ASLRRRA's Drug and Alcohol Education Materials Include Downloadable Posters

ASLRRRA's new [Drug and Alcohol Educational Materials](#) page includes posters available for download, a Part 219 educational brochure, affidavit templates and employer review documents.

Developed with experts on ASLRRRA's Safety and Training Committee, the materials are available to ASLRRRA members under the [Safety Training Resources](#) section of ASLRRRA's [Safety & Compliance page](#). Each of the posters can be printed for use on railroad property and are meant to help ensure employees are aware of some of the rules and regulations concerning drug and alcohol use. Other resources help railroads, contractors and employees learn more about required compliance practices and drug and alcohol testing.

The educational materials page also features links to webinar recordings discussing Part 219, which can be found in ASLRRRA's [On-Demand Webinar library](#).

Register Before Year's End to Secure a Space in ASLRRRA's FRA Part 219 Drug & Alcohol Training Seminar

ASLRRRA is partnering with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to offer its popular Drug and Alcohol Training Seminar, Jan. 30 to Feb. 1, in Phoenix, Arizona. Presented by FRA Drug and Alcohol Program Specialist Sam Noe and ASLRRRA Vice President Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar, this essential training includes an in-depth review of FRA Part 219 Drug and Alcohol Training and covers all sections of the rule and requirements for all railroads and contractors.

This comprehensive two-day training is always in high demand and typically sells out; attendees are encouraged to register before the year's end to secure a spot. Book hotel rooms online as well before the block expires at the end of December. ASLRRRA's room block for this training is almost full.

Visit aslrro.org/training to view full details on this and other 2023 training seminars and register today.



The banner features a dark blue background with a photograph of a historic street in New Orleans on the right. On the left is a purple shield-shaped logo with a green train icon and the text 'ASLRRRA 2023 Annual Conference & Exhibition NEW ORLEANS'. The main text in yellow reads: 'ASLRRRA 2023 Annual Conference & Exhibition April 2-4, 2023 | New Orleans Registration opens soon!'.

ASLRRRA Webinars

Upcoming Webinars

[Freight Rail Cybersecurity Threat Briefing and TSA Security Directive](#) – Dec. 15, 2022

Join Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Industry Engagement Manager Jonathan Lamb and Kristen Lane of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for an important freight rail cybersecurity threat briefing and TSA security directive. This webinar is free for ASLRRRA members.

[FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse Requirements for CDL Drivers](#) – Jan. 10, 2023

Spark TS's Holly Rainwater and Rio Grande Pacific's Mitch Harris will join ASLRRRA's JR Gelnar to discuss the responsibilities for railroads with regards to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Clearinghouse for CDL drivers. This webinar is free for ASLRRRA members.

[Update on Part 240/242 Audits and FRA Findings](#) – Jan. 12, 2023

Join the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Kevin Lewis and ASLRRRA's JR Gelnar for an update on Part 240/242 audits and learn what FRA has discovered during their first year of focused audits on short lines. Lewis will provide information and insight into findings and discuss what FRA will be doing in future audits. This webinar is free for ASLRRRA members.

[2022 Economic Update and What to Look for in 2023](#) – Jan. 25, 2023

Association of American Railroads (AAR) economists Luisa Fernandez-Willey and Dan Keen will discuss what happened in 2022 with freight traffic and the economy and learn what economic indicators to watch for as we enter 2023. This webinar is free for ASLRRA members.

On-Demand Webinars

Find ASLRRA's Cybersecurity Webinar Series in the On-Demand Webinar Library

Cybersecurity is an increasingly more important issue for railroads. ASLRRA has offered a three-part webinar series focused on this topic, originally presented and sponsored by Collins Aerospace. Recordings of these webinars can be found in the Technology category of the Association's On-Demand Webinar library. Available recordings include:

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

Visit ASLRRA's [webinar homepage](#) and log in to view all the on-demand offerings in the Association's webinar library. Most of the recordings also have a copy of the accompanying PDF presentation available for download. ASLRRA members can access recordings for free at any time, while non-members can purchase a subscription.

Click [here](#) to learn more about ASLRRA's education offerings.

Industry Events and Announcements

Dec. 15 – FRA Webinar to Discuss Federal-State Partnership Grant Program

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will give an overview of the fiscal year (FY) 2022 [Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program](#) during a webinar on Dec. 15.

In addition to providing a general program overview, FRA representatives will also discuss the application, submission, review and evaluation process. A total of \$2.283 billion in funding is available for capital projects located outside the Northeast Corridor. Although these grants are intended for projects related to passenger rail services, freight railroads that host or otherwise work with passenger railroads could benefit from this significant federal investment through a partnership with eligible entities.

Follow [this link](#) to learn more about the webinar and to register.

***Railway Age* Accepting Nominations for Annual Small Railroad, Fast Tracker Awards**

The nomination period for *Railway Age* magazine's [Fast Trackers 25 Under 40](#) awards and its [Short Line and Regional Railroad of the Year](#) awards is now open.

The Fast Tracker award recognizes railroad industry professionals under the age of 40 who are making significant contributions to their respective fields and/or within their company. Nominees are judged

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on a number of criteria including leadership skills and industry experience and contributions. Nominations are due Jan. 9, and winners will be featured in *Railway Age's* February issue.

The magazine is also accepting nominations for its annual Short Line of the Year and Regional Railroad of the Year awards. The awards recognize Class II and III railroads that demonstrate outstanding achievement in one or more areas including marketing, community relations, safety improvement and innovation in operations or maintenance.

Winners of the Short Line and Regional Railroad of the Year awards will be recognized at [ASLRRRA's Annual Conference and Exhibition](#), taking place April 2 to 4 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Winners will also be featured in the March issue of *Railway Age*.

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

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