



October 27, 2021



ASLRRRA Mourns the Passing of Former Employee Thomas Streicher

Thomas Eric Streicher, 71, passed away suddenly on Oct. 24. Streicher served for many years as the general superintendent of safety for ASLRRRA, retiring in 2015 after about a decade with the Association. His extensive railroad career also included stints at Conrail, Norfolk Southern, and as principal of his own railroad safety consulting firm. He was an accomplished safety expert, leader and mentor.



Tom Streicher speaks at the 2015 ASLRRRA convention in Orlando, Florida.

Streicher is well remembered by staff and members of the ASLRRRA. "Tom was a dedicated advocate for safety, serving our members with diligence and thoughtful advice for years. In addition to his focus on safety, he was a man of varied interests, including being an opera buff. He will be truly missed," said Mike Ogborn, former ASLRRRA chairman and current special advisor to the ASLRRRA president.

As a mentor, Tom was influential in providing opportunities for others in the industry that he loved. "Tom and I met when he went to work for ASLRRRA, and we soon became friends and had many good times together. Tom asked me to join his newly reorganized Safety and Training Committee, which changed the course of my career. He opened many doors for me with introductions to many industry safety leaders expanding my knowledge of regulations and safety practices. My employment with the ASLRRRA was very much influenced by Tom. He had the ability to bring the right people together for solving a problem no matter how complex. I have fond memories of Tom, his wife Linda, myself and my wife, Susan, sharing dinner and stories as guests at their home. Tom was a great friend and will be missed by many within our industry," said ASLRRRA Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar.

Streicher's expertise and commitment to safety were notable whether he was working on behalf of the company he represented, or on broader industry initiatives. "Tom and I knew each other through working together on the Rail Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC), Switching Operations Fatality Analysis (SOFA) Working Group, and as a founding member of the Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-Way Employees and Signalmen (FAMES) Committee," said ASLRRRA Senior Vice President of Safety and Regulatory Policy Jo Strang. "He loved his work at the ASLRRRA and enjoyed helping railroads with safety issues and understanding regulatory matters. Later, when we became colleagues, I learned that Tom was kind and generous, he always had time for anyone that needed him and truly had a heart of gold."

Streicher was an active staff participant in ASLRRRA's Safety and Training Committee. Mitch Harris, Rio Grande Pacific Corporation director of safety, training and regulatory compliance who currently chairs

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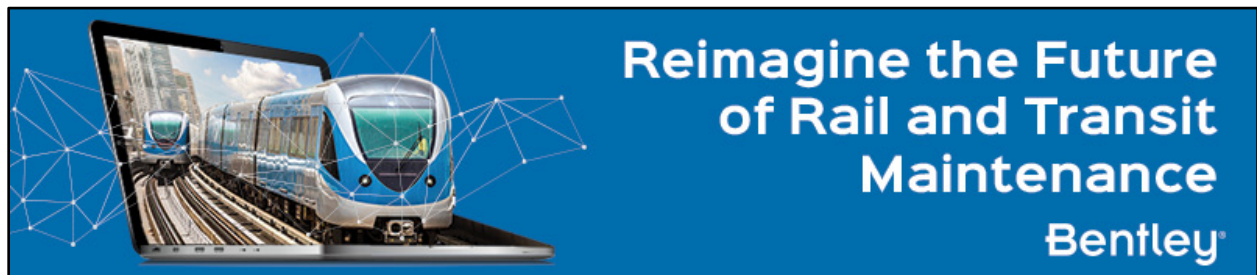
that committee, remembers him fondly, "I am greatly saddened by the passing of Mr. Streicher. He has been an important and vibrant part of our safety & training community for many years. Tom was a great friend and mentor to me in my railroad career and I will miss him very much. I wish peace to the Streicher family and all of Tom's friends...there are many."

Streicher is survived by his father, two siblings, three children and six grandchildren. Tom was predeceased by his wife, Linda Brace Streicher. His first wife, Peggy Huber, survives as does his recent companion of three years, Carolyn Williams.

Service Information:

An initial viewing will be held on Thursday, October 28, from 5-7 p.m. at [Eline Funeral Home](#) in Reisterstown, MD. An additional viewing will be held on Friday from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. at [St. Charles Borromeo Church](#) in Pikesville, Md., with the funeral service immediately following. A reception will be held after the service.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations in honor of Thomas Streicher's servants' heart may be made to [My Sister's Place Women's Center](#), 320 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD, 21201.



ASLRRRA and AAR Respond to FRA Notice of Information Collection

ASLRRRA joined the Association of American Railroads (AAR) in filing [comments](#) with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) in response to a [request for comment](#) on a notice of information collection concerning the FRA's locomotive safety standards found in 48 CFR part 229.

The comments question the FRA's calculations indicating a 94 percent decrease in the paperwork collection burden estimation from the requirements approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in 2018. ASLRRRA and AAR note that the stated estimated burdens have dropped without a significant change in the original regulations, leading the associations to question the FRA's methodology, as well as the transparency surrounding the calculation process.

ASLRRRA and AAR requested an opportunity to review and comment on the data the FRA used to support its changes in estimated recordkeeping burdens.

RRB Discusses Increases to Benefits and Earnings Limits in 2022

Two Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) news releases detail increases to retirement benefits and retiree earnings limits in 2022.

The first press release explains how a rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) over the past year will lead to an [increase in railroad retirement annuities](#) in January 2022. Tier I benefits will increase by 5.9 percent, while Tier II benefits will increase by 1.9 percent. The RRB further details how much annuitants can expect to receive.

In the second press release, the RRB explains how [retiree earnings limits](#) will also increase in 2022. Earnings restrictions apply to individuals who have not yet reached full Social Security retirement age, and will rise to \$19,560 for those under full retirement age throughout 2022, or \$51,960 for the months prior to the month in 2022 in which the annuitant reaches full retirement age.

RRB Q&A Explains Appeals Process for Claims Disputes

The [October installment](#) of the Railroad Retirement Board's monthly question and answer (Q&A) series explains how an individual can appeal unfavorable decisions made on their claims.

The Q&A describes the three-stage review and appeals process for all claims under the Railroad Retirement Act and Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act. It also details the timeline for filing appeals and appeal options beyond the RRB.



Democratic Leaders Hash Out Details of Build Back Better Agenda

President Joe Biden and Democratic leaders in the Senate and House are working feverishly to negotiate a framework for a major climate-related and social spending policy bill, which Biden says will reflect the core elements of his Build Back Better agenda.

The biggest focus this week has been how to pay for the package, which could cost at least \$1.5 trillion. Democratic leaders have seemed to coalesce around several tax proposals, such as instituting an alternative minimum corporate tax rate of 15 percent

for certain large corporations with \$1 billion in annual profits and imposing a tax on assets held by very wealthy Americans.

As the question of how to pay for the spending nears some possible resolution, Democrats also continue to wrangle over what policy priorities will be in the final measure, including clean energy provisions, paid family leave, free pre-kindergarten education and expansion of Medicare, though it appears some of the Democrats' original priorities will be drastically scaled back or scrapped altogether.

Once the overall details of the plan are finalized, the House will be closer to acting on the bipartisan infrastructure bill, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which already passed out of the U.S. Senate in August. The IIJA has strong support from many transportation stakeholders, including ASLRRA.

Congressman Babin visits Watco's Timber Rock Railroad in Texas



Photo Courtesy of TIBR

Texas Congressman Brian Babin gives a thumbs up during a tour of the equipment and facilities of ASLRRRA member Timber Rock Railroad. Babin recently visited TIBR to learn about its operations, and to discuss issues like crew size mandates and infrastructure legislation that are important to short lines

visits like Babin's and help railroads build relationships with lawmakers. Contact ASLRRRA's Assistant Vice President of Legislative and Regulatory Policy Crystal Gitchell at cgitchell@aslrra.org with questions or for more information.

ASLRRRA member Timber Rock Railroad (TIBR), a Watco subsidiary, hosted U.S. Representative Brian Babin (R-Texas) on Oct. 6.

Babin, along with representatives from his Texas office, spent nearly three hours at TIBR, touring facilities and speaking with Watco officials about the company's operations and rail infrastructure needs. The group also discussed the impact of short lines on the Texas and U.S. economy as well as regulatory issues important to the industry. As part of the visit, TIBR General Manager Bubba Marshall took the group on a hi-rail ride from the railroad's Kirbyville, Texas location to its bridge at the Texas-Louisiana border.

Babin sits on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and is eager to grow in his role as a short line champion. Making these kinds of connections is important, and ASLRRRA staff members want to facilitate site

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS RESOURCES

Be Prepared! Download ASLRRRA's member-exclusive templates and checklists to build or enhance your railroad's emergency response plans. Visit www.aslrra.org/disasterprep.



Make In-Person Connections with Short Line Industry Colleagues at this Year's Annual Conference

Why register for the 2021 ASLRRA Annual Conference and Exhibition? Stefan Loeb, vice chair for ASLRRA's Board of Directors, makes a good point: There's nothing like being able to reconnect with industry colleagues in person, especially after more than a year of virtual meetings, where a wave into a camera has replaced handshakes and fist bumps.

Follow [this link](#) to hear from Loeb – accompanied by his epic model train – about the benefits of an in-person conference. Then view the [conference website](#) to learn about all the [engaging events](#) planned for Nov. 17-19, including:

Keynote speaker Amit Bose, Federal Railroad Administration deputy administrator

Over 30 [education breakout sessions](#) in 11 different categories

More than 150 companies in the popular [Exhibit Hall](#)

Several [networking opportunities](#) including the Early Bird Happy Hour, First Timer's Reception and two Exhibit Hall Receptions

A [golf tournament](#) at the JW Marriott Camelback Golf Club

ASLRRA will also honor winners of its [Business Development](#) and [Veterans Engagement](#) Awards, as well as inductees to the Short Line Industry Hall of Fame and [Safety Professional and Safety Person of the Year Award](#) winners.

[Register](#) today to attend this year's [ASLRRA Annual Conference and Exhibition](#) in Phoenix, Arizona. Limited space is still available in [ASLRRA's hotel room blocks](#) at the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown and the Hyatt Regency Phoenix.

Stay Through Friday to Maximize Your ASLRRA Conference Experience

Nearly 20 of this year's education breakout sessions at the [2021 ASLRRA Annual Conference and Exhibition](#) will take place Nov. 19, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m., so participants looking to make the most of their conference experience should make plans to stay at least through noon on Friday.

Friday's educational offerings represent all of the 11 different tracks. Sessions include:

- Human Resources – Recruitment and Retention Strategies in 2021 and Beyond
- Mechanical – Hot Topics in Rail Car Maintenance and Repair
- Safety and Operations – Security Update Including TSA's New Training Rule
- Technology – New Technologies in Simulator Training

There is also a "Speed Mentoring" session in the Young Professionals track, and Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and Washington updates.

Follow this [link](#) to view a full schedule of education sessions, including the dates and times each session is offered. Click [here](#) to register today!

ASLRRRA Members of Note

ASLRRRA is pleased to highlight the accomplishments of its members and the strides being made in [freight rail sustainability](#), [business development](#), [veterans engagement](#) and more.

In the next few weeks, ASLRRRA will focus on those member companies working to hire and support veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. These profiles will lead up to a Veterans Day feature focused on the winner of this year's ASLRRRA Veterans Engagement Award.

Despite COVID-19 Business Impacts, MRL Extends Financial Support to Military Organizations



Photo Courtesy of MRL

One way ASLRRRA member Montana Rail Link honored U.S. service members in 2020 was through this special tribute locomotive, which debuted in November. The locomotive features patriotic artwork and the seals of the branches of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Despite a tough 2020, Montana Rail Link (MRL) continued its relationship with Montana's military-affiliated organizations, donating \$50,000 to Warriors and Quiet Waters and becoming a \$15,000+ admiral-level donor to the USS Montana Committee. Warriors and Quiet Waters provides adaptive fly-fishing experiences in Montana to post-9/11 veterans and their families, while the USS Montana Committee supports the commissioning of a new nuclear-powered fast attack Navy submarine, the USS Montana or SSN 794.

In November 2020, MRL also debuted a special tribute locomotive, covered in patriotic artwork and each of the seals of the U.S. military branches, as well as the logo of the USS Montana Committee. The locomotive is used in regular freight service on the MRL system.

The company also worked to support U.S. service members in other ways. For its employees who currently serve in the U.S. National Guard and Reserves, MRL changed its military leave policy to add a make whole pay clause. The change ensures MRL employees called to military training or deployment do not experience a reduction in pay during that time. MRL also provided custom baseball caps and hard hat stickers to the over 175 company employees who are veterans. MRL also

recognizes veterans in its corporate communications, thanking veterans for their service and encouraging their colleagues to do the same.

ASLRRRA Announcements

SmartWay Webinar Helps Build Connections Between SmartWay Participants, Regional Representatives

On Nov. 18, SmartWay will host a [webinar](#) to encourage networking between SmartWay affiliates and EPA regional offices. Subject-matter experts will be available to discuss local and regional freight transportation issues and connect with organizations. Follow the link above to register for this free webinar.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) SmartWay program is a good way for railroads to advance their supply-chain sustainability by allowing them to measure and improve their freight transportation efficiency. ASLRRRA is a SmartWay affiliate member, and many of the Association's railroad members are also SmartWay shipping partners.

ASLRRRA Training Videos Enable Members to Meet FRA Requirements

ASLRRRA is dedicated to railroad safety and compliance and strives to assist members with industry best practices and compliance throughout their operations by offering essential resources, including [training videos](#) that are available as a direct download from the association website.

The [Reasonable Suspicion Drug & Alcohol Signs and Symptoms Video](#) provides detailed direction on drug and alcohol testing guidelines. This video teaches railroad workers how to recognize possible impairment, what substances to test for, how to conduct a proper test, and steps to take in case of a positive test, among many other components. Part 219.11(g) requires signs and symptoms training for supervisors of regulated employees. Training with this video will ensure compliance.

This video, as well as a [Post-Accident Toxicological Testing Video](#), are available at no cost to ASLRRRA members and to non-members for a fee. Visit www.aslrra.org/safety to access the full complement of safety and compliance tools, resources and information available from ASLRRRA.

ASLRRA Out and About



Baker Participates in GoRail Webinar Discussing the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

On Oct. 26, ASLRRA President Chuck Baker spoke to 200 participants at a GoRail webinar titled "Railroads, Infrastructure Policy, and the View from D.C." He was joined by former Congressman and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster and Association of American Railroads Senior Vice President of Government Affairs Adrian Arnakis.

The three panelists discussed the Infrastructure Investment

Photo courtesy of GoRail

ASLRRA President Chuck Baker (top right) gets a thumbs up from former Congressman Bill Shuster (bottom left) during a GoRail webinar discussing the infrastructure bill currently awaiting passage on Capitol Hill.

and Jobs Act (IIJA), which has passed the Senate and is awaiting a vote in the House. They focused on the bill's impact on freight railroads and their customers, as well as new funding opportunities for rail and infrastructure projects included in the bill.

Yurasko Leads LRW Membership Meeting at Virtual Conference

ASLRRA General Counsel Sarah Yurasko participated in the League of Railway Women's (LRW) virtual Annual Conference last week.

Yurasko, who is also vice president of the League of Railway Women's Board of Directors, ran the LRW membership meeting. ASLRRA also had a booth in the virtual expo hall.

ASLRRA SAFETY & TRAINING Reasonable Suspicion Drug & Alcohol Signs and Symptoms Training Video

Visit www.aslrra.org/safety for more info





ASLRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

Upcoming Webinars

[Harness the Power of Rail Analytics to Improve Safety](#) – Nov. 2, 2021

Bentley Product Manager Robert Henderson will explore how railroads can unlock the potential of data their organizations already own, through predictive maintenance strategies that use the latest innovations in rail condition analytics. He will also explain how, with cloud-based technology and pre-configured analytics, short lines can now access analytical and decision support tools to realize a faster ROI.

Thank you to sponsor



[Environmental Update – Who's on First](#) – Nov. 3, 2021

HDR Vice President and Senior Professional Associate Kevin Keller will provide an update of current environmental regulations and how they potentially impact the freight rail industry. Attendees will have an opportunity to participate in Q&A at the end of the presentation. **CLE credits are available for this webinar.**

Thank you to sponsor



Recorded Webinar Series Explains Railroad Retirement Eligibility and Benefits

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) recently announced [annuity](#) and [earnings limit](#) increases for 2022. Those who need additional information regarding RRB retirement eligibility, benefits and more can find it in ASLRRA's On-Demand Webinar library. ASLRRA and the RRB worked together to produce a series of three informational webinars provided by RRB representatives.

Look [online](#) for the following titles:

- RRB General Eligibility and Employee Benefits
- RRB Spouse Benefits and Working After Retirement
- RRB Survivor Benefits and General Information

ASLRRA's online resource library offers more than 150 webinar recordings on a variety of topics. Visit aslrta.org/webinars and select the On Demand Webinars button to view a complete list of all available recordings. Access is free to ASLRRA members, and by subscription for non-members.

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

Industry Events and Announcements

Oct. 29 – Hay Seminar Focuses on Freight Car Standards

This Friday's [Hay Seminar](#), presented by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Rail Transportation and Engineering Center, discusses freight car mechanical standards, including how they are developed and managed.

Richard Dawson is the webinar speaker. He retired from TTX in 2003 but has remained active as a consulting engineer on railcar engineering projects, and recently served as chair of the Association of American Railroads Safety Appliance Task Force.

[Registration](#) for the webinar is free but required. Professional development hours are available for a fee.

Nov. 2 – FRA Webinar Looks at Post-Selection Grant Process

A Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [webinar](#) will help attendees understand the responsibilities of a project sponsor when their project is chosen for an FRA grant.

The FRA will talk about the stages of the grant lifecycle, explaining post-selection expectations and activities for FRA discretionary grant programs. The agency encourages project sponsors, their consultants and potential discretionary grant applicants to register.

[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.