



## Headlines

### DOT Releases RAISE Grant Preliminary Funding Notice

The Department of Transportation (DOT) has issued a [preliminary notice of funding opportunity](#) (NOFO) for the Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant program. Available funding for fiscal year (FY) 2023 totals \$1.5 billion for eligible surface transportation infrastructure projects.

Half of awarded funds will go to rural projects. The DOT will issue a final NOFO on or before Dec. 14, with grant applications due Feb. 28. Although short line railroads are not directly eligible for RAISE grants, they can partner with eligible entities to apply for funding. Railroads that have already submitted a CRISI grant application and want the same project considered for a RAISE grant can use many of the materials already prepared for their CRISI package.

Several ASLRRA members have benefitted from RAISE funding through partnerships and other means. For example, a grant awarded to the Florida Department of Transportation will help pay for construction of additional safety measures along a shared-use Florida East Coast Railway and Brightline railway corridor. In addition, the City of Springfield (Illinois) will use RAISE funds to construct a new railroad grade separation over Illinois Midland Railroad and Norfolk Southern rail lines.

A number of resources are available on the DOT website under the RAISE 2023 section of the [RAISE homepage](#). These resources include information on [how to apply](#), [webinar recordings and presentation materials](#) from the FY 2022 RAISE cycle, [additional guidance](#) on benefit-cost analysis and environmental approvals and more. The agency will also be hosting informational webinars specifically for FY 2023 in the coming months.

To help with the grant process, ASLRRA's Member Discount Program features vetted [grant-writing Preferred Providers](#) Bergmann, HDR and Global Train Services (GTS) whose experts can offer application assistance at special pricing for ASLRRA members.

#### Other Federal, State Grant Programs Offer Funding for Rail Projects

Today the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) published the [Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program \(FSP-National\) notice of funding opportunity](#). This program provides grant funding for projects not located on the Northeast Corridor under the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Program (FSP-Program).

This program makes \$2.2 billion available for eligible projects. Although FSP-National and FSP-Program are intended for capital 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. The FRA will publish a separate funding notice for FSP projects located on the Northeast Corridor, which are not eligible for this program.

In addition to these federal programs, railroads in Virginia [can also apply for grants](#) with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (DRPT). The agency is accepting applications for [all its rail, transit and commuter assistance programs](#). For freight and short line railroads, these programs include the [Rail Preservation Fund \(RPF\)](#), which is meant specifically to benefit the nine short lines operating in Virginia. There is also the [Freight Fund](#) and the [Rail Industrial Access \(RIA\) Program](#).

The due date for all Virginia DRPT grants is Feb. 1.



## Regulatory Update

### ASLRRRA Joins Letter Requesting Extension to Comment Period for TSA Proposed Rule Notice

ASLRRRA joined the Association of American Railroads and other industry associations in [submitting a letter](#) to Transportation Security Administrator David Pekoske requesting an extension to the public comment period for the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) [advance notice of proposed rulemaking](#) (ANPRM) concerning surface cyber risk management.

The associations request a 30-day extension to the public comment period in order to compile "meaningful stakeholder comments." The request notes that the TSA's ANPRM is looking for feedback on six broad categories and includes a number of questions on complicated issues, making the current Jan. 17 comment deadline impractical.

TSA's ANPRM seeks input from stakeholders on cybersecurity requirements for owner/operators of higher-risk pipeline and rail operations. The agency wants to understand how pipeline and rail sectors implement cyber risk management and how they can help work toward the enhancement of pipeline and rail cybersecurity.

### Small Business Administration Roundtable: ASLRRRA to Participate, Invites Members to Join

On Dec. 12, ASLRRRA will participate in a Small Business Administration (SBA) roundtable discussing the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) proposed minimum crew size rule. The SBA is interested in gathering feedback from Class II and III railroads, and the Association urges its short line railroad members to join the discussion and share their concerns about the rule. Doing so will help the SBA understand the full potential impact of the FRA's crew-size rule and enable the SBA to better advocate on behalf of Class II and III small business railroads.

The SBA's roundtable will focus on small business concerns for the FRA's proposed rule. It will take place virtually from 2 to 3:30 EST. Please see a copy of the SBA's invitation in our [e-mail](#) here to learn how to participate in the roundtable.

## FRA Reports Describe Studies on Track and Rolling Stock

Two reports from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) discuss results of studies done on railroad track and rolling stock to examine potential causes of component degradation and safety hazards.

[One report](#) describes results from a study on the impact of shoulder ballast cleaning (SBC) on the performance of fine-filled ballast. Repeated vehicle loadings can degrade ballast particles and eventually allow enough degraded ballast fines to accumulate around tie ends, blocking drainage and producing mud pumping, rapid track geometry degradation and potentially accelerating track component degradation. Results of the study show that shoulder drainage due to shoulder cleaning improves drainage and reduces mud pumping, but the effectiveness of SBC varies with climate.

The [second report](#) looks at ways to prevent water ingress in railroad bearings. Bearing degradation and defects can lead to the bearing being removed before the end of its normal service life or possible bearing failure, with water damage the leading cause of premature bearing failure. Transportation Technology Center researchers performed three main tests on different seal types to see how well they prevented water vapor and spray from penetrating and damaging railway bearings. There were three overall conclusions reached by the study, including that frictionless seals performed better than rubbing lip seals in water spray testing.

## Legislative Update

### Chuck Baker Discusses Congressional Outreach in December *Railway Age* Column

While winter holidays are on the horizon, ASLRRA is looking past them to January, when at least 82 new members of Congress will be sworn in and a new set of House committee and subcommittee chairs will be chosen. For the Association, that is when work begins in earnest to familiarize newcomers with the short line industry and policies important to it.

ASLRRA President Chuck Baker discusses this outreach work in his [December column](#) for *Railway Age* magazine. He touches on some important policy issues currently facing short lines, namely the Federal Railroad Administration's efforts to mandate two-person train crews and the California Air Resources Board's (CARB) proposal to charge railroads stiff fees depending on the emissions tier of their locomotives.

ASLRRA is active on both fronts. Next week, Baker will testify in a hearing focused on two-person crews and will participate in a Small Business Association roundtable discussing the same topic. Association staff members have been collecting input from members on the burden a manning requirement will impose on small railroads, which will be used in ASLRRA comments on the proposed rule and in other communications with relevant entities concerning the regulation.

Baker also recently traveled to California to speak on behalf of short lines about the CARB proposed locomotive rule during a CARB board meeting. As acknowledged by CARB itself, the fees imposed by this regulation could put some California short lines out of business.

These proposed state and federal rules underscore the importance of getting out and getting in touch with lawmakers to ensure they are familiar with the ways the short line industry contributes to local and national economic development and the impact lawmakers' decisions have on the operational capabilities of these small businesses.

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## Announcements

### **ASLRRRA Members Save Money with Vetted Preferred Providers**

ASLRRRA's Member Discount Program leverages the buying power of all Association members to secure discounted pricing on essential business products and services. ASLRRRA members receive exclusive access to programs tailored specifically for the short line railroad industry with discounted pricing, special offers and guaranteed exceptional service. Visit our [Member Discount Program](#) page for details and to learn more about ASLRRRA's Member Discount Program Preferred Providers.

Interested in becoming a Preferred Provider? ASLRRRA is seeking to add new products and services to its Member Discount Program offerings. The program is open exclusively to ASLRRRA associate members, and Preferred Providers benefit from a broad range of marketing/promotional activities, including visibility on [ASLRRRA's website](#) and in print and electronic communications. Interested companies may contact [Sabrina Waiss](#) for more information on becoming a Preferred Provider.

### **Register to Reserve Your Spot 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-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.

Attendees will have an opportunity to engage in interactive discussion of rule requirements and practices with subject matter experts and fellow attendees and signed certificates of completion will be provided.

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. Visit [aslrra.org/training](https://aslrra.org/training) to view full details on this and other 2023 training seminars and register today!

### **Nominate an ASLRRRA Member for the Veterans Engagement Award**

ASLRRRA is accepting nominations for its Veterans Engagement Award, which honors industry employers who demonstrate positive policies toward U.S. veterans and who implement unique programs and practices to hire, recognize, support, and engage with veterans in the workplace and the broader community.

The 2023 Veterans Engagement Award winner will be recognized at ASLRRA's Annual Conference and Exhibition, April 2-4, in New Orleans, LA. Find Veterans Engagement Award nomination criteria and a nomination form [on ASLRRA's website](#). Award nominations will be due in February 2023.

## Delivering Accessible Education to the Short Line Industry



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## ASLRRA Webinars

### Upcoming Webinars

#### [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 ASLRRA'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 ASLRRA members.

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

Join FRA's Kevin Lewis and ASLRRA'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 ASLRRA members.

### On-Demand Webinars

#### **Learn About the EPA's SmartWay Program Through ASLRRA On-Demand Webinars**

The Environmental Protection Agency's SmartWay program helps companies advance supply chain sustainability. ASLRRA is a program partner, and several members also participate. ASLRRA has hosted several webinars about SmartWay and its benefits, and those interested in the program can find recordings of these webinars in the Association's On-Demand Webinar library. Available recordings include:

- ASLRRA and SmartWay: Introduction and Opportunities
- Benefits of Freight Rail – Capacity, Safety & Clean Air!
- Benefits of Using Rail from a Shipper & Logistics Perspective
- Freight Emissions, Carbon Accounting and Sustainability

Visit ASLRRRA'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. ASLRRRA members can access recordings for free at any time, while non-members can purchase a subscription.

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

## Industry Events and Announcements

### University of Tennessee Announces Railroad Workshops for 2023

The University of Tennessee-Knoxville's [Tennessee Transportation Assistance Program](#) has scheduled its railroad workshops for the coming year.

The program will offer four of its popular Railroad Track Inspection & Safety Standards courses throughout the year. Also scheduled are Basic Railroad Track Maintenance, Railroad Track Design and Railroad Bridge Inspection. [Click here](#) to view the calendar and see links to each event for more information.

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.