



March 9, 2022

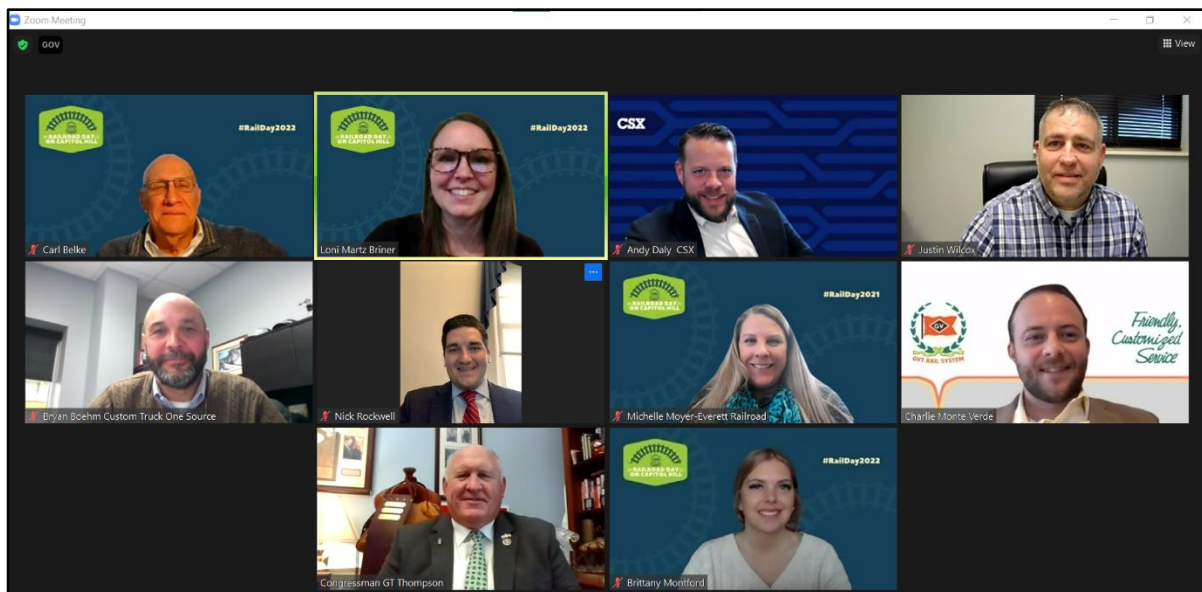


Virtual Railroad Days Happening Today

March 9 marks the start of the single largest gathering between freight railroad industry representatives and their federal elected officials – [Railroad Day on Capitol Hill](#).

As with last year, COVID-19 concerns moved today and tomorrow's meetings between lawmakers and freight rail stakeholders to the virtual world. More than 350 participants will speak via Zoom with over 220 congressional offices, urging their representatives to support full funding and streamlined implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL); preserve balanced economic regulation; and oppose all efforts to increase truck length and weight limits.

"Railroad Day on the Hill is a time-honored tradition that our industry looks forward to each year," said ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker. "Each meeting is an opportunity to illuminate the impacts of legislative actions that affect the railroads and the thousands of customers and communities that depend on our service."



Pennsylvania Representative GT Thompson (bottom left) participated in a Zoom meeting today during virtual Railroad Day on Capitol Hill. Thompson staffer Nick Rockwell, (second row, second from left) also participated. Meetings with lawmakers and their staff members today and tomorrow allow freight railroad stakeholders to discuss important industry issues and build relationships with their congressional representatives.

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Railroad Day on Capitol Hill has been held annually for nearly 20 years. Sharing the freight rail story as a unified voice amplifies its message and strengthens connections between railroaders and lawmakers.

"The constituents in these meetings will be able to point to specific district-level and statewide impacts," said Baker. "Railroad Day on the Hill meetings offer congressional staff an opportunity to better understand the factors that drive or hinder the ability of the freight rail industry to serve communities, providing critical links between thousands of customers and the domestic and global economies, and how the industry advances environmental and safety solutions and works to remove supply chain bottlenecks."

Nomination Period to Close Soon for ASLRRRA Annual Awards

Less than a week is left for ASLRRRA members to nominate themselves or their deserving employees for one of the Association's annual awards, which will be presented to winners at the 2022 ASLRRRA Annual Conference and Exhibition in St. Louis, Missouri.

ASLRRRA is accepting nominations for its Business Development Awards, Veterans Engagement Awards and Safety Person and Safety Professional of the Year awards. Submissions are due March 15.

The [Business Development Awards](#) recognize railroads that have designed and enacted the most innovative and successful business-building initiatives in the small railroad industry. Award criteria can be found [here](#), and railroads can submit nominations or questions to ASLRRRA's [Amy Krouse](#).

The [Veterans Engagement Award](#) 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. Review award criteria [here](#), and access the application form [here](#). Please send any questions to ASLRRRA's [Sabrina Waiss](#).

The [Safety Person of the Year](#) award recognizes a non-management employee of a member railroad who works with management on effective safety programs, exhibits a high degree of safety awareness and contributes off-duty time to activities promoting safety awareness in the community. Find award criteria [here](#), and fill out a nomination form [here](#).

The [Safety Professional of the Year](#) recognizes a railroad management employee of an ASLRRRA member railroad who is responsible for safety programs, training and the overall management of safe behavior and actions on their railroad(s) and demonstrates these [criteria](#). Find a nomination form [here](#). Contact ASLRRRA's [Crystal Gitchell](#) with any questions regarding either safety award.



Save the date!
ASLRRRA ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION
MAY 1-3, 2022
AMERICA'S CENTER | ST. LOUIS, MO



Updated Model Program Available Online Through ASLRRRA

ASLRRRA has updated its model program for the Efficiency Testing Program Guide. Railroad members can use the model, adapting it to their particular operations, to comply with federal regulations outlined in 49 CFR Part 217. Find the document by logging in to the Compliance Templates section under the [Safety & Compliance](#) tab on ASLRRRA's website.

ASLRRRA's Comments Address Questions in DOT Request for Information

ASLRRRA [submitted comments](#) responding to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) [Request for Information](#) (RFI) concerning the department's ongoing research plan.

The Association addressed three questions in the RFI. ASLRRRA urged Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg to pursue the Transportation Research Board's truck size and weight research plan, which contains 27 projects to determine the various impacts of raising the status quo weight and lengths of commercial trucks.

ASLRRRA also urged research on rail geographic information system (GIS) data, suggested further DOT and Department of Energy (DOE) collaboration on locomotive emission reduction, and commended FRA's efforts on the Broad Agency Announcement research funding program. ASLRRRA has applied for a research grant through this program and hopes to be funded soon.

Association Letter Suggests Changes to NEPA to Address Supply Chain Concerns

ASLRRRA [sent a letter](#) this week to several federal agency leaders with suggestions for minor changes to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) in the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) implementing regulations at 23 CFR Part 771.

In January, several short line industry officials and ASLRRRA staff participated in a virtual roundtable with Federal Railroad Administrator Amit Bose, Surface Transportation Board Chairman Martin Oberman, and Ports Envoy John Porcari and their respective staffs. During that call, several ideas for addressing supply chain congestion were raised and discussed. After the call, the Federal Railroad Administration welcomed subsequent ideas and feedback, which prompted ASLRRRA's recent letter.

The Association believes the changes presented in the letter could help expedite FRA-funded projects that impact supply chain congestion.

Trio of Grant Programs Offer Opportunities to Railroads for Infrastructure Project Funding

Several federal grant programs are open that offer opportunities for freight railroads to receive funding for infrastructure projects through partnerships with grant-eligible entities. ASLRRRA encourages its members to pursue these funding opportunities when practicable.

The U. S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration (MARAD) recently announced \$25 million in funding is available for the [America's Marine Highway Program](#). These funds, made possible through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), comprise the largest single funding appropriation ever made for this program.

Railroads can benefit from grant awards through this program by [working with](#) eligible applicants on eligible Marine Highway Projects as designated by the DOT secretary. Find a list of eligible Marine Highway Projects [here](#). Grant applications are due April 29.

Another grant program supporting infrastructure around America's waterways is the [Port Infrastructure Development Program](#) (PIDP). Railroads with operations that involve moving goods into, out of, around, or within a port can be eligible for [PIDP grants](#) through partnerships with eligible applicants. Applications are due May 16. In previous years, several ASLRRA members have received PIDP grant funding for rail infrastructure projects.

Likely more familiar to ASLRRA members are [Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity \(RAISE\) grants](#). These grants [offer funding](#) for surface transportation infrastructure projects, and, again, railroads can be eligible through partnerships with various public entities. Applications are due April 14. To help organizations navigate the grant application process, the DOT offered several informational webinars on the topic. Recordings of these webinars can be found [here](#).

ASLRRA also offers assistance with grant writing through its [Member Discount Program Preferred Providers](#). Bergmann, HDR, Inc. and Global Train Services can help ASLRRA members create and submit grant applications for a variety of state and federal programs, all at special member pricing.



Brief Extension Expected to Pave Way for Big Budget Deal

Congressional leaders are getting closer to passing a 2022 omnibus spending bill to fund the government through the end of the fiscal year.

The current continuing resolution was slated to expire Friday, potentially triggering a government shutdown. Early today, however, a short stopgap spending extension through March 15 was expected to pass to allow the House and Senate more time to work through the bill's final details.

Key highlights from the 2,700-page, \$1.5 trillion bill include \$625 million for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants, which is a significant increase from last year. After some set asides for passenger rail and other efforts, there will be even more funding available for short lines to compete for in fiscal year 2022 beyond even the \$1 billion already guaranteed in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Also included in the spending bill is \$2.5 million to fund the Short Line Safety Institute.

ASLRRA Urges DOT to Stress Full Funding of Programs for FY 2023

While Congress is still working to finalize a federal budget for fiscal year (FY) 2022, ASLRRA is looking ahead to fiscal year 2023. The Association outlined its priorities for FY 2023 in a [recent letter](#) to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

ASLRRA urged the DOT, in the agency's FY 2023 draft budget, to propose fully funding the discretionary programs that received significant increases in funding authorizations in the recent Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). ASLRRA expressed concerns that if the Biden administration does not urge Congress to fully fund grant programs like Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) at authorized levels, Congress could underfund them.

House Rail Subcommittee Discusses Rail Issues During Hearing on Stakeholder Views of STB Reauthorization

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Yesterday, the rail subcommittee of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a [hearing](#) focused on "Stakeholder Views on Surface Transportation Board Reauthorization." Though not a part of the hearing, ASLRRA's Crystal Gitchell monitored the proceedings to keep abreast of any information that could affect the short line railroad industry.

While there is no actual pending legislation concerning the reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Board (STB), the hearing gave the House subcommittee a chance to hear testimony from the Association of American Railroads (AAR), labor organizations, shippers and Amtrak regarding economic regulation of the freight rail industry in advance of possible legislation later this year.

A significant portion of the hearing focused on new reciprocal switching regulations, currently under consideration at the STB. AAR President Ian Jefferies expressed grave concerns with the STB's actions. Other issues, like long-distance passenger rail, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and safety were also discussed.



ASLRRA Announcements

Make the Health Care Experience Less Painful for Employees with the Coalition Health Plan

The Coalition Health Plan is specifically designed for ASLRRA 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 ASLRRA members with a vast network of benefits experts and best-in-class resources no matter where they are in the U.S.

Those who partner with HUB, are at the center of a vast network of experts who will help them reach their goals through risk services, claims management, and compliance support. Visit ASLRRA's [Member Discount Program](#) page and select Employee Health Insurance to start saving today.

Maintain Compliance with Federal Regulations Through ASLRRA's Training Videos

ASLRRA is dedicated to railroad safety 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 Post-Accident Toxicological Testing Video is an industry-produced interactive training video that provides instruction on when and how to administer post-accident drug and alcohol tests. Federal

Regulation Part 219.11(g) requires post-accident toxicological testing (PATT) training for supervisors of regulated employees. This PATT eLearning course has been reviewed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and will ensure compliance with PATT training requirements.

The Reasonable Suspicion Drug & Alcohol Signs and Symptoms Video provides detailed directions 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, steps to take in case of a positive test and many other components. Part 219.11(g) requires signs and symptoms training for supervisors of regulated employees. Training with this video will ensure compliance.

Both videos are available at no cost to ASLRRA members and to non-members for a fee. Visit ASLRRA's [Safety and Compliance](#) page to access the full complement of safety and compliance tools, resources and information available from ASLRRA.


ASLRRA Out and About

Baker, Clarke and Claussen to Testify at STB Hearing on Reciprocal Switching

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) will hold a hearing on reciprocal switching on March 15 and 16, and ASLRRA President Chuck Baker will testify at the meeting on behalf of short line railroads. He will be joined by David Clarke, retired director of the Center for Transportation Research at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and Doc Claussen, chairman of ASLRRA's Board of Directors and vice president of ASLRRA member Gulf and Ohio Railways.

Viewers can watch the virtual hearing on the STB's [YouTube channel](#). Baker, Clarke and Claussen will speak in Panel Five, which is scheduled for March 16. Panel Four will testify first on that day, starting at 9:30 a.m. During their subsequent thirty-minute time slot, Baker will provide an overview of the short line position, Clarke will discuss the unique economics of short lines and explain to the board how mandated reciprocal switching would adversely affect small railroads, while Claussen will provide a first-hand account of the how short lines go above and beyond to achieve success for customers and thus a forced switching rule is not needed.

Last month, ASLRRA submitted [comments](#) and [written testimony](#) to the STB concerning Docket No. EP 711 (Sub-No. 1), which is a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) on reciprocal switching first introduced in 2016.



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



ASLRRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

Upcoming Webinars

[Part 243 Railroad Obligations with Contractors](#) – June 1, 2022 (NOTE NEW DATE)

Join FRA Staff Director Rob Castiglione to understand what your obligations are as a railroad when engaging with contractors under

Part 243, including Roadway Worker Protection (RWP). Attendees will have an opportunity to participate in Q&A at the end of the presentation. Presenters include Castiglione and ASLRRRA's Jo Strang and JR Gelnar.

This webinar is free for both ASLRRRA members and non-members.

Industry Events and Announcements

April 26-28 – Outback Railroad Association to Hold Safety and Training Conference and Trade Show

The Outback Railroad Association will hold its Eighth Annual Outback Safety and Training Conference April 26 to 28 at The Lodge in Deadwood, South Dakota.

The conference will feature a two-day seminar titled "Derailment Investigation and Prevention for Short line and Regional Railroads" presented by Gary Wolf of Wolf Railway Consulting. Also featured are presentations on grant availability and grant applications by the Association of American Railroads' Jordan Stone and the Federal Railroad Administration's Valarie Kniss; cyber security presented by Norwich University Applied Research Institutes' Tim Herman and Paul Veeneman; CFR Part 219 signs and symptoms, presented by Spark Training Solutions' Holly Rainwater; and much more. For more information or to register, visit www.OutbackRailroad.org.

May 24-27 – FRA Spring Conference to Take Place on South Padre Island

ASLRRRA member Brownsville and Rio Grande International Railway will host the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) [2022 Spring Conference](#) May 24 to 27 in South Padre Island, Texas.

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