



In This Issue:

- **FRA Extends Two-Person Crew NPRM Comment Period** – Stakeholders will now have an additional 67 days to comment on the proposed crew size rule. Read more in [our article](#) in the Regulatory Section below.

Headlines

INFRA Grant Awarded to ASLRRRA Member Shows Power of Public-Private Partnerships in Application Process

It is something ASLRRRA members have probably heard over and over – short lines are not directly eligible to compete for many federal grant programs – with notable exceptions for CRISI and grade crossing grants. Yet the government has made millions of dollars available for the very infrastructure projects short lines need to complete, the same projects that often benefit the communities in which short lines operate. Such funding is crucial for big jobs, but small railroads need not apply. What to do?

Enter the public-private partnership.

ASLRRRA member Paducah & Louisville Railway (P&L) will benefit from a \$17.3 [million Infrastructure for Rebuilding America \(INFRA\) grant](#) to rehabilitate the 100-year-old Rockport Bridge spanning the Green River in Kentucky. P&L could not apply alone for the grant, so the railroad looked to the [Green River Area Development District](#) (GRADD) to form a public-private partnership. GRADD agreed to work with P&L because of the positive effect the project would have on the region's economic development.

The Rockport Bridge is located on P&L's main line. With the grant, P&L will replace the bridge deck, rebuild timber approaches, refurbish the steel structure and replace all mechanical and electrical components that raise and lower the bridge to accommodate barge traffic. These improvements will allow P&L to continue its shipments of military equipment, coal, steel, lumber and other raw materials to the railroad's customers.

The overall project cost is approximately \$36 million. P&L will provide matching funds to cover the balance, and the railroad will also be responsible for funding ongoing operations and maintenance.

To support P&L and GRADD's INFRA application, Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell wrote a letter to Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. The Kentucky state legislature also passed a [resolution](#) endorsing the group's grant application, which the legislature then submitted to Kentucky's congressional delegation.

P&L's INFRA award demonstrates the ability of short lines to capture federal funds through partnerships with public entities, and ASLRRRA encourages its members to explore the idea of applying for grants through programs like [RAISE](#) and [INFRA](#).

The Association also reminds its members that the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant program, for which short lines *are* directly eligible, is currently accepting applications. ASLRRRA's [CRISI information webpage](#) features application advice and resources for railroads. Even with direct eligibility, short lines will benefit in the application process by engaging local economic development groups, and elected officials in their efforts.

In addition, the ASLRRRA Member Discount Program includes [grant writing Preferred Providers](#) Bergmann, HDR, Inc. and Global Train Services (GTS), which help members manage all steps in the grant application and administration process.

ASLRRRA Statement on Rail Contract Settlement Expresses Thanks to Negotiators, Urges a Look Forward

With representatives from Class I railroads and rail labor unions [reaching a tentative contract agreement](#) last Thursday morning after roughly 20 straight hours of negotiation, ASLRRRA joined groups nationwide in expressing thanks to all parties for their efforts and relief that a potentially catastrophic rail shutdown was prevented.

In a [statement](#), ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker thanked railroad and union negotiators for remaining committed to contract talks. Baker also acknowledged the work of those in the Biden administration for stepping in to help both sides make a deal.

In noting the significance of the agreement, Baker pointed out the "severe ripple effects" a rail strike would have had on short line railroads, their customers and the entire U.S. economy. Indeed, Class I railroads were already preparing for a strike by securing hazardous materials and curtailing shipments. Even Amtrak, which runs its trains on many freight rail lines, had preemptively canceled a number of trips.

Baker took the settlement announcement as an opportunity to also call on everyone in the railroad industry to "work together to solve the ongoing challenges of moving the nation's freight" and restore the nation's supply chain to "pre-pandemic levels of efficiency and effectiveness."

Lastly, Baker encouraged all parties to repair and rebuild relationships so that any future negotiations might proceed efficiently and effectively.

A blue rectangular banner advertisement for Bentley. On the left, a laptop screen displays a 3D model of a train on tracks, with a network of white lines and dots overlaid on the scene. To the right of the image, the text "Better Rail Networks Begin with Better Designs" is written in white. Below this, the text "Download eBook >>" is written in white, followed by the Bentley logo in white.

**Better Rail Networks Begin
with Better Designs**

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Regulatory Update

Deadline for Submitting Comments on FRA Two-Person Crew Proposed Rule Extended 67 Days

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has granted a 67-day extension of the comment period for its [notice of proposed rulemaking \(NPRM\)](#) that would mandate minimum train crew sizes. Public

comments on the proposed rule were initially due by Sept. 26, but the deadline will now be [pushed back to Dec. 2](#).

Just yesterday, Representative Sam Graves (R-Mo.), the ranking member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and Representative Rick Crawford (R-Ark.), ranking member of the Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials, [sent a letter](#) to FRA Administrator Amit Bose requesting a 60-day extension of the NPRM comment period.

Representatives Graves and Crawford noted the more intensive research stakeholders would have to do to prepare adequate reports on the implications of the two-person crew rule as one of the reasons for an extension. They also pointed out that recent concern over rail labor negotiations prevented involved parties from being able to put full attention toward writing comprehensive comments.

In August the Small Business Administration (SBA) also [sent a letter](#) to the FRA in support of a 60-day extension of the NPRM comment period. The SBA's letter was in response to ASLRRRA's request to the Office of Advocacy for support in the matter, as ASLRRRA has been working to gather information from its members to assess the impact of a two-person crew size rule on short line freight rail operations. An extended comment period will allow ASLRRRA to more fully understand the impact of the rule on its members' operations and business costs.

FRA Report Discusses Study Analyzing Human Error Associated with Locomotive Cab Automation

In a recently released [report](#), the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) discussed results of a study examining the potential for human error when locomotive cab automation systems are in operation.

The study, conducted by Alion Science and Technology, looked specifically at trip optimizer (TO) and positive train control (PTC) systems. The research team performed analyses based on the performance of engineers who participated in simulator sessions during which they ran a 17-mile section of track with TO or PTC systems in operation. The data gathered was meant to determine what, if any, human errors were most prominent in such situations.

Results suggested that while PTC and TO systems offer enhanced safety and efficiency in freight rail operations, they also introduce new opportunities for error. Some mitigation strategies suggested in the report include further training that covers known automation concerns and training simulators that provide engineers the chance to experience automation failures.

Legislative Update

Talks on Rail Service, STB Bill Likely Delayed Until After Midterms

Last week's looming railroad strike prompted members of the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials and the Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture to delay their hearing on rail service issues and the agricultural industry, and it now appears unlikely that the hearing will take place before midterm elections in November.

The markup of a Surface Transportation Board (STB) reauthorization bill, the Freight Rail Shipping Fair Market Act, that was also tentatively scheduled for this week has also been pushed back. The Rail Customer Coalition sent a letter on Sept. 15 to members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee expressing support for the bill and urging its passage.

However, while ASLRRRA supports efforts to improve the movement of freight on the national network, the Association and other organizations see the Freight Rail Shipping Fair Market Act as imposing harmful government intervention on the marketplace. The Association made these points clear in an [Aug. 2 statement on the bill's introduction](#).

ASLRRA will continue to engage with the committees of jurisdiction to advocate for short line interests.



Announcements

Board Chair Stefan Loeb Talks About the Value of Attending ASLRRA's Regional Meetings

Anything important that has happened or will happen in the short line railroad industry is discussed at ASLRRA's regional meetings. That's according to ASLRRA Board Chair Stefan Loeb, whose [recent video](#) explains why anyone who wants to stay up-to-date on short line issues should attend the Association's upcoming events.

Loeb also highlights the networking aspect of ASLRRA's meetings, noting the number of familiar faces he encounters walking down one hallway at these events replaces 20 individual trips he might take to meet with those same people.

Loeb has been attending the Association's regional and annual meetings for 18 years, and with the dynamic educational content that is always changing and the sense of unity and camaraderie that doesn't, Loeb finds that the events never get old.

Individuals interested in experiencing an ASLRRA regional meeting still have time to register. The [Eastern and Southern Region Meeting](#) will be held next week, Sept. 26-28, in Atlanta, Georgia. [Click here](#) to register through Friday, and then one can register onsite, or [here](#) to secure a hotel room in the ASLRRA room block. There is limited space still available for those wanting to play in the golf tournament.

The Association's [Central and Pacific Region Meeting](#) takes place next month, Oct. 25-27, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where Loeb will lead the "Discussion with a Shipper" segment. [Register](#) today for the Central and Pacific Region Meeting, or click [here](#) to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.

In addition to the regional meetings, ASLRRA offers more targeted events for railroad personnel with the [Finance and Administration Seminar and General Counsel Symposium](#), which take place in conjunction with the Central and Pacific Region Meeting. Continuing legal education credits (CLEs) are available to symposium participants.

Discounted room rates in the ASLRRA [hotel block](#) for these three events are available until Sept. 26. ASLRRA is also welcoming sponsors for the finance seminar and symposium. Click [here](#) to learn more about sponsorships.

Access Disaster Preparedness Tools on ASLRRRA's Website

September is [National Preparedness Month](#) in the U.S., which offers a reminder to companies and individuals to evaluate and update plans for dealing with emergencies and disasters. The potential human, community and economic impact underscores the critical need for railroads to have an emergency plan that can be activated on short notice as well as quick access to resources and emergency relief services to facilitate a return to normal operations as quickly as possible.

With support from railroad and supplier members, ASLRRRA has assembled essential templates and checklists to assist members in developing response plans that can be put in place and used as training tools before disaster strikes, as well as emergency response tools and resources to aid in the recovery process in the aftermath of a catastrophic event. Available resources include Disaster Planning, HazMat Response, and instructions on accessing an Emergency Docket, in addition to links to other government websites, and members may download materials [directly from the website](#).

ASLRRRA also has a robust selection of recorded webinars available for members in the [On-Demand Resource Library](#) that may be used to prepare and train for emergency situations. Topics range from Crisis Communications and Media Training to Hazardous Materials Incident Reporting and Emergency Notifications Section Review.

Register Early for ASLRRRA's Part 219 Training Seminar in January

ASLRRRA will offer its popular [Drug and Alcohol \(Part 219\) Training Seminar](#) Jan. 31 to Feb. 1 in Phoenix, Arizona.

The seminar will discuss 49 CFR Part 219, covering all sections of the rule and requirements for all railroads and contractors and including interactive discussion of rule requirements and practices. Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Drug and Alcohol Program Specialist Sam Noe will lead the instruction, joined by ASLRRRA Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar.

ASLRRRA expects this training to fill up quickly. [Register today](#) to secure a spot.

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.



Staff Members Hit the Road to Participate in Various Industry Events

ASLRRRA staff members participated in a number of events in several different places this week, sharing ASLRRRA and industry news with stakeholders, supporting advocacy efforts and attending Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) training.

September 21, 2022

ASLRRA Assistant Vice President, Legislative and Regulatory Crystal Gitchell traveled to Kansas City, Missouri to participate in the 2022 American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Council on Rail Transportation Annual Meeting. Gitchell spoke to the freight states group about ASLRRA's legislative priorities and the status of projects in the state legislative space.

Today, Assistant Vice President, Congressional Affairs Zach Radford participated in a conference call with members of the Keystone State Railroad Association to share with them the latest happenings on Capitol Hill

Meanwhile, ASLRRA President Chuck Baker was in French Lick, Illinois for an event hosted by rail advocacy organization GoRail. The event with railroaders and suppliers is meant to raise money to support GoRail's nationwide grassroots efforts in support of the rail industry.

And Vice President of Communications Amy Krouse was on the road in Nashville, Tennessee to attend an FRA training for short line Confidential Close Call Reporting (C³RS) teams.

A banner with an orange background. On the left, there is an illustration of hands holding a clipboard with a checklist, a pen, and a smartphone. A green speech bubble next to the illustration contains the text "ARE YOU READY?". To the right of the illustration, the text reads: "DISASTER PREPAREDNESS RESOURCES" in bold, dark blue letters. Below this, in smaller dark blue text, it says: "Be Prepared! Download ASLRRA's member-exclusive templates and checklists to build or enhance your railroad's emergency response plans. Visit www.aslrra.org/disasterprep."

ASLRRA Webinars

Upcoming Live Webinars

[ASLRRA Part 219 Education Materials and Correction Affidavits](#) – Nov. 10, 2022

Join Holly Rainwater, vice president of drug and alcohol programs at Spark TS, Mitch Harris, director of safety, training and regulatory compliance at Rio Grande Pacific, and JR Gelnar, vice president of safety and compliance at ASLRRA to discuss the recently developed Part 219 drug and alcohol educational materials and multiple Correction Affidavits. A working group was established by the Safety and Training Committee to develop these materials to better assist the membership in the requirements of Part 219.

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

Industry Events and Announcements

Sept. 23: Free Hay Seminar to Discuss Shipping Container Movement

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Rail Transportation and Engineering Center (RailTEC) will hold a webinar this Friday to discuss how combining trucking and short-line railroad technology can result in a better way to move shipping containers to and from inland container depots, helping address supply-chain bottlenecks at ports.

Registration for the webinar is free, with 1.5 professional development hours available for a \$25 fee. [Click here](#) for more information or to register.

Oct. 20-21: AARS Offers Accident Prevention and Investigation Training

The American Association of Railroad Superintendents (AARS) will hold its Fall 2022 AARS Field Train Accident Prevention (TAP) and Investigation Training at ASLRRA member R.J. Corman's facilities in Nicholasville, Kentucky.

Ten slots are available for the Oct. 20-21 training seminar, which features a day of classroom instruction and a day of field work. Lunch is included in the registration cost. Follow [this link](#) to view an agenda or register.

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.