



September 29, 2021



FRA Urges Railroad Employees to Be Vaccinated Against COVID-19

The Federal Railroad Administration is encouraging railroads to emphasize the importance of Covid vaccines to their employees. Currently there are three authorized vaccines (Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA fully authorized, Moderna mRNA and Johnson & Johnson authorized under emergency use) for adults available in the United States. Vaccinations of all types have proven to be effective against hospitalization and death.

The FRA issued the following request on Sept. 28:

Railroad Industry Partners,

COVID-19 vaccination rates continue to climb across the country and everyone must do their part to combat COVID-19 by getting vaccinated. The most recently reported COVID-19 cases FRA received from the railroad industry indicates that after 10 weeks of rising numbers, the railroad industry has reported two consecutive weeks with decreasing cases. This is an encouraging sign and FRA strongly encourages railroads to build on this momentum by urging their employees to get vaccinated.

According to the [Mayo Clinic and the CDC](#), in the past two months, more Americans have begun getting vaccinated against COVID-19. On August 23rd, the Food and Drug Administration approved the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. Additionally, CDC now recommends that people 65 years and older and people over 18 years old with underlying medical conditions, or who work or live in high-risk settings should receive a [booster shot](#).

Vaccination is the most effective way to protect yourself and those around you from contracting COVID-19. To maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, the CDC advises everyone to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Please share this information and do all you can to encourage vaccination among your workforces. Some companies are providing paid time off to receive the vaccine, cash awards, or gift cards to motivate employees to get vaccinated.

Thank you for your efforts to make continuous safety improvements in the railroad industry.

Links:

[Mayo Clinic US COVID-19 Vaccine Tracker](#)
[CDC estimates of vaccine hesitancy for COVID-19](#)

Congress Working to Pass High-Stakes Legislation

Both the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives are working frenetically on a growing list of priorities and deadlines. See more below in the Legislative Section.



ASLRRA Files Supplemental Comments on FRA Proposed Rule

ASLRRA and the Association of American Railroads (AAR) recently filed [supplemental comments](#) regarding the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) [notice of proposed rulemaking](#) to revise regulations concerning the use of electronic air brake slips (eABS).

The comments were meant to reiterate the associations' previous comments submitted in March and provide additional support for the FRA's proposal to modernize and improve existing air brake

inspection regulations. The FRA's rulemaking would also implement some proposals from a 2019 AAR petition for rulemaking regarding eABS, which ASLRRA and AAR favor.

ASLRRA and AAR note, "this rulemaking, if finalized, would move safety forward while also directly advancing climate and environmental goals."

RRB Appoints New Director of Programs

Arturo Cardenas is the [new director of programs](#) at the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB). He will oversee operations to process and pay RRB benefits and will serve on the RRB Executive Committee.

Prior to being appointed to this position at the RRB, Cardenas spent over 30 years with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and most recently was the deputy commissioner for the Office of Quality Review.



Congress Grapples with Critical Deadlines and High-Stakes Legislation

Both the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives are working frenetically on a growing list of priorities and deadlines. First, Congress is racing to fund the federal government by midnight tomorrow when the current federal fiscal year expires. Second, Congress is grappling with ways to address the nation's debt limit, which the Treasury Department says the country will hit by Oct. 18 unless the limit is raised or suspended. Both problems need to be addressed to stave off dramatic economic consequences.

Meanwhile, various Democratic factions are working to find some sort of consensus on a price tag and framework for Democrats' "soft" infrastructure priorities such as climate change efforts and efforts to expand the social safety net. As those discussions barrel forward, Democratic leaders in the House are working to ensure a critical mass of its caucus continues to remain in support of the "hard" infrastructure bill – the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) – that the Senate passed last month and which is on track for a vote as soon as Sept. 30.

ASLRRA continues to remain in strong and enthusiastic support of the IIJA and is eager to see it favorably voted out of the U.S. House as soon as possible so it can get to the president's desk for signature.

CONNECT REMOTELY AND CONTINUE LEARNING WITH ASLRRA WEBINARS

With more than 150 recordings available, there's a webinar to meet the needs of everyone on your team. Visit aslrra.org/webinars to view a complete list of available recordings.



ASLRRA New Members

Know a company that would benefit from joining and participating in ASLRRA? Please contact ASLRRA's Vice President of Membership and Business Development [Kathy Keeney](mailto:kathy.keeney@aslrra.org) via email or on (202) 585-3439.

ASLRRA Welcomes Two New Associate Business Members



[Kato Engineering Inc.](https://www.nidec-kato.com), based in North Mankato, Minnesota, manufactures locomotive traction alternators for new or rebuilt locomotives used in switch yard, rail grinding, and short road-haul applications. Its rugged construction and superior insulation ensure their generators can handle bumpy, grimy conditions as well as the thermal cycling caused by the

September 29, 2021

constant acceleration and deceleration of locomotives. Our primary contact is Business Development Manager [Paul Adams](#), who can also be reached on (604) 358-8504. Many thanks to our friends at Cummins and Western Rail for recommending that Kato join ASLRRA.



[Standard Rail Corp.](#), a North American rail services company, provides a complete line of railcar repair and maintenance services. From logistics support to railcar storage, Standard Rail is an industry leader in providing creative and innovative railcar management solutions. Our primary contact is Sales Executive [Nick Borders](#), who can also be reached on (832) 392-1010.



New Networking Events Added to Convention Schedule

ASLRRA has added new networking opportunities to the 2021 [ASLRRA Annual Conference and Exhibition](#) in Phoenix, Arizona, offering participants more chances to interact with fellow railroad professionals.

The conference does not officially start until Nov. 17, but several ASLRRA committees will hold their meetings on Tuesday, Nov. 16. Exhibitors will also begin setting up on Tuesday. That evening, there will be an Early Bird Happy Hour event at the Sheraton

Phoenix Downtown hotel. First-time convention attendees will also have an opportunity to meet each other and ASLRRA staff at the First Timer's Reception on Nov. 17 at the Phoenix Convention Center.

While individual committee meetings will take place at the Sheraton, all education sessions, the exhibit hall and two exhibit hall receptions will be held at the Phoenix Convention Center. [Education sessions](#) cover a wide variety of topics, appealing to professionals from all parts of the short line industry, and the [exhibit hall](#) allows railroaders to connect with industry suppliers. A special exhibit hall Green Zone will highlight companies engaged in businesses supporting the environment and sustainability.

And of course, participants can sign up to compete in the [golf tournament](#) at the JW Marriott Camelback Golf Club.

[Register](#) today to attend this year's [ASLRRA Annual Conference and Exhibition](#). A [conference hotel block](#) is open with special rates at both the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown and the Hyatt Regency Phoenix. **All discounted hotel, golf and conference registration rates end on Oct. 11.**

ASLRRA Members of Note

ASLRRA is pleased to highlight the accomplishments of its members and the strides being made in [freight rail sustainability](#), [business development](#), [veterans engagement](#) and more. This week, the Association is happy to feature the environmental efforts of Iowa Interstate Railroad, and the business achievements of Maryland Midland Railway.

IAIS Looks to Technology and Data Collection to Move Goods as Efficiently as Possible



By IAIS Director-Operating Systems Greg Wilson

The efforts of ASLRRA member Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS) to make its operations more environmentally friendly began over a decade ago with new locomotives. Over the years, IAIS has continued to focus on upgrading its fleet to improve fuel efficiency with cutting-edge technology that both optimizes engine operations and enables better data collection and information application.

In 2008 IAIS began investing in more fuel-efficient, modern locomotives, buying 12 brand new GE (now Wabtec) ES44AC GEVO locomotives. They allowed IAIS to move more freight with fewer running locomotives on each train, meeting customer demands

Photo Courtesy of IAIS

In 2019, ASLRRA member Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS) took delivery of three Tier 4C-equipped ES44ACs: IAIS 517, 518, 519. Acquiring these more efficient locomotives demonstrates one of the many ways IAIS is working toward more sustainable and environmentally friendly operations.

while driving down fuel usage. Currently, IAIS maintains a fleet of 20 ES44ACs, and all the units are equipped with automatic engine shutdown/start-up (AESS) technology, reducing engine idling.

With its older fleet equipped with smart start technology, IAIS started to review other proven fuel-saving enhancements. In 2012, IAIS installed fuel-saving injectors that result in less fuel consumption, a cleaner burn and extended component changeout cycles. To further improve the performance of its older locomotives, an ongoing project will retrofit this fleet with auxiliary power unit (APU) technology enabling IAIS to operate engines more efficiently during periods of cold weather.

In late 2016, IAIS installed its first Wi-Tronix asset monitoring system, Violet. IAIS was the first railroad to retrofit its fleet with the Violet system, and since then the benefits have been unmatched. Monitoring

the fleet in real time offers more visibility to IAIS systems, operations, and mechanical departments, and the system also keeps a historical database for a large collection of asset events.

Data collection is a key part of managing efficient operations, and more recently IAIS has started to take advantage of its data by building in-house dashboards so information can be viewed by location, asset and train symbol. Using the visual measurement data allows operating departments to make sound decisions when it comes to train meets, crew calling, asset utilization and more, having a positive impact on IAIS's carbon footprint reduction by highlighting areas of focus for cutting idle times.

Moreover, in the last calendar year, IAIS has implemented Wabtec's Trip Optimizer (TO) technology. A smart cruise-control system for trains, TO is Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) certified for 10 percent fuel savings. Not only does the system automatically control throttle and brakes to reduce fuel burn and provide efficient and consistent train handling, it collects and provides data from the onboard system that IAIS can use to identify key performance indicators and improve energy management.

IAIS is more than a business. It is a member of the of the communities it serves, so being a safe, environmentally conscious community member is key. In addition to all the other steps it has taken, IAIS recently partnered with the EPA's SmartWay program to communicate to friends, neighbors and customers the impact the company has on the environment and the ways it will continue to make improvements for future.

Maryland Midland Railway Team Willing to Get Hands Dirty for New Business

To passersby, the scene was probably just mounds of dirt. But for Maryland Midland Railway (MMID) and the Carroll County Bureau of Resource Management (CCBRM), moving those 70,000 cubic yards of dirt in 1,800 total carloads from Westminster to New Windsor, Maryland, was part of an important public project in 2020.

The county was looking to redirect Little Pipe Creek and create a drainage pond to improve water flow and alleviate frequent downstream flooding. Meanwhile, the dirt would be used in two places: on a farm that was being re-graded and in an area where a baseball field was being built. But first, the dirt had to get there. Stakeholders were adamant they did not want a steady stream of dirt-hauling trucks clogging local roads.

Because MMID's main line was next to the creek, CCBRM approached the railroad to see if they could take on the job. MMID agreed, but because the work had to be done during the day, the railroad needed to shift regular merchandise shipments and rock trains to night shifts.

In April 2020, after MMID had acquired 10 gondola cars, chosen a contractor to unload the dirt and hired an additional employee, the work began. Five days a week, for six months, train crews loaded dirt and hauled it to its two destinations, often completing two trips in a day. All of the dirt was moved without incident, keeping 7,500 truck movements off the street and out of nearby neighborhoods.

ASLRRRA Announcements

Join Us In Person for Our 2021 Annual Conference, and Access Last Year's Meeting Content Any Time

ASLRRA's 2021 Annual Conference is being held in person Nov. 17 to 19 and we look forward to welcoming attendees to Phoenix, Arizona. In addition to great networking in the exhibit hall and the annual golf outing, conference attendees will hear from industry leaders, celebrate award winners, engage in important discussions, and choose from more than 35 education breakout sessions tailored to meet the interests and needs of railroad professionals. Online registration is open and early bird rates are available until Oct. 11, so [register today!](#)

And for those unable to join us in person – or anyone wanting to explore great industry-specific discussions and rich educational content – recorded content from ASLRRA's 2020 Virtual Convention is available and accessible at the click of a mouse. The on-demand 2020 Virtual Convention features a stunning lineup of speakers, panelists, and subject matter experts and delivers more than 40 total hours of rich content, insight, and industry-specific education.

Recordings of all 26 education breakout sessions are available to view along with four full days of general session presentations, keynotes, panel discussions, and industry award winner presentations and videos. Download the [Schedule-at-a-Glance](#) overview or [click here](#) to view the full agenda. Access ALL the content by [registering online](#) today!

Apply for CRISI Funding with Help from ASLRRA Providers

Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant applications are due in exactly two months, on Nov. 29, and ASLRRA urges its members to consider applying for grants through this program.

ASLRRA's Member Discount Program features Preferred Providers Bergmann, HDR, Inc. and Global Train Services (GTS) that can help railroads with the application process. All three companies have extensive expertise in preparing grant applications and offer discounted rates and exceptional service to ASLRRA members. Log in to the [ASLRRA website](#) for more information.

View the CRISI notice of funding opportunity [here](#). The Federal Railroad Administration also hosted a [webinar](#) on Sept. 21 to provide grant applicants with more information about the CRISI program and tips for creating strong applications. Click [here](#) to view a recording of the FRA's webinar, or [here](#) to view the webinar presentation file.

ASLRRA Out and About



Strang Speaks on Rail Safety at NEARS Conference

ASLRRA Senior Vice President of Safety and Regulatory Policy Jo Strang, who is also chair of the Board of Directors at Operation Lifesaver (OLI), spoke about rail safety on behalf of OLI at the North East Association of Rail Shippers (NEARS) Fall Conference Sept. 22 to 24 in Portland, Maine.

Strang also helped staff the OLI booth at the conference vendor fair. During the conference David Fink, president of ASLRRA member Springfield Terminal and member of ASLRRA's Legislative Policy Committee, received the NEARS 2021 Transportation Person of the Year award.

ASLRRA's Jo Strang (right), staffed the Operation Lifesaver booth with Norma Griffiths of the FRA at the NEARS Fall Conference Sept. 22 to 24. Both women wore red in honor of Operation Lifesaver's Red Out for Rail Safety Day during Rail Safety Week.

Virtual Meeting Content Available

Access hours of General Session keynotes, panel discussions & Breakout Education Sessions from ASLRRA's Virtual Convention and General Counsel Symposium.

On-Demand 

Click to learn more...



ASLRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

Earn CLE Credits Through ASLRRA Live Webinars

Those who attend certain live webinar sessions can register to receive continuing legal education (CLE) credits – an industry first. Register today to learn about these important rail industry legal issues.

[Encroachments and Trespass: On the Railroad, It's All About Property](#) – Oct. 5, 2021

In this webinar John Fiorilla and Greg Peterson, partners at Dyer & Peterson, will discuss what railroads can do to ensure their property rights are secure. They will discuss actions railroads can take and offer recommendations regarding how to deal with encroachers and trespassers on railroad property, using both court and non-court remedies. **CLE credits are available for this webinar.**

[Section 889: Protecting the Security of the Railroad Supply Chain](#) – Oct. 14, 2021

Federal grant and acquisition regulations implementing NDAA FY 2019, Section 889 requirements now prevent federal agencies from entering into contracts or funding grants for entities that use any covered telecommunications and video surveillance equipment or services as a substantial or essential component of any of your systems after August 13, 2020. Join Susan Warshaw Ebner, Esq., Stinson LLP, and Mark Sidman, General Counsel & Corporate Secretary, Anacostia Rail Holdings Co., as they explain the new requirements and discuss the challenges railroads face in implementing these Section 889 requirements. **CLE credits are available for this webinar.**

Thank you to sponsor



[Strategically Defending a FELA Toxic Tort Case](#) – Oct. 20, 2021

David Schmitt and Anne Marie O'Brien, partners at Lamson Dugan and Murray, LLP, will discuss the new FELA threat posed by toxic tort cases claiming diesel exhaust and other exposures caused cancer. They will also cover plaintiffs' law firm business models in filing such lawsuits, and how to strategically defend the claims from inception to defense verdict. **CLE credits are available for this webinar.**

Thank you to sponsor



View Recordings of Previous Legal Webinars Through ASLRRRA's On-Demand Webinar Library

In addition to the legal webinars being offered live this month, ASLRRRA has made recordings of the first three webinars in its current Legal Series available in its [On-Demand Webinar Library](#).

Look for the following titles in the library's legal category:

- STB Hot Topics
- NTSB Investigations
- Utility Crossings and Broadband Deployment

Beyond these recordings, ASLRRRA's On-Demand Webinar Library features over 150 webinars covering topics related to finance, human resources, environmental issues, operations and safety and more. Members can access on-demand webinars for free, while non-members can purchase a subscription.

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

Industry Events and Announcements

Oct. 18-20: League of Railway Women to Hold Annual Conference Online

For a second year, the League of Railway Women (LRW) will hold its [annual conference](#) online.

ASLRRA's Assistant Vice President of Legislative and Regulatory Policy Crystal Gitchell, who is also LRW's scholarship chair, will serve as a panelist in a presentation about current and upcoming legislation and policies affecting transportation. Other panel discussions will focus on COVID-19 company policies, rail sustainability, diversity and inclusion, big data and more. There will also be several networking opportunities.

Follow this [link](#) to learn more about the event or to register.

Transportation Research Board Standing Committee on Freight Transportation is Seeking New Members

Calling Short Line Railroad and Class I Executives – are you interested in getting involved in issues that are facing our industry? Learning from a group of freight transportation experts that span international, Class Is, short lines, rail industry suppliers, economic experts and academia? Consider lending your talent to the Transportation Research Board's *AR 040 – Standing Committee on Freight Transportation*.

The committee is concerned with the spectrum of strategic, technical and planning issues related to freight rail transportation. The Committee's areas of emphasis include relationships between railroads, including the roles of railroads in the freight marketplace; demand for freight services, including intermodal traffic; the economics of freight railroads and related topics; integrating rail transport into federal, state and local transportation planning processes; public and private investment strategies including public/private partnerships; assessing regulatory issues and impacts; identifying areas of needed technical research; and promoting implementation of new rail technology.

The committee meets quarterly via Zoom, and once a year in person at the TRB Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. Please contact [Kevin Keller](#), committee chair for details, and consider joining our next call on Friday, Oct. 15 at 1:30 pm EDT.

[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.