



## American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association

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### **Short Lines Share Industry Priorities with NTSB Member Jennifer Homendy**

WASHINGTON, January 22, 2021 – The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) had the opportunity to share short line freight industry challenges and opportunities, safety initiatives undertaken, and the many ways that short line freight railroads are responding as part of the nation’s critical workforce during the pandemic with National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Member Jennifer Homendy and members of NTSB staff via Zoom call recently.

Steve Powell, President of the Buckingham Branch Railroad (BB), described the complex operations of this small railroad that provides critical rail access for freight and Amtrak. The BB is a family-owned, short line railroad that operates 280 miles of railroad in Virginia, has seven train crews and 20 locomotives, and more than 40 freight customers. Regardless of economic pressures brought about by the pandemic, the BB continues to invest in track upgrades to ensure safety and performance, while seeking opportunities to use transformative technology to further improve safety and operations.

“Short line railroads are integral to our nation’s economy, especially during COVID, with their frontline employees working tirelessly to ensure products and materials are able to get to their destinations

safely and on time. The virtual tour of Buckingham Branch Railroad was a tremendous opportunity to learn more about their operations and some of the innovative measures they are implementing to improve safety,” said Member Homendy.

Powell described several ongoing projects using third-party partners to explore the benefits of implementing technologies such as autonomous geometry track testing on box cars, drones for inspections, and in partnership with the Federal Railroad Administration, the development of trespasser detection and warning using seismic sensor technology at grade crossings on their property.

“During normal operations, I would have liked to visit in person, but it’s not safe to travel, so I want to thank the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association for being creative and figuring out a new way for short line and regional railroads to share all the great work they are doing for our nation,” continued Homendy.

In addition to Mr. Powell and Member Homendy, participants in the online meeting included Stephen Stadius, Confidential Assistant to Member Homendy, Erik Strickland, Senior Advisor to Member Homendy and members of ASLRRA’s Policy and Government Affairs teams.

“While there are many aspects of business that have been difficult to address during the COVID pandemic, we are encouraged that access to provide firsthand knowledge transfer on issues of importance to our industry has not been one of them,” said Tom Lynch, Vice President of Government Affairs, ASLRRA. “This meeting gave Member Homendy and her staff the opportunity to better understand the positive impact that government policy actions can have on the short line industry, and the technology advancements our members are using to move the industry forward, safely. ASLRRA member participation is critical to the success of these meetings, and we are sincerely grateful for their continued willingness to provide front-line perspective.”

Jennifer Homendy took the oath of office as the 44th Member of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) on August 20, 2018, filling a vacancy through 2019. She was renominated in 2019, and unanimously confirmed by the Senate for a five-year term expiring December 31, 2024.

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**About ASLRRA** - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) is a non-profit trade association representing the interests of the nation's 600 short line and regional railroads and railroad supply company members in legislative and regulatory matters. Short lines operate 47,500 miles of track in 49 states, or approximately 29% of the national railroad network, touching in origination or termination one out of every five cars moving on the national railroad system, serving customers who otherwise would be cut off from the national railroad network. [www.aslrra.org](http://www.aslrra.org)