



October 6, 2021



## Discounts for ASLRRRA Conference Registration, Hotel Rooms and Golf to End Monday

Less than a week is left to save money on [registration](#), [hotel rooms](#) and [golf](#) at the [2021 ASLRRRA Annual Conference and Exhibition](#) in Phoenix, Arizona in November.

Not only are rooms in ASLRRRA's hotel block at the Sheraton Phoenix Downtown almost sold out, after Oct. 11 they will be more expensive. Rates will also increase for the room block at the Hyatt Regency Phoenix after Oct. 11.

ASLRRRA is planning a dynamic return to its annual conference, which will feature [education sessions](#) in 11 different tracks; an [Exhibit Hall](#) with a special Green Zone showcasing companies focused on the environment and sustainability; [multiple networking opportunities](#); an awards ceremony honoring the industry's best; and, of course, a [golf tournament](#) at the JW Marriott Camelback Golf Club.

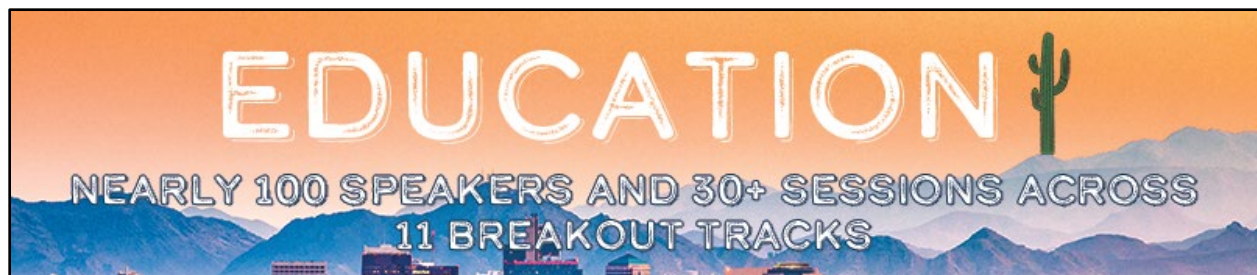
[Register](#) today to attend this year's [ASLRRRA Annual Conference and Exhibition](#) in Arizona.

## SLSI to Offer Leadership Development Training Course in November – Spaces Are Limited

The Short Line Safety Institute still has a few openings for its [Leadership Development Training Course](#), which will be held Nov. 2 to 4 in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

The Leadership Development Training Course features interactive sessions meant to help both new and experienced railroad managers improve their leadership skills in areas such as communication, team building and coaching.

Training is provided to participants at no cost to them, but registration is required. Click [here](#) to learn more about the program, or [here](#) to register.





### Stinson Explains Executive Order Concerning COVID Safety Protocols

A [document](#) by ASLRRRA associate business member Stinson helps short line railroads understand President Joe Biden's [Executive Order 14042](#). Ensuring Adequate COVID Safety Protocols for Federal Contractors, and the subsequent [guidance on implementation](#) issued by the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force.

The document identifies which contracts and contract-like instruments are covered by the executive order. It also explains that all contractor employees working on or in connection with a covered contract or subcontract, as well as employees working at a covered contractor workplace, are subject to the order's requirements. All covered contractor employees must be fully vaccinated by Dec. 8, 2021. To ensure compliance with all COVID safety requirements, contractors must have someone to implement and coordinate company efforts in this area.

The [Safer Federal Workforce website](#) also offers guidance concerning the executive order, including a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section covering several topics such as federal contractors and vaccination requirements.

### NTSB Releases Accident Report on 2018 Roadway Worker Fatality

On Sept. 30, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) released its accident report on the [Amtrak roadway worker fatality](#) that occurred on April 24, 2018 in Bowie, Maryland.

According to the NTSB, "Amtrak's insufficient site-specific safety work plan for the Bowie project did not adequately consider the challenges of multiple main tracks in a high-noise environment. The watchman was focused on the movement of a southbound MARC commuter train when he was struck from behind by a high-speed northbound Amtrak train."

The NTSB recommends that Amtrak and Class I railroads eliminate the use of train approach warning (TAW) protection in controlled track territory during planned maintenance and inspection activities.

The final report is available [here](#).

### RRB Q&A Explains Retirement Benefits for Spouses

The [September edition](#) of the Railroad Retirement Board's Question and Answer (Q&A) series discusses railroad retirement benefits for eligible spouses, including divorced spouses.

Like the Social Security Act, the Railroad Retirement Act allows some spouses of retired railroad employees to collect benefits. Divorced spouses can also qualify for these benefits. Eligibility for the spouse annuity depends on the employee's age, date of retirement and years of railroad service. Eligibility for a divorced spouse depends on years of marriage, age of both individuals and current marital status of the divorced spouse.

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## Congress Extends Funding for Key Programs, but High-stakes Debate on Infrastructure, Social Spending and Debt Limit Continues

Last week, Congress extended government funding through December 3, averting a shutdown of major federal agencies.

Congress also separately extended funding for Highway Trust Fund programs through Oct. 31, giving Democratic leaders in the Senate and House time to continue to debate the contours of a social spending package, which is now likely to top \$2 trillion in new spending for childcare, health care, education and climate-

related programs. Until the details of the social spending measure are solidified, a sizeable bloc of Congressional members have pledged to withhold support of the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which passed the Senate in August – and which ASLRRRA continues to strongly support.

Democratic leaders have pledged to achieve consensus on a social spending bill and then move both the infrastructure bill and the social spending package together through Congress and to the president's desk by the end of October. This timeline, however, appears ambitious.

While Democrats and the Biden administration wrangle over infrastructure and the safety net, the deadline for action on the debt limit approaches quickly. The Treasury Department has stated Oct. 18 is "X Date" – the day the federal government defaults if the debt limit is not raised or suspended. The Biden administration, along with Democratic congressional leaders, are continuing to grapple with ways to suspend or raise the debt limit before the Oct. 18 deadline while also striving to garner Republican support.



As an ASLRRRA Preferred Provider, ORR Safety offers Discounts on Personal Protective Equipment and Related Services to ASLRRRA Members.

Click to learn more!



## ASLRRRA New Members

Know a company that would benefit from joining and participating in ASLRRRA? Please contact ASLRRRA's Vice President of Membership and Business Development [Kathy Keeney](#) via email or on (202) 585-3439.

## ASLRRRA Welcomes a New Associate Business Member

October 6, 2021



[SMIRAIL LLC](#), based in Houston, Texas, has been providing the industry with rebuilt and RTO components since 2006. SMIRAIL specializes in truck frame rebuilds and combo build-ups. Components include engines, generators, traction

motors and wheelsets. The company also provides locomotive purchasing, leasing and dismantling services. Our primary contact is President [Ahmad Malik](#), who can also be reached on (713) 724-2794. Learn more about the company by visiting their booth at our annual conference in Phoenix.



### Education Track Sponsor Spotlight

ASLRRA appreciates the strong sponsorship support it has received for next month's annual conference in Phoenix. This week we give a special shout-out to the companies sponsoring our breakout educational tracks.

[Baker & Miller](#)—Legislative & Regulatory

[Bentley Systems](#)—Marketing

[Fletcher & Sippel](#)—Legal

[Harbor Rail Services](#)—Mechanical

[MaxAccel](#)—Safety & Operations

[PS Technology](#)—Technology

[Purify Fuel](#)—Environmental

[Railroad Software](#)—Engineering & MOW

[Short Line Data Systems](#)—Young Professionals

[Stinson](#)—Human Resources

[TerraPact](#)—Finance & Administration

We encourage railroads and suppliers to take full advantage of the multiple workshops in each track to learn more about their line of work and industry and make a few new connections.

Remember, early bird discounts for [conference registration](#), [hotel rooms](#) and [golf](#) will end next Monday, Oct. 11. Register today!

## ASLRRRA Members of Note

ASLRRRA 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 business achievements of Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad and Brownsville & Rio Grande International Railway.

### Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad Uses Legislative Advocacy to Create Rail Friendly Laws



Photo Courtesy of PVJR.

*This artist's rendition shows a proposed Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad (PVJR) branch line in Brush Prairie, Washington, that would serve the new development area made possible by legislation supported by PVJR. This legislation enables land along rail lines to be developed for rail-served businesses, where such development was previously prohibited.*

In business, success is usually measured by the bottom line – how many customers have been added or how much income has been generated. However, the short line freight industry does not always deal with such absolutes, and there are different ways to measure wins. For the Portland Vancouver Junction Railroad (PVJR), its work to preserve opportunities for freight-rail-related business is just as important as the business deals themselves.

PVJR operates the freight portion of the Chelatchie Prairie Railroad, which is owned by Clark County, Wash. Since it began operating the railroad in 2003, PVJR has invested over \$10 million to modernize the railroad, increased rail traffic from 43 to over 800 cars per year, and currently provides rail

shipping options to local businesses that support over 1,000 jobs in the community.

But beyond these contributions, PVJR has also worked with the Washington state legislature to create a local zoning classification for railroads and pass a law allowing economic development infrastructure to be built near rail lines, enabling freight-rail-dependent uses. As the text of the bill affirms, "railroads provide benefits to state and local jurisdictions that are valuable to economic development, highway safety, and the environment."

With the passage of the state law, the Clark County Council later added a Freight Rail Dependent Uses (FRDU) overlay onto its Comprehensive Plan and Map, identifying lands for railroad-served and rail-related development adjacent to the rail line. This allows, in part, for urban facilities to be built outside the urban growth area, where they can use the railroad.

By working with state and local governments, PVJR has helped codify support for railroad-use-only development, with an emphasis on projects that can build up rural communities and businesses. This approach is a way to help PVJR boost its own profits, but beyond that, its efforts can serve as a model for other railroads looking to build support for rail through civic partnerships.

### **Brownsville & Rio Grande International Railway Builds Customer Trust to Cement Business Partnerships**

The contrast between companies' expectations for 2020 and the reality of 2020 was the backdrop of new and creative solutions to keep the lights on for both customers and the Brownsville & Rio Grande International Railway (BRG). The railroad made connections with new customers that allowed it to grow over 24 percent last year and move 10,000 more carloads than planned – over 51,000 carloads total.

BRG, an affiliate of OmniTRAX, serves the Port of Brownsville in Texas. In January 2020, BRG President and Chief Operating Officer Norma Torres and OmniTRAX Regional Vice President, Commercial Tony Chavez saw an opportunity to work with Vestas, a global wind turbine company. Knowing Vestas was experiencing difficulties with its existing rail shipper, Torres and Chavez collaborated with the Port of Brownsville, Dix Shipping and Union Pacific to create a transportation alternative that better addressed Vestas's needs.

A mid-January trial shipment of wind turbine parts took place without a hitch, and BRG was able to rebuild Vestas' trust in rail shipping with what the railroad describes as its "superior service, resourcefulness, and solution-oriented approach." BRG moved 1,700 cars for Vestas in 2020 and expects that number to grow in 2021.

Instead of trying to hunker down and simply weather the storm of 2020, BRG stepped forward to offer their new customer a shipping solution that would benefit all partners involved. In building relationships with customers new and old, BRG demonstrated the ability of rail to meet customer needs despite adversity and set itself up for a productive 2021 and beyond.



*Photo Courtesy of BRG*

*Brownsville & Rio Grande International Railway crews work to move a Vestas wind turbine blade through the Port of Brownsville.*

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## ASLRRA Announcements

### ASLRRA Members Can Prepare for Winter with Personal Protective Equipment from ORR Safety

Colder weather is on its way, and ASLRRA Preferred Provider ORR Safety can help Association members protect their employees with a wide variety of products and services, such as insulated gloves, winter liners and traction cleats.

ORR Safety is an ISO 9001-registered distributor of PPE and related services to the industrial market. For over 70 years, ORR Safety has worked with over 20,000 companies, helping to protect hundreds of thousands of workers. With more than 40 years of railroad experience, ORR Safety has worked with customers and suppliers to provide innovative solutions to many of the unique challenges inherent in this complex and demanding industry.

ASLRRA members benefit from exceptional, personalized service and discounted pricing on a huge assortment of products and equipment needed to implement an effective and efficient safety program. Visit [aslrra.org/discount](https://aslrra.org/discount) to view ORR Safety's online e-catalog and start saving today!

### Access ASLRRA's Program Templates to Ensure Compliance with Federal Regulations

To help members fulfill federal regulatory requirements, ASLRRA has developed a variety of [compliance templates](#) for different parts of 49 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Some of the areas of focus include:

- Part 213 (Continuous Welded Rail)
- Part 214 (Roadway Worker Protection)
- Part 228 (Hours-of-Service)
- Part 232 (Brake System Safety Standards)
- Part 234 (Grade Crossing Safety)

These are only a few of the template programs available to members in the [Safety & Compliance](#) section of the ASLRRA website. Members can log in under "Compliance Templates" and choose from a variety of resources. Additional information concerning requirements for record retention, contractor safety training and more can be found in this section.

All templates are available at no cost to railroad members, and select templates are available free to associate business members and for a fee to non-member railroads. Visit [www.aslrra.org/safety](https://www.aslrra.org/safety) to access the complete collection of safety and compliance tools, resources and information available from the ASLRRA.

### Last Training in October Covers General Code of Operating Rules

A training event Oct. 26-28 in Cedar Falls, Iowa will help familiarize participants with the eighth edition of the [General Code of Operating Rules](#).

ASLRRA Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar and Iowa Northern Railway Company Assistant General Manager Mark Vaughn will lead the seminar, which is intended for railroads that have adopted the GCOR as their operating rules. Attendance at this event may be used to meet operating rules training as required by 49 CFR Part 240, 242 and 214 Subpart C.

Click [here](#) to register for the training. Limited space is available. Attendees are asked to bring a copy of the eighth edition GCOR for reference.

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## ASLRRA Out and About

### Baker Joins Panel Discussion on Rail Safety for Eno Webinar

On Oct. 7, ASLRRA President Chuck Baker will join other railroad industry leaders in a [webinar](#) hosted by the Eno Center for Transportation. The group will discuss findings from Eno's report, "[Safer Railroading: A Guide Toward Targeted Safety Policy](#)."

Baker will join representatives from the Association of American Railroads, Amtrak and Eno to talk about the most significant safety issue facing railroads and how to address safety gains that appear headed in the wrong direction.

### Krouse Covers the News from Washington at Virginia Railroad Association Meeting

ASLRRA's Vice President of Communications Amy Krouse participated in the Virginia Railroad Association Meeting Sept. 30 to Oct. 1, in Virginia Beach, Virginia.

Krouse shared updates on the Association's work on behalf of members on Capitol Hill and with regulatory bodies including the Surface Transportation Board and the Federal Railroad Administration.

**COMPLIANCE TEMPLATES**

Click here for member-exclusive templates and additional resources.

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## ASLRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

### Upcoming Webinars

#### [Section 88g: Protecting the Security of the Railroad Supply Chain](#) – Oct. 14, 2021

Federal grant and acquisition regulations implementing NDAA FY 2019, Section 88g 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 88g requirements. **CLE credits are available for this webinar.**

Thank you to sponsor



#### [Strategically Defending a FELA Toxic Tort Case](#) – Oct. 14, 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



#### [Environmental Update – Who's on First](#) – Nov. 3, 2021

HDR Vice President and Senior Professional Associate Kevin Keller will provide an update of current environmental regulations and how they potentially impact the freight rail industry. Attendees will have an opportunity to participate in Q&A at the end of the presentation.

Thank you to sponsor



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

## Industry Events and Announcements

### Oct. 8 – University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Hay Seminar Focuses on Track Design

This Friday's [William H. Hay Seminar](#) will examine heavy haul freight railroad track design, focusing on how these railroads have evolved to move larger, heavier materials using higher capacity freight cars and longer trains.

Speakers include Steve Wilk of ASLRRA member TTCI, and David Davis, who retired from TTCI last year. Follow this [link](#) to register for the webinar.

[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.