



March 31, 2021



Notice of Funding Opportunity Issued for Port Infrastructure Grant Program

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration [has announced](#) a notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) for grants through the [Port Infrastructure Development Program](#) (PIDP).

Railroads that move goods into, out of, around or within a port can benefit from this program.

PIDP grants are meant for projects that will strengthen and modernize port infrastructure in support of long-term economic growth. It can be applied to facilities within or outside of and directly related to port operations or intermodal connections. Projects will also be evaluated based on how they address climate change, impact environmental justice and more.

This year, \$230 million is available for the program, with \$205 million reserved for grants to coastal seaports and Great Lakes ports. The application deadline is July 30. The Department of Transportation will also host webinars to help applicants with the process and learn best practices for preparing a cost-benefit analysis. Webinar times and dates, once finalized, will be posted [here](#).

In 2020, ASLRRRA member Coos Bay Rail Line received a nearly \$10 million PIDP grant to rehabilitate 121 miles of track in Oregon, while other [2020 grant recipients](#) planned to apply funding to upgrade rail connectivity, develop rail access to intermodal facilities and make rail improvements at bulk transfer facilities.

ASLRRRA members can take advantage of the Association's [Member Discount Program](#), which features preferred providers who offer assistance with the preparation and submission of grant applications for this and other grant programs.

Sign Up by April 2 to be Scheduled for Railroad Day Meetings with Requested Representatives

An all-virtual [Railroad Day on Capitol Hill](#) enables organizers to match participants with their state representatives, but doing so is only possible if those participants register for the event and indicate their preferences by April 2.

President Biden has indicated that infrastructure legislation is his next big focus, and the timing of this year's Railroad Day, on April 13 and 14, allows the railroad industry to advocate for important issues as funding talks start gaining steam.

As Aaron Burr sang in *Hamilton*, you will want to be in the room where it happens!

Speaking directly with lawmakers allows them to understand how their actions in Washington affect their rail constituents, whose livelihoods depend on a healthy industry. At the same time, rail industry

employees and advocates can articulate the benefits of rail in a way that can be more relatable than a report filled with statistics.

Interested participants still have time to [register](#) for Railroad Day. All meetings will be held via Zoom, and, this year, there are no registration fees or travel costs for attendees.

ASLRRA thanks all the companies sponsoring this event. Their contributions help ensure dozens of meetings with many participants can take place simultaneously online. Contact ASLRRA's [Amy Westerman](#) for sponsorship opportunities.



Mask Mandate: FRA Emergency Order 32 - Updated FAQs Available

ASLRRA sent a number of questions on behalf of our members to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) seeking further clarity on Emergency Order 32, which went into effect on March 1, 2021. The FRA has responded with additional clarity for railroad operations provided in a [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) available on the U.S. Department of Transportation's website under FRA, which are in line

with responses ASLRRA had provided in an e-mail to members on March 8, 2021.

Additional questions or concerns regarding EO 32 can be emailed to railroadsmaskup@dot.gov.

DOT Final Rule Affects Internal Policies and Procedures

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has [issued](#) a [final rule](#) concerning administrative rulemaking, guidance and enforcement procedures. The rule will be published in the Federal Register on March 29, 2021.

The rule removes from the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) the DOT's internal policies and procedures concerning creation of rulemaking and guidance documents. It also removes regulations concerning the initiation and conduct of enforcement actions.

The DOT issued this rule in response to two recently issued executive orders, [Executive Order \(E.O.\) 13992](#) and [E.O. 13990](#). Executive Order 13992 revokes previous executive orders requiring federal government action in areas concerning rulemaking, guidance and regulatory enforcement, while E.O. 13990 requires all executive departments and agencies to identify and address regulations and actions conflicting with the objectives stated in E.O. 13990.

AAR RAN Bulletin Discusses FBI Report on Ransomware

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) has issued a new Railway Alert Network (RAN) Rail Cyber Security Information Bulletin that ASLRRA has made available to members on its [website](#).

The bulletin features information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) report concerning ransomware known as Mamba, or HDDCryptor. The bulletin also includes recommendations from the FBI and explains how victims of ransomware can report it and file a complaint.

Other RAN notices and alerts, along with security notifications from groups like the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), can also be found at the ASLRRRA link above.

Latest RRB Q&A Talks about Railroad Retirement Benefits Compared to Social Security

In its [March Q&A](#), the Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) compares benefits under the Railroad Retirement Act to benefits under the Social Security Act.

In general, while employers and employees covered by the Railroad Retirement Act pay higher retirement taxes, they ultimately receive higher benefits than they might through social security, especially if they are career employees with 30 or more years of service.

The information identifies the average monthly railroad retirement benefit as \$3,735 for career employees and \$2,985 for all retired rail employees. The average social security monthly benefit is \$1,505.

Also compared are several other details, including the ages at which railroad employees are eligible for regular annuities, and what benefits are offered through social security that aren't available through railroad retirement, and vice versa.



Coalition Letter Asks Congress to Reject Laws Allowing Bigger Trucks

With Congress looking to develop transportation infrastructure legislation, the Coalition Against Bigger Trucks (CABT) sent a [letter](#) today to the House and Senate transportation committees and the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works calling for members to oppose allowing increases to truck length or weight limits on federal highways.

ASLRRRA joined the Association of American Railroads (AAR) and other national organizations in signing the letter, which references the recently released 2021 American Society of Civil Engineers' [Report Card for America's Infrastructure](#). The letter notes that roads received a "D" grade, unchanged from the previous report four years ago, while bridges received a "C." The issues facing the nation's roads and bridges would only be worsened by increased truck sizes.

The letter goes on to point out that for the damage larger trucks would cause to the national highway system, that effect could be significantly more severe on local roads and bridges, increasing the financial burden on state, county and local governments.

RSTAC Advocates for Short Lines in Letter to Transportation Committee

The Railroad-Shipper Transportation Advisory Council (RSTAC) recently sent a [letter](#) to leaders of the respective House and Senate transportation committees urging Congress to fully include short line railroads in any future infrastructure investment legislation.

The letter asks Congress to treat small railroads equitably in spending legislation, specifically calling for federal grant programs like Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI), Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) and Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) be expanded proportionally in order encourage small railroad participation.

In addition, RSTAC members remind officials that, if future infrastructure investment legislation creates new federal grant opportunities, the opportunities available to short lines should also “be expanded proportionately”

Two executives at ASLRRRA-member companies recently joined the RSTAC as small railroad representatives. The appointment of Patriot Rail Company Chief Policy Officer Donald Itzkoff and Anacostia Rail Holdings Chief Commercial Officer Eric Jakubowski was announced in early March.

Biden to Talk About Big Infrastructure Plan During Trip to Pittsburgh

President Joe Biden hopes Congress will pass a multi-trillion-dollar [infrastructure plan](#) over the summer. The plan is expected to include investments in infrastructure and domestic manufacturing, and provisions to combat climate change and keep the U.S. competitive with China.

Biden will discuss his “Build Back Better” plan today in Pittsburgh. It is expected that the plan will be split into [two parts](#), with the first focused on more traditional physical infrastructure components, broadband access, American manufacturing and clean energy projects, while the second part will deal with what is known as the “care economy” - jobs, healthcare and childcare.

Funding for the \$3 to \$4 trillion plan will come in part from new tax hikes planned for corporations and the ultra-rich. The introduction of increased taxes as a source of funding came about because of fears that the plan’s gap between spending and revenue was too wide, potentially having a negative impact on the U.S. economy.

Illinois Representatives Reintroduce Freight Railcar Bill

On Monday, U.S. Representatives Brad Schneider and Darin LaHood of Illinois [reintroduced](#) the Freight Rail Assistance and Investment to Launch Coronavirus-era Activity and Recovery Act, or Freight RAILCAR Act.

The Freight RAILCAR Act would offer tax credits to incentivize use of more environmentally friendly freight railcars and encourage investment in “safer, greener” freight railcar manufacturing. It was first [put forth](#) last August.

COMPLIANCE TEMPLATES

Click here for member-exclusive templates and additional resources.



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.

Four More Companies Become ASLRRRA Members

ASLRRRA is pleased to welcome four new members this week: a short line, a switching operation and two suppliers.



East Brookfield & Spencer Railroad LLC, based in East Brookfield, Mass., is a 4-mile short line serving the automotive market. The EBSR, which connects with CSX, offers car repair services as well. Our primary contact is General Manager Kory Bryant. The railroad can be reached on (508) 885-4664.



[F&M Rail Service, Inc.](#), based in Wilmington, Calif., is a provider of locomotive inspection and repair services. Our primary contact is President [Kevin Masters](#), who can be reached on (310) 971-1460. Many thanks to our friends at Anacostia Rail Holdings for recommending that they join ASLRRA.



[Hallcon Corp.](#), based in Lenexa, Kan., is a premier North American provider of outsourced transportation services and commuter rail operations. It acquired Transportation Certification Services, Inc. (TCS) and Rail Temps, Inc. (RTI) in 2017. Hallcon can provide short line support for your

training, certification, start-ups, regulatory compliance, and temporary/permanent staffing needs as well as rail employee transportation. Our primary contact is [Alex Vahldick](#), Director, Rail Services, who can be reached on (913) 890-6255. Many thanks to the FRA's Kevin Lewis for suggesting they join ASLRRA.



Orange Rail, Inc., an Orange, Texas-based unit of [LJA Infrastructure](#), is preparing to conduct switching operations in a newly built facility that is served by Union Pacific and BNSF. It offers car storage and has available industrial development sites. Our primary contact is [Beau Maida](#), Director of Rail Operations, who can be reached on (409) 767-4166.

ASLRRA Announcements

Avoid Tech Glitches and Review Messaging During a Pre-Railroad Day Informational Zoom Call

Those who have already registered for this year's [Railroad Day on Capitol Hill](#) should plan to attend one of two informational Zoom calls before the event, one on April 6 and one on April 8. Both are scheduled for 12:30 p.m. EDT.

The calls will help attendees test their Zoom capabilities to ensure they can hear and be heard, and know how to avoid using [cat-face filters](#). Registered participants will also learn what is expected of them and understand the anticipated meeting flow. In addition, they will review key talking points with ASLRRA's government affairs team.

Those who cannot attend either meeting can access a recording that will be available on the ASLRRA website after April 6.



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...](#)



ASLRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

Upcoming Webinars

[Short Line Fire Prevention - Hazards, Risks and Resolutions](#) - April 20, 2021 (NOTE NEW DATE)

Members of ASLRRA's Environmental Committee and representatives from sponsor Purify Fuel will offer comprehensive fire prevention education and an in-depth discussion on how to prevent fires

involving train operations, locomotive mechanical issues and maintenance of way.

Sponsored by:



[Rail Trends: Freight Railroads Helping America Recover](#) - April 27, 2021 (NOTE NEW DATE)

Association of American Railroads Assistant Vice President of Policy & Economics Luisa Fernandez-Willey will discuss the current state of the railroad industry, the movement of key commodities, and leading economic indicators crucial in understanding the economic recovery. This webinar is scheduled to last 90 minutes to allow for more questions at the end of the presentation.

ASLRRA's Subject-Matter Experts Explain Federal Regulations in On-Demand Webinars

Keeping up with federal regulations can be difficult, so ASLRRA's team of experts have put together webinars focused on topics related to Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requirements and more.

Recordings of these webinars can be found in ASLRRA's [On-Demand Webinar library](#). Titles include:

- Emergency Docket Waivers
- FRA Penalties and Violations
- FRA Regulatory & Program Requirements for Short Lines, Part 1
- FRA Regulatory & Program Requirements for Short Lines, Part 2

In addition, ASLRRA offers more than 100 recordings covering a variety of railroad topics. Recordings are free to members and available by subscription to non-members. Follow the link above to learn more.

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

Industry Events and Announcements

[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.