



June 16, 2021



ASLRRRA Commends Senate Commerce Committee on the Advancement of the Surface Transportation Investment Act

Following today's strongly bipartisan vote by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation to advance the Surface Transportation Investment Act, ASLRRRA shared the following:

"ASLRRRA commends the strong bipartisan approval of the Surface Transportation Investment Act out of the Senate Commerce Committee this afternoon. This action shows that our elected officials can work together to bring meaningful legislation forward - legislation that will support the continued strength of the U.S. freight transportation network, and in particular the growth of small business freight railroads, allowing us to serve America's freight shippers, support the communities we operate in throughout America, invest in safety and service improvements, and contribute to continued reduction of the environmental impact of freight transportation," said ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker. "Specifically, for short line railroads this bill provides excellent competitive funding opportunities and avoids unnecessarily burdensome regulations that would limit our ability to help grow the economy and protect the environment in every part of America. We look forward to further engagement with both the Senate and the House as they work to advance a bill that can get to the President's desk."

The bill was [strongly supported](#) by ASLRRRA following its introduction on June 10, 2021.

Registration Still Open for the Eastern & Southern Region Meeting and General Counsel Symposium, But Golf is SOLD OUT!

Don't miss ASLRRRA's final Regional Meeting of 2021! Registration is still open for next week's [Eastern & Southern Region Meeting](#) in Louisville, Ky., with a chance to learn from representatives from Class I railroads, fellow short lines, federal agencies and industry subject-matter experts,

The Eastern & Southern Region Meeting will also feature networking opportunities and social events like a [golf tournament](#). Golf is sold out but there's still an opportunity to reserve rental clubs for those already registered.

In addition, the Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) will bring its [Safety Train](#), allowing attendees to tour the train and meet with SLSI representatives to learn about the no-cost resources available to short line railroads.

Individuals can also still register for the [General Counsel Symposium](#), which will be held in conjunction with the regional meeting. The symposium offers important legal information specifically for professionals in the rail industry, and CLEs are available for an additional fee.

Several ASLRRRA committees will gather during the regional meeting, including the Legislative Policy Committee (LPC), General Counsel Committee and Small Railroad Committee. The Young Professionals Committee will have a social gathering on June 21 instead of an official meeting.

Attendance at the Small Railroad Committee meeting is open to any eligible railroad member. Please contact ASLRRRA's [Sabrina Waiss](#) for information about attending the committee meeting.



FRA Provides Update on Order Requiring Face Mask Use in Operations

ASLRRRA received more information from the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) regarding its [Emergency Order No. 32](#), which required face mask use in railroad operations.

According to a statement from the FRA, the agency “will exercise its discretion” when enforcing the emergency order, taking into consideration current guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC has [said](#) it will not require people to wear a mask outdoors on conveyances or outdoors at transportation hubs.

In response, the FRA noted its emergency order is still in effect, but when the order conflicts with the CDC’s guidance for outdoor mask wearing, the FRA will exercise its discretion to not take enforcement action under the emergency order. The FRA also plans to amend its emergency order for clarity in response to the CDC’s action.

Importantly, the FRA notes its statement does not address CDC guidance unrelated to the particular mask order noted above. View the CDC’s [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) for more information about mask requirements on public transportation. Those with questions about the FRA’s statement can contact ASLRRRA’s [JR Gelnar](#).

Mark Blythe is the RRB’s New Director of Field Service

The Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) [appointed](#) Mark Blythe its Director of Field Service. He replaces Daniel Fadden, who became the RRB’s Director of Administration in January.

Blythe will oversee the RRB’s 53 field offices, which are staffed by approximately 200 employees. He will also serve on the RRB’s Executive Committee.

Before joining the RRB, Blythe spent over 20 years working for the Social Security Administration (SSA), and was most recently an area director for the Denver region.



Baker Calls for Bipartisanship in Surface Transportation Bill in Railway Age Magazine Piece

In his column for the [June issue](#) of *Railway Age* magazine, ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker outlined important legislative objectives for short line railroads, which, for the first time in many years, do not focus on the 45G short line infrastructure tax credit.

This article was particularly timely, as this month the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee reported out their “[INVEST in America Act](#),” and the “Surface Transportation Investment Act” was reported out of the Senate Commerce Committee today.

In the article, Baker references his experience testifying before the Senate Commerce Committee Subcommittee on Surface Transportation. In his testimony, he offered suggestions for the surface transportation bill that would better enable short lines to meet local and national economic needs.

Mentioned were the Association’s support for the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grant program and the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program or a similar successor program. Baker also identified ways these funding opportunities could be further improved for small railroads.

Beyond specific discussion of ASLRRRA’s preferences for legislative and regulatory action, Baker made a broader appeal for bipartisan cooperation in the development of an infrastructure bill. He referenced Chris Spear, president and CEO of the American Trucking Associations, who also testified at the subcommittee hearing, writing that while “trucks and short lines are intensely competitive,” both he and Spear wanted Congress to “put partisanship aside and get on with the task of getting the job done.”

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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 Three New Associate Business Members



[Burns & McDonnell](#), based in Kansas City, Mo., is a design and construction firm specializing in industrial track, industrial buildings, rail bridges and rail

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environmental services. It performs work for a variety of industries served by rail, including ports; oil, gas & chemical; energy; food & consumer products, and manufacturing. Our primary contact is [Jeff Jones](#), Rail Project Manager, Transportation, who can also be reached on (785) 691-5594.



CONSTRUCTION

[PCL Construction, Inc.](#), based in Tampa, Fla., is a contractor that has completed more than 325 transportation infrastructure projects across the country, from small bridge rehabilitations to large-scale P3s. It works across all sizes and scopes of transportation projects, with a specialized focus on bridge construction and rehabilitations. Project Manager [Jordan Robbins](#) is our primary contact and can be reached on (813) 425-1440.



Wallace Saunders

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

[Wallace Saunders - Attorneys-at-Law](#), based in Overland Park, Kan., provides full-service legal representation to rail and transportation industry clients. The firm's attorneys have over 100 years' combined experience defending railroads and transportation companies in FELA and grade crossing litigation, FRSA/whistleblower claims, and employment litigation and labor disputes. The firm also has experience with disaster and catastrophic injury/damage response, FRA/NTSB investigations, as well as railroad and railroad-related business

corporate formation, acquisitions and sales. Our primary contact is Partner [Chris Confer](#), who can also be reached on (913) 888-1000. Many thanks to our friends at Midwest & Bluegrass Rail's Youngstown & Southeastern Railroad for the assist with this membership.



Employee Health Insurance

The Coalition Health Plan is available exclusively to ASLRRRA members, designed to reduce medical premiums and simplify the healthcare experience for employees. [Click to learn more...](#)

ASLRRRA Announcements

Help ASLRRRA Improve by Completing a Survey About the Central & Pacific Region Meeting

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More than 300 people attended the Central & Pacific Region Meeting last week in Kansas City, Mo., and ASLRRA is glad to have been able to hold an in-person event offering engaging educational opportunities and networking events for railroad and supplier personnel.

In order to continue to improve, ASLRRA has sent an online survey to all meeting participants to gather feedback on their experience. The Association encourages everyone to take some time to complete the [survey](#), and thanks those who have already done so. In addition, registered attendees can access content from the meeting [here](#).

Members Save Money on Medical Premiums with ASLRRA's Coalition Health Plan

The Coalition Health Plan is specifically designed for ASLRRA members looking for a solution to reduce their medical premiums and simplify the healthcare experience for their employees.

As the 5th largest broker in the world with over 500 locations in North America, HUB International is well equipped to provide ASLRRA members with a vast network of benefits experts and best-in-class resources no matter where you are in the US.

When you partner with HUB, you're at the center of a vast network of experts who will help you reach your goals through risk services, claims management, and compliance support. Visit aslrta.org/discounts and select Employee Health Insurance to start saving today!

Save Money with ASLRRA's Member Discount Program Partners



ASLRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

Upcoming Webinars

[Employee Retention Credit](#) - June 29, 2021

In this webinar, Nicole Teska and Chelsea Sweet of Bowers and Company CPAs will talk about how Employee Retention Credit rules have changed in 2021. They will discuss how to determine eligibility, how much the credit can be worth and how to claim the credit. Also,

Teska and Sweet will explain to participants how those who have not yet analyzed their credit for 2020 can still file an amended return.

Sponsored by:



Find Information on Important Financial Issues in ASLRRA's On-Demand Webinar Library

ASLRRA's JR Gelnar joined Mitch Harris of Rio Grande Pacific Corporation and Katie Inouye of Spark Training Solutions to present a three-part webinar series discussing the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Part 243 training requirements. Recordings of these webinars can be found in the Regulatory category of ASLRRA's [On-Demand Webinar Library](#). Look for the following titles:

- FRA Part 243: Part 1 - Initial Training Requirements
- FRA Part 243: Part 2 - Requirements for Compliance
- FRA Part 243: Part 3 - Discussion and Q&A

In addition to these offerings, ASLRRA has more than 100 webinar recordings in its [On-Demand Webinar Library](#). Recordings are free to members and available by subscription to non-members.

[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.