



ASLRRRA will not publish Views & News next week. Our next issue will be January 4.

We wish everyone joy, peace, love and hope this holiday season.

In This Issue:

- **ASLRRRA Files Crew Size Comments** – The Association has filed comments regarding the FRA’s crew size safety notice of proposed rulemaking. Learn more in our [Headlines section](#) below.
- **Florida Representative Introduces Disaster Relief Bill** – A bill introduced by Byron Donalds (R-Fla.) would provide assistance to Class II and III railroads affected by natural disasters. Learn more in our [Legislative Updates section](#) below.

The banner features the word 'Headlines' in a large, bold, white font on the left side. The background is a stylized, low-poly illustration of a landscape with green hills and a road or railway track leading into the distance under a warm, orange-toned sky.

Headlines

ASLRRRA Annual Conference & Exhibition Registration Now Open **Participants Can Also Sign Up For Port Tours and the Golf Tournament**

[Registration is now open](#) for ASLRRRA’s Annual Conference and Exhibition, which will be held April 2 to 4 at the [Ernest N. Morial Convention Center](#) in New Orleans, Louisiana. Those who register can also add on optional activities, including a tour of the Port of New Orleans by bus or boat.

ASLRRRA staff is planning another exciting and engaging conference with the latest short line news and information from subject-matter and industry experts. Bookmark ASLRRRA’s [conference home page](#) to keep track of all event updates, including the conference [agenda](#).

ASLRRRA member New Orleans Public Belt Railroad has joined with the Association to offer [port tours](#) to conference attendees. Those on the bus tour will receive a first-hand look at the Port of New Orleans’ breakbulk and container terminals, while those touring by boat will explore port operations aboard a working fire boat. Space on the port excursion is extremely limited. Those interested in participating should register as soon as possible to secure a spot in the tour.

Registered attendees can also sign up to participate in the [conference golf tournament](#), held this year at two separate sites: the [Lockwood Golf Club](#) and the [English Turn Golf Club](#).

Hotel room blocks are also open for those making travel arrangements. ASLRRRA encourages attendees to use links provided on [ASLRRRA’s website to make hotel reservations](#) and reminds attendees that the Association never uses outside solicitors to contact individuals to book hotel rooms.

Please contact ASLRRRA Vice President of Meetings Amy Westerman via [email](#) or phone at (202) 585-3449 with any concerns about unauthorized hotel vendors.

Click [here](#) to register and take advantage of early bird specials!

Exhibit Hall Booth Sales, Conference Sponsorships Continue

Sales of exhibit hall booths and conference sponsorships started earlier this fall and continue to move at a brisk pace. Still, there are many opportunities for organizations interested in showing off their latest products or supporting one of the event's many components.

There are five different [sponsorship packages](#), each of which come with their own benefits. View the [sponsorship prospectus here](#) for more detailed information about each sponsorship level.

Companies interested in purchasing booth space in the exhibit hall can learn more [here](#) or view the current hall floorplan [here](#). Again, the hall will feature a green zone to showcase businesses with environmentally friendly products and services.

Please contact ASLRRRA's Senior Vice President of Membership and Business Development [Kathy Keeney](#) about sponsorship opportunities and securing a space in the exhibit hall.

ASLRRRA Urges FRA to Withdraw Proposed Rule Concerning Train Crew Size Safety Requirements in Comments Submitted Today

Today, ASLRRRA [filed comments](#) in response to [Docket No. Fra-2021-0032: Train Crew Size Safety Requirements](#). The Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) proposes a minimum requirement of two crewmembers for most railroad operations and requires that the second crewmember be physically located on the train, typically in the locomotive cab.

In its comments, ASLRRRA argues that the short line industry will be immediately and dramatically harmed by this rulemaking and urges the FRA to withdraw the rulemaking or completely exempt short line railroads from any minimum crew size and location mandate.

ASLRRRA raises several issues with the NPRM including that the FRA lacks statutory authority to issue this NPRM under its general regulatory authority, as the agency has failed to show a safety nexus between railroad staffing and safety; the NPRM violates the Regulatory Flexibility Act because it grossly underestimates the impacted number of small railroads, omits the cost for small railroads to comply with the NPRM, and it miscalculates the impact on small railroads to comply with the special approval process; and short line railroads, a vital part of the national freight network, will be dramatically harmed by the NPRM by an order of magnitude far greater than the nine railroads FRA identified as being subject to this rule. Research conducted by the ASLRRRA indicates that 414 short line railroads operate with one crew member in the cab today.

Further, the NPRM focuses entirely on Class I railroads, and fails to raise any safety concerns through either data or studies involving short line railroad operations. By mandating the location of the second crewmember, the NPRM threatens to upend the operational efficiencies and flexibilities that facilitate the ability of short line railroads to provide their signature customized, flexible, and responsive service to their customers. The NPRM also fails to propose a compliance schedule for railroads to meet the new requirements. [Read ASLRRRA's comments here.](#)

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Regulatory Update

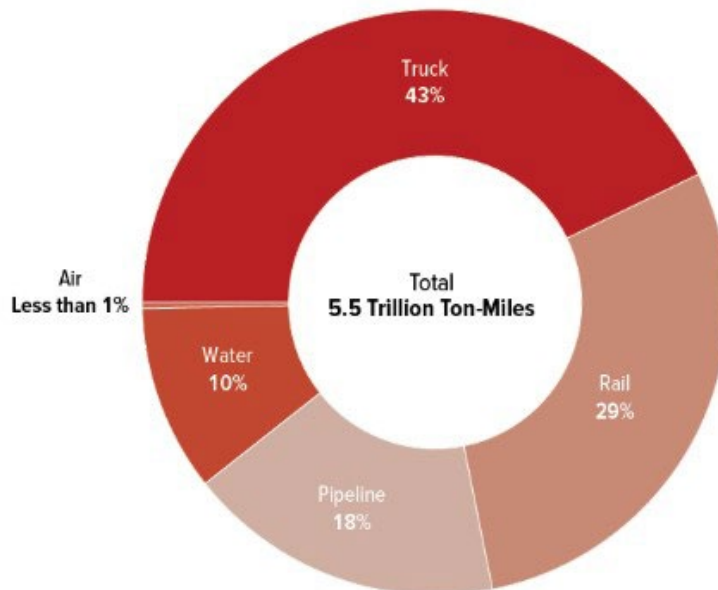
Budget Office Report Reveals Rail is Most Efficient Way to Move Freight

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) [released an overview](#) of carbon dioxide emissions in the transportation sector, revealing what little share of overall emissions come from freight rail.

According to the nonpartisan agency, rail moves 29 percent of total ton-miles of freight and accounts for only 0.05 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions per ton-mile of freight. In contrast, trucks move 43 percent of freight and emit 0.40 pounds of carbon dioxide per ton-mile, which is eight times that of rail.

The emissions from freight rail transportation are lowest of all five modes examined in the report, including pipelines at 0.13 pounds of carbon dioxide per ton-mile and water at 0.14 pounds per ton-mile. Air freight transportation was the highest at 2.57 pounds per ton-mile, but air transportation comprises less than one percent of total ton-miles of freight moved.

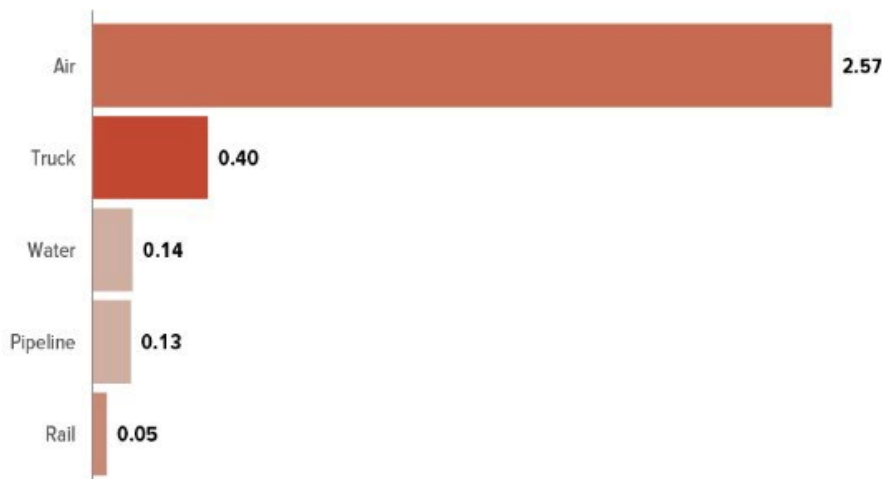
Shares of Ton-Miles of Freight, by Mode of Transportation, 2019



These charts from a Congressional Budget Office report show the percentage of total freight moved by rail in 2019 (left) and the pounds of carbon dioxide emissions released per ton-mile of freight moved by different modes (below). Data reveals that while rail accounts for 29 percent of freight moved, it emits the lowest amount of carbon dioxide per ton-mile of all transportation modes.

Average Carbon Dioxide Emissions per Ton-Mile of Freight, by Mode of Transportation, 2019

Pounds of Carbon Dioxide per Ton-Mile



ASLRRRA Files Comments with STB Concerning a Petition for Declaratory Order

ASLRRRA filed [comments](#) on Dec. 19 concerning STB Docket No. FD 36397, "Wisconsin Central, LTD. – Petition for Declaratory Order – Interchange with SOO Line Railroad Company." This proceeding comes from a prior STB determination, which was appealed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit, involving one rail carrier unilaterally wishing to change an interchange location.

The board invited interested parties to provide input regarding the potential impacts of different approaches to enable the board to make an informed decision on interchange rules. ASLRRRA provided comments stating that, in the experience of short lines, most instances involving one party wishing to alter an interchange point are resolved through informal negotiation, which should continue to be the norm.

STB Issues Rule Governing Rate Dispute Resolutions, AAR Disagrees

The Surface Transportation Board (STB) [adopted two final rules](#) establishing new rate reasonableness procedures providing two approaches for shippers and railroads to resolve smaller rate disputes.

Through these rules, the STB has established a voluntary arbitration program and a new procedure for rate challenges known as Final Offer Rate Review (FORR). According to the STB, if all seven Class I carriers commit to participating in the voluntary arbitration program for five years and make that commitment within 50 days of the date of the final rule's publication in the *Federal Register*, all the carriers will be exempt from the FORR procedure. When the FORR procedure was first introduced in a proposed rule in September 2019, five Class I carriers filed a petition to be exempted from the procedure.

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) [issued a statement](#) that was critical of the STB's rules. ASLRRRA staff will continue to monitor this rule for its impact to short lines.

Legislative Update

Florida Lawmaker Introduces Short Line Disaster Relief Bill

Representative Byron Donalds (R-Fla.) [introduced](#) the Short Line Railroad Relief Act, H.R. 9581, on Dec. 15, which would provide emergency disaster relief funding to Class II and III railroads through the Department of Transportation. Those who joined Donalds to co-sponsor the bill are Representatives Mike Bost (R-Ill.), Rodney Davis (R-Ill.), Randy Feenstra (R-Iowa), Michael Guest (R-Miss.), Steven Palazzo (R-Miss.) and Troy Nehls (R-Texas).

"This bill establishes a means for critical relief for American short line railroads in the event of catastrophic damage following a natural disaster," said Donalds in a [statement](#).

There are no federal programs currently in place that provide relief benefits to short line and regional railroads, although such programs exist for most other transportation modes, including highways and transit rail. The bill was inspired in part by the devastation caused by Hurricane Ian to ASLRRRA member Seminole Gulf Railway. The railroad experienced over \$25 million in damage, including destruction of multiple bridges and flooding of its Arcadia rail yard.

"When a natural disaster strikes, it is critical that transportation infrastructure get back up and running as soon as possible, allowing for relief efforts to flow in and materials to flow out of affected areas," said ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker in a [press release](#). "The Short Line Railroad Relief Act would allow the USDOT to provide speedy and significant grant funding to short line railroads following a disaster, so they can help rebuild the local economy instead of being forced to end operations, abandoning customers and the communities they serve."

Since Congress adjourns Dec. 30, it is unlikely [the bill](#) will become law before the end of the year. However, it is expected the bill will be re-introduced once the 118th Congress convenes on Jan. 3.

Federal Funding Bill Includes Robust CRISI Funding

Yesterday, congressional leaders released [text](#) of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, which would fund the federal government for the remainder of fiscal year (FY) 2023. Current funding is set to expire this Friday if lawmakers do not pass this bill or another continuing resolution.

The \$1.7 trillion package is considered an omnibus because it affects every area where Congress has discretion to raise and lower spending and revamp how programs are administered. While the bill is largely free of any significant tax provisions, there are several significant and unrelated legislative measures, including the Electoral Count Act.

ASLRRRA's congressional team is evaluating the measure for its potential effects on the short line freight rail industry. Some highlights already apparent for ASLRRRA's members include sustained funding levels for the CRISI grant program. The bill provides \$535 million overall for CRISI in addition to the \$1 billion guaranteed through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) for FY 23. This means the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will have roughly \$1.3 billion available for CRISI grants in FY 23.

The bill also provides \$2.5 million for the Short Line Safety Institute and does not include any troublesome language concerning increases in truck size and weight limits. View a copy of the Joint Explanatory Statement, or report, for the bill's transportation section [here](#).

WEBINARS AVAILABLE ON DEMAND

With nearly 200 recordings available, there's a webinar to meet the needs of everyone on your team. Visit aslrri.org/webinars to view a complete list of available recordings.



Announcements

Doug Golden Donates Additional \$12,000 to Short Line Education Fund for Training Scholarships

Retired former ASLRRA board member Douglas Golden and his wife Mary have made another \$12,000 donation to ASLRRA's Short Line Education Fund through their Douglas Golden-Mary Cullen Charitable Fund. This marks the third such donation from Golden, allowing more small-railroad employees to participate in industry-specific training events.

[Scholarships of up to \\$1,200](#) each are available to employees at railroads earning \$10 million or less in annual revenues. Funds can be used to pay for registration fees, travel and lodging costs for training covering topics such as track, bridge and signal inspection and maintenance; railroad safety and operations training; locomotive and freight car inspection and maintenance and more.

Special consideration is given to employees at ASLRRA members in the southern region. The Association hopes to award eight to ten scholarships to southern-region small-railroad employees in 2023.

The scholarship program was recently expanded to allow recipients to use funds for ASLRRA training seminars, including the upcoming Part 219 Drug and Alcohol Training Seminar scheduled for Jan. 31 to Feb. 1 in Phoenix, Arizona. Follow the link above to learn more about the scholarship program, or click [here](#) to apply. Applications are accepted and evaluated on a rolling basis.



Register Now for ASLRRA's 2023 Conference & Exhibition

April 2-4 | New Orleans

ASLRRA.org/Conference



ASLRRRA Webinars

Upcoming Webinars

[FMCSA Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse Requirements for CDL Drivers](#) – Jan. 10, 2023

Spark TS's Holly Rainwater and Rio Grande Pacific's Mitch Harris will join ASLRRRA's JR Gelnar to discuss the responsibilities for railroads with regards to the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) Clearinghouse for CDL drivers. This webinar is free for ASLRRRA members.

[Update on Part 240/242 Audits and FRA Findings](#) – Jan. 12, 2023

Join the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Kevin Lewis and ASLRRRA's JR Gelnar for an update on Part 240/242 audits and learn what FRA has discovered during their first year of focused audits on short lines. Lewis will provide information and insight into findings and discuss what FRA will be doing in future audits. This webinar is free for ASLRRRA members.

[2022 Economic Update and What to Look for in 2023](#) – Jan. 25, 2023

Association of American Railroads (AAR) economists Luisa Fernandez-Willey and Dan Keen will discuss what happened in 2022 with freight traffic and the economy and learn what economic indicators to watch for as we enter 2023. This webinar is free for ASLRRRA members.

On-Demand Webinars

Further Railroad Knowledge Any Time With On-Demand Webinars

ASLRRRA offers almost 200 webinar recordings in its [On-Demand Webinar Library](#), covering a wide range of topics from regulatory compliance to environmental programs to the grant-application process. Members can access these webinars at any time, making them perfect for squeezing in educational opportunities whenever and wherever possible.

Most of the recordings also have a copy of the accompanying PDF presentation available for download. Visit ASLRRRA's [webinar homepage](#) and log in to view all the on-demand offerings in the Association's webinar library.

Industry Events and Announcements

Click [here](#) to learn more about ASLRRRA's education offerings.

North Carolina, Pennsylvania Award Grants to ASLRRRA Members

Several states have grant programs to help fund short line freight railroad infrastructure projects, and North Carolina and Pennsylvania recently awarded grants to a number of ASLRRRA member short lines.

The [North Carolina Department of Transportation \(NCDOT\) awarded](#) approximately \$12 million to 13 projects in the state through its Rail Industrial Access Program, helping pay for improvements to 52 railroad bridges and 123 miles of track. Ten ASLRRRA member railroads will receive funding from NCDOT, which will be bolstered by the railroads' matching contributions.

- Aberdeen Carolina and Western Railway: \$3,563,324 for bridge improvements, siding construction, and track upgrades
- Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad: \$536,908 for track upgrades on the mainline corridor
- Alexander Railroad Co.: \$403,995 for track upgrades on the mainline corridor in Iredell County
- Alexander Railroad Co.: \$96,000 for track upgrades on the mainline corridor in Alexander County
- Atlantic and Western Railway: \$647,985 for bridge improvements and track upgrades
- Blue Ridge Southern Railroad: \$1,847,754 for bridge improvements and track upgrades on the Canton and Skyland branches
- Carolina Coastal Railway: \$1,154,500 for bridge improvements and track upgrades on the Belhaven, Plymouth, and Wilson branches
- Chesapeake and Albemarle Railroad: \$403,863 for bridge improvements and track upgrades along the mainline and Pasquotank and Vulcan Lead branches
- Great Smoky Mountains Railroad: \$1,011,978 for bridge improvements and track upgrades along the mainline corridor
- North Carolina and Virginia Railroad: \$415,572 for bridge improvements and track upgrades along the mainline, Northampton, Bertie, and Hertford branches
- Wilmington Terminal Railroad: \$574,914 for track upgrades along the mainline and in the Wilmington yard

In [Pennsylvania](#), 24 rail freight improvement projects will receive \$26 million through the state's Rail Transportation Assistance Program and the Rail Freight Assistance Program. Both railroads and companies with rail infrastructure were eligible for grants and 10 ASLRRRA member railroads will receive funding for their projects. They are:

- Allegheny Valley Railroad: \$1.6 million to construct new track and rehabilitate other tracks
- Pittsburgh and Ohio Central Railroad: \$700,000 to rehabilitate 4.5 miles of track
- R.J. Corman Railroad-Lehigh Line: \$690,000 to rehabilitate over two miles of track
- R.J. Corman Railroad: \$3 million to rehabilitate about 24 miles of track
- Western New York & Pennsylvania Railroad: \$1.4 million to rehabilitate about 23 miles of track
- Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad: \$2.6 million to rehabilitate approximately 20 miles of track
- West Erie Short Line: \$270,000 to rehabilitate approximately one mile of track
- Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad: \$1.1 million to rehabilitate three bridges and a culvert
- Kasgro Rail Corporation: \$172,000 to construct a section of track to connect adjacent tracks
- York Railway: \$1.3 million to rehabilitate tracks in the Lincoln Yard and build new connecting track

Alaska Railroad Prepares for Centennial Year with Special Trips, Commemorative Artwork

ASLRRRA member Alaska Railroad will celebrate its centennial year in 2023 with special travel packages, events and more.

A [limited edition centennial special](#) tourist package will run from late May to Early September, taking tourists on a 12-day journey to destinations along the railroad's historic mainline. There will also be a [special exhibition](#) at the Anchorage Museum focused on the railroad's centennial, examining three key eras of Alaska Railroad history.

The railroad [also commissioned](#) special centennial-focused artwork from local artists, one of whom hails from Nenana, Alaska, where President Warren Harding drove the golden spike on July 15, 1923 signaling the completion of the railroad. In January, the railroad will host two signing events with the artists and their artwork.

Click [here](#) for a calendar of industry events.

Views & News is published by American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association. Please contact [Amy Krouse](#), editor, with questions or comments.