



American Short Line and
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ASLRRRA NAMES KERN SCHUMACHER, CHAIRMAN AND FOUNDER OF A&K
RAILROAD MATERIALS, AS A SHORT LINE INDUSTRY CATALYST
Award Honors Seven Decades of Seeking Solutions for the Industry

St. Louis, MO – October 6, 2026 – Today, the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRRA) presented Ken Schumacher, Chairman and Founder of A&K Railroad Materials, Inc. with the Short Line Industry Catalyst Award at its Fall Super Regional Meeting in St. Louis, MO.

While there are many entrepreneurs who have built thriving railroad companies that form the short line industry, this award focuses a spotlight on those whose out-of-the-box thinking has changed the industry for the better, or have changed how short lines and their stakeholders do business. Honorees may not have set out to transform railroading, but by establishing a unique company, inventing new technological advancements or developing innovative products and services, they have created an enduring impact.

“From the humble and scrappy beginning of seeing an opportunity in used railroad ties as a young entrepreneur to building A&K into one of the most trusted and innovative names in the rail industry, Kern has spent more than seven decades demonstrating what vision, perseverance and integrity can accomplish. Having owned 13 short lines, he understands firsthand what it takes for these railroads to succeed, and he has consistently used that

experience to support the people and communities that depend on them. His leadership has always been understated, but his impact has been anything but,” said Chuck Baker, President, ASLRRRA. “Through his support of the short line industry, his commitment to ASLRRRA and its members, and his personal advocacy at the most senior levels of government for policies that strengthen short line railroads, Kern has helped shape the industry in lasting ways. He may not have set out to transform railroading, but that is undeniably part of the legacy he leaves behind.”

Kern’s connection to railroading began in an unconventional way. In 1958, Schumacher saw thousands of railroad ties set to be discarded when they were removed from the Oakland Bay Bridge in California. Though he was only a teenager, Schumacher recognized a business opportunity. Schumacher joined with local salvage expert Alfred Boyd to buy every tie, starting A&K Tie Company in 1958. The company continued buying used railroad ties, selling them primarily for landscaping purposes.

Schumacher’s personal commitment to sourcing items was well known. He walked hundreds of miles of track to inspect and recover usable assets, ultimately pioneering the practice of recycling rail materials on a national scale. For short lines, having these more affordable resources was often the key that allowed them to remain in business.

A&K Tie Company became A&K Railroad Materials, quickly outgrowing its modest California headquarters, relocating its HQ to Utah, and also adding locations in 13 states to serve the North American rail network. The company grew to over 300 employees in the 1980s as it expanded to recover and supply materials nationwide.

Today, A&K has grown with the industry offering much more than recycled ties and rail. The company’s product catalog includes new rail, continuous welded rail (CWR), manufactured in-house specialty track work and most every facet of track material. The company also offers a wide range of rail services including transloading, storage and track recovery.

As A&K continued to expand, Schumacher became more involved in the short line railroad industry. He acquired his first short line in 1990 and has owned 13 small railroads in the U.S. and Canada. He also supported others by financing their acquisition of railroad lines when no other funding was available. In addition, Schumacher has been a strong advocate for short line issues, drumming up support in Congress for key priorities like the 45G short line railroad maintenance tax credit.

What started as a way to repurpose old railroad ties became a life of dedication to short lines, contractors, industries, transits and customers they serve. Schumacher's impact goes far beyond individual railroads and track structures. His work has influenced the entire industry!

About ASLRRA - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) is a non-profit trade association representing the interests of the nation's 603 short line and regional railroads and railroad supply company members in legislative and regulatory matters. Short lines operate 50,000 miles of track in 49 states, or approximately one third 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.