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ASLRRA Selects 2026 Hall of Fame Class

WASHINGTON, December 9, 2025 – The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association has selected three inductees to the Short Line Railroad Industry Hall of Fame. Richard Jay Corman (posthumously), R. Lawrence McCaffrey, and Michael V. Smith have each left indelible marks on the short line industry.

"The Short Line Railroad Industry Hall of Fame honors the resilience and vision behind our industry's great American success story. This year's inductees, Rick Corman, Larry McCaffrey and Mike Smith are recognized for their business acumen, and their role in shaping an industry that has succeeded on ingenuity and persistence," said Chuck Baker, President of ASLRRA.

Created in 2020, the Short Line Railroad Industry Hall of Fame recognizes short line railroad visionaries who through their dedication, commitment, and achievement best exemplify the qualities of innovation, entrepreneurialism, perseverance, and service that have advanced the short line railroad industry.

2026 Inductees

Richard Jay "Rick" Corman – *A Railroader With Grit, Generosity and Vision*

Rick Corman was more than a railroad entrepreneur – he was a force of nature whose life story continues to inspire generations of railroad professionals. From the very beginning, Corman embodied the spirit of possibility, believing that with hard work, ingenuity and a little luck, anything was achievable.

Corman's professional journey began in 1973, just after graduating high school. With a rented backhoe, a dump truck, and fierce determination, he founded R. J. Corman Construction Company. Over time, his signature red trucks and machinery grew to become a symbol of quality, ingenuity, and reliability, recognized across the country.

The passage of the Staggers Rail Act in 1980 was a turning point. Corman saw opportunity where others saw risk and he acquired his first short line, the Bardstown Line, in 1987. This move marked the birth of R. J. Corman Railroad Company, which currently owns 19 short line operations stretching over 1,400 miles. Corman's business model became a prime example of the short line railroad industry's vital role in America's infrastructure through its commitment to high-touch service, innovative rail solutions and partnership philosophy.

Despite battling cancer for over a decade, Corman remained actively involved in his company, leading major projects and inspiring employees with his resilience and warmth. Corman's relationships with policymakers, executives, and industry organizations helped shape the future of short line railroading.

Corman passed away in 2013 at age 58, but his spirit lives on in every mile of track, every red locomotive or red truck and the nearly 1,400 employees across 70 locations who carry forward his legacy.

R. Lawrence (Larry) McCaffrey – *the Author of Short Line Growth in the U.S. and Abroad*

Larry McCaffrey quite literally wrote the book on how to create and manage a short line railroad, publishing *Starting a Short Line* in 1983 with his law partner, Peter Gilbertson. This was not the first of firsts for McCaffrey. In the early years of his law practice, focused on seeking restructuring financing through USDOT programs, a breakthrough came with an Interstate Commerce Commission decision for one of McCaffrey's clients. The decision created a policy of permitting acquisition of a rail line by a party that was not a railroad under expedited procedures and without labor protection mandated by other acquisitions.

This new policy opened the door to sales of rail lines by Class 1 carriers to non-carriers, which thereby became new railroads. From there the short line industry blossomed with new railroads, most small but some quite large, resulting in among other things the transformation of the American Short Line Railroad Association (ASLRA) into ASLRRA.

For much of his career, McCaffrey focused on railroad privatizations. McCaffrey was a director and shareholder of ten separate railroads controlled by different ownership groups and worked in 16 different countries. His longest stint was in Bolivia where he served as board chair and investor in Ferrocarril Oriental for ten years.

While every country and state presented unique challenges due to local economy, labor force, and financial conditions, always core to success was delivering operating efficiency and high-quality service learned from the U.S. railroad restructuring of the 1980s.

Michael V. Smith – *A Transformational Marketer for the Short Line Industry*

Mike Smith, President of Finger Lakes Railway, is an expert at sharing our industry's value story. While a student at Amherst College, Smith spent his summers working as a trackman for the Delaware & Hudson Railway and the New York Central Railroad. Though Smith majored in political science, a job as an operating management trainee with Penn Central Transportation Company after graduation set him on a career path that has lasted over half a century.

After Penn Central, Smith worked as a marketing manager at the Canadian Pacific Railway in Montreal and later the Boston & Maine Railroad. At the Boston & Maine, as the vice president of marketing and sales, he was part of the team that brought the railroad out of bankruptcy. In 1990 Smith and others found an opportunity to take over a nearly defunct 118-mile railroad in the Finger Lakes region of New York.

With the dogged determination typical of those in the small-railroad industry, Smith and the FGLK team secured Finger Lakes' transformation into a vital property. Smith shared that part of what helps Finger Lakes continue to flourish is FGLK management's focus on customer service and the accumulated and applied marketing acumen the team has developed since start-up.

Though Smith was intent on guiding Finger Lakes' growth, he recognized the importance and value of working with organizations like ASLRRA on policies that would be beneficial to the entire short line industry. Smith was a strong proponent of the original 45G short line infrastructure tax credit and advocated persistently for passage of the first tax credit bill.

For more information on each Short Line Railroad Hall of Fame 2026 inductee, click here.

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 (Class II and III railroads) and railroad supply company members in legislative and regulatory matters. Short lines operate 47,500 miles of track in 49 states, or approximately 29% 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, particularly in rural and small-town America. Categorized as small businesses, short lines transport all commodities, with the agriculture, energy and manufacturing sectors being particularly reliant on short line service. www.aslrra.org