



American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association

50 F Street, NW
Suite 500
Washington, DC 20001
aslrra@aslrra.org
www.aslrra.org

Contact:

Amy Krouse
akrouse@aslrra.org
(Cell) 312-371-6947
(Direct) 202-585-3438

ASLRRA Inducts 2022 Class into the Short Line Hall of Fame

ST. LOUIS, May 2, 2022 - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRA) has selected George Betke, Chairman, Farmrail Systems and Walter Rich, former Chairman, Delaware Otsego Corp (posthumously) as the 2022 Short Line Hall of Fame inductees. The inductees were honored at ASLRRA's Conference & Exhibition this morning in St. Louis, Missouri.

The Short Line Hall of Fame recognizes exceptional leaders and entrepreneurs who paved the way for the growth and impact of the modern short line industry.

"It's often recognized that today's short line leaders stand on the shoulders of giants," said Chuck Baker, President of ASLRRA. "We are fortunate to enjoy the mentorship and leadership of the generations who have gone before us. George Betke and Walter Rich have not only led successful short line enterprises, but they have also challenged the industry to do ever-better, and contributed their talents to the growth and development of our Association and its members. They are each industry giants and uniquely deserving of being the second class inducted into the Short Line Hall of Fame."

George Betke - Colleagues, employees, customers and friends use words like "legend", "inspiration", "visionary", and "dedicated" when talking about George Betke, founder and

chairman of Oklahoma-based Farmrail System. Under his stewardship, Farmrail evolved from a 35-mile joint venture into a 347-mile network covering 12 counties.

An economics graduate of Amherst College, Betke started his working career as a trust investment officer of a Dallas bank, leaving to earn an M.B.A. at the University of North Carolina. He performed transportation securities research for a New York institutional brokerage, co-founded a private investment boutique, and later formed his own railroad-oriented consulting firm to assist others in business analysis and the structuring of sound transactions.

Farmrail became the first short line to establish a formal Employee Stock Ownership Plan as a foundation for teamwork, with Farmrail employees challenged to “think like an owner.” Betke also designed the public-private financial structure for Finger Lakes Railway, a joint venture with five county industrial development authorities in upstate New York that was co-founded by Farmrail.

He has made invaluable contributions to ASLRRA and the overall industry as a member of the Association’s Executive and Legislative Policy Committees and is widely viewed as a thought leader. In 2016 he received the Thomas L. Schlosser Distinguished Service Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Association that recognizes above-and-beyond leaders for their contributions to the Association.

Walter Rich - The short-line industry lost a tireless and dedicated leader in 2007 when Walter Rich, chairman, of the Delaware Otsego Corp., passed away.

He had served as chairman, president and chief executive officer of the Delaware Otsego since 1971 and held leadership roles at its New York Susquehanna & Western Railway and Central New York Railroad units.

Rich was a member and past chairman of the Eastern General Managers Association, where he worked to improve rail safety, organizing numerous industry seminars on the subject. In 1988, he was recognized by his industry colleagues, receiving the Right-Hand Man Award.

In 1994, he was elected vice president of the Eastern Region board of directors for ASLRRA and later served for five years as chairman of the Association. He was an influential and

dynamic spokesman for the short line industry during the 1980's and 1990's, when the number and reach of short lines was growing rapidly.

Rich, who earned undergraduate and law degrees from Syracuse University, was active in several organizations in Cooperstown, New York and the state of New York. An avid railfan and memorabilia collector, he was a member of the National Railway Historical Society and a trustee for the John W. Barriger III National Railroad Library.

About ASLRRRA - The American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRRA) 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 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. www.aslrra.org