



April 6, 2022



Vermont Railway and South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad Named Annual Railroad Award Winners

ASLRRRA member Vermont Railway has won *Railway Age* magazine's Short Line of the Year Award, and fellow member South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad is the magazine's Regional Railroad

of the Year.

Vermont Railway (VTR), part of the Vermont Rail System, is a Class III railroad serving its home state as well as parts of New York and New Hampshire. The company was honored in part for the successful completion of its main line tunnel reconstruction project, which replaced two structurally deficient bridges with a tunnel. VTR worked closely with its partners, including the Vermont Agency of Transportation, to complete the project without any service disruptions for VTR customers despite a shutdown of VTR's main line for 10 weeks during construction.

The new tunnel allows clearance for double-stack rail cars and will make it possible for Amtrak to expand passenger service to Burlington, Vermont. The project also benefitted downtown Middlebury, which now has additional street parking, wider sidewalks and larger green spaces in place of the old rail bridges.

South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad (SKOL) is a Watco subsidiary serving 81 customers over 433 miles in its two namesake states. *Railway Age* recognized SKOL for a project improving rail infrastructure to accommodate industry-standard 286,000-pound carloads. Rail upgrades will also allow increased train speeds that will cut transit times in half.

SKOL was also honored for its dedication to customer service and its work with Class I railroad BNSF to meet the needs of longtime customers. SKOL further demonstrated this dedication after a fire on a wooden trestle bridge affected traffic in Kansas. An arrangement with BNSF and constant communication enabled SKOL to continue service while keeping customers informed of circumstances as they changed.

The [April edition of *Railway Age*](#) features longer profiles of VTR and SKOL. Both railroads will be recognized at ASLRRRA's 2022 Annual Conference and Exhibition, May 1-3 in St. Louis, Missouri. Use [this link](#) to learn more about the conference and register today.



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Don't Delay – Hyatt Regency Extends Conference Rates for ASLRRR's Room Block for Limited Time

Through this week, the Hyatt Regency St. Louis at The Arch has extended its ASLRRR [hotel block registration rates](#). Conference attendees can still reserve a room at the Marriott Grand, although conference rates at this property have expired, and the hotel is sold out for several nights during the conference.

[Register](#) now for the conference, held May 1 to 3 at the [America's Center Convention Complex](#). Remember, individuals **must** be logged in to their ASLRRR accounts prior to attempting to register. Those without an ASLRRR user account should email aslrra@aslrra.org to create one, while organizations needing to register five or more employees at one time should send a list with employee names, titles and email addresses to ASLRRR's Danialle Richards at drichards@aslrra.org.

Take in a Cardinals Game at ASLRRR's Annual Conference

[ASLRRR Annual Conference](#) participants can purchase specially priced tickets to the April 30 and May 1 games between the St. Louis Cardinals and Arizona Diamondbacks at Busch Stadium.

These [ASLRRR Days at the ballpark](#) are another exciting activity for those traveling to St. Louis, Missouri to attend the Association's May 1-3 conference, joining the [golf tournament](#) and "[Round the World Loop](#)" [train excursion](#) as ways attendees can enjoy the city while interacting with fellow industry colleagues and guests.

Social activities complement the [33 education sessions in 11 different tracks](#) designed to allow conference attendees to explore pressing railroad industry topics. Professionals can receive updates from financial, regulatory and legal experts, learn about grant programs, technology and marketing tools, and much more.

ASLRRR will also celebrate its annual award winners and induct a new class of Short Line Hall of Fame honorees. These festivities join the various receptions and networking opportunities enabling attendees to [connect](#) with industry peers, supplier representatives and others.

There are a very limited number of [booths](#) and [sponsorship opportunities](#) still available. Contact ASLRRR's Kathy Keeney at kkeeney@aslrra.org for information about both expo booths and sponsorships.



DOT Lists Anticipated Release Dates for Program Funding Notices

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has [published a list](#) of anticipated release dates for notices of funding opportunity (NOFOs) for Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) programs.

Of note for ASLRRA members are the [Railroad Crossing Elimination Program](#), expected in June, and the [Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements \(CRISI\)](#) Grant Program in August.

The DOT notes that dates on the list are subject to change and the list will occasionally be updated with new programs and dates.

Supplemental Comments Address Questions Brought Up in STB Hearing

ASLRRA filed [supplemental comments](#) with the Surface Transportation Board (STB) to address a line of questioning brought up by STB Chair Martin Oberman and board member Patrick Fuchs during a hearing discussing the STB's proposed reciprocal switching rule.

Oberman and Fuchs asked what percentage of freight rail industry traffic would be excluded from the proposed reciprocal switching rule if, as ASLRRA prefers, short lines continue to be exempt from the switching regulation.

ASLRRA estimates about 10 percent of traffic volume would not be subject to a reciprocal switching mandate if short line traffic were excluded from the rule, which means excluding small railroads from reciprocal switching rules would affect only a small percentage of total railroad freight traffic.

ASLRRA [previously submitted comments](#) regarding reciprocal switching, and Association President Chuck Baker, along with Chair Doc Claussen, testified during a [related STB hearing](#) on March 16. The Association's STB Working Group will continue to monitor this potential rule and advocate firmly for short line interests in this matter.



Senate Passes Ocean Shipping Legislation

Last week, the Senate passed by voice vote the Ocean Shipping Reform Act (S. 3580). The bill was backed by a bipartisan group of senators and aims to increase penalties on carriers for certain actions, increase reporting and spur more investigatory and enforcement actions.

The legislative effort comes in the wake of concerns about recent practices by ocean carriers and their impact on supply chain disruption and inflation. The bill will now be part of negotiations between senators and members of the House of Representatives, which has passed its own shipping

reform bill. Other matters – like competition with China and legislation reauthorizing Coast Guard programs, are also in the mix in the negotiations. Several provisions that could foster information sharing in freight (and which were initially in legislation offered by Sen. Roger Wicker (R-MS) in a bill called the FREIGHT Act) were added to the Senate's ocean shipping bill.

Department of Transportation Releases Five-Year Strategic Plan

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has released its [Strategic Plan](#) for FY 2022-2026. ASLRRRA [provided comments](#) during the drafting phase of the plan last December and looks forward to participating in the delivery of "transformative investments that will modernize our infrastructure to deliver safer, cleaner, and more equitable transportation systems" particularly those focused on supply chain resiliency at our ports, inland waterways, and where we share infrastructure with passenger rail.

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ASLRRRA Announcements

Supplier Board Representative Nomination Deadline: 5 P.M. TODAY

The nomination period for individuals wishing to run for election to the Association's board of directors representing Associate Business Members (suppliers) closes today. There are two board seats representing Associate Members that are filled via election from the supplier membership and there is one board vacancy that we will need to fill at the Annual Convention in St. Louis.

Members wishing to suggest themselves or nominate a candidate should contact Nominating Committee Co-Chairs Steve Friedland on sfriedland@sdsrocs.com or (973) 769-6505 or Beth Garguilo on Beth.Garguilo@lincolnins.com or (315) 768-6110. Candidates need to supply a short biography, photo and a few sentences about why they would like to serve on the ASLRRRA Board of Directors. They are also welcome to provide a two-minute video outlining their qualifications.

Association Training Videos Enable Members to Meet FRA Requirements

ASLRRRA is dedicated to railroad safety and compliance, striving to assist members with industry best practices and compliance throughout their operations by offering essential resources, including [training videos](#) that are available as a direct download from the association website.

The [Reasonable Suspicion Drug & Alcohol Signs and Symptoms Video](#) provides detailed direction on drug and alcohol testing guidelines. This video teaches railroad workers how to recognize possible impairment, what substances to test for, how to conduct a proper test, and steps to take in case of a positive test, among many other components. Part 219.11(g) requires signs and symptoms training for supervisors of regulated employees. Training with this video will ensure compliance. Visit aslrta.org/safety to access the full complement of safety and compliance tools, resources and information available from ASLRRA.

LAST CHANCE for Veterans Engagement Award Nominations

Nominations for ASLRRA's Veterans Engagement Award are still being accepted through Friday, April 8 at 5 p.m. EDT. The Veterans Engagement Award honors industry employers who demonstrate positive policies toward U.S. veterans and who implement unique programs and practices to hire, recognize, support, and engage with veterans in the workplace and the broader community.

Award winners will be recognized at ASLRRA's [Annual Conference and Exhibition](#) in St. Louis. Review award criteria [here](#), and access the application form [here](#). Please send any questions to ASLRRA's [Sabrina Waiss](#).

ASLRRA Out and About

Baker's Latest Magazine Column Highlights Virtual and In-Person Railroad Events

ASLRRA President Chuck Baker discussed the highlights of this year's virtual Railroad Day on Capitol Hill meetings and previewed the ASLRRA 2022 Annual Conference and Exhibition in his column in the [April edition of Railway Age](#) magazine.

Baker's column, featured on page 50, notes the success of the two-day Railroad Day event, which was held via Zoom for the second year in a row due to COVID-19-related restrictions in place for the Capitol building. Approximately 360 participants representing every segment of the freight rail industry joined over 220 congressional meetings to discuss topics like the recently passed infrastructure bill and preserving balanced economic regulation.

The second part of Baker's column focused on ASLRRA's upcoming conference, in particular the education sessions that will discuss the historic level of funding made available to short line railroads through the infrastructure bill.

Association's Radford Speaks at Online Meeting for Pacific Northwest Group

ASLRRA Assistant Vice President of Congressional Affairs Zach Radford spoke at a virtual meeting of the Pacific Northwest Waterways Association, addressing topics related to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and funding programs.

Radford talked with Northwest port stakeholders about the importance of the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements grant program for short lines and how short lines can partner with localities and ports to be considered eligible for other programs. Meeting participants included representatives from BNSF, Union Pacific and the Association of American Railroads (AAR).

2022 ASLRRR TRAINING SEMINARS click to learn more

May 17-18 FRA Engineer/Conductor (240/242) and Railroad Operating Rules (217) Training

June 7-8 FRA Drug & Alcohol (219) Training

Coming soon ASLRRR Leadership Development Training, Regulatory Module

July 26-28 General Code of Operating Rules (GCOR) Training

August 9-10 Advanced Designated Supervisor of Locomotive Engineers (DSLE) Training

Coming soon FRA Roadway Worker/Bridge Worker Safety Training



ASLRRR Webinars – Live or On-Demand

In-House Subject-Matter Experts Focus on FRA Topics in Webinars

ASLRRR's expert staff members have offered several webinars focused on regulatory topics. Recordings of these webinars are available in ASLRRR's [On-Demand Webinar Library](#). Look for the following titles:

- Emergency Docket Waivers
- FRA Penalties and Violations
- FRA Regulatory and Program Requirements for Short Lines, Parts 1 and 2

Copies of PDF presentation materials for these recordings are also available for download. These webinars are just a few of the over 150 recordings available to ASLRRR members. Non-members can access on-demand webinars by purchasing a subscription. View our [webinar page](#) and click on the On-Demand Webinar button to log in and access recordings.

Upcoming Webinars

[Part 243 Railroad Obligations with Contractors](#) – June 1, 2022

Join FRA Staff Director Rob Castiglione to understand what your obligations are as a railroad when engaging with contractors under Part 243, including Roadway Worker Protection (RWP). Attendees will have an opportunity to participate in Q&A at the end of the presentation. Presenters include Castiglione and ASLRRR's Jo Strang and JR Gelnar.

This webinar is free for both ASLRRR members and non-members.

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

Industry Events and Announcements

June 13-16 – AAR to Hold Damage Prevention and Freight Claim Conference in Kentucky

The Association of American Railroads (AAR) will hold its [129th Annual Damage Prevention and Freight Claim Conference](#) June 13-16 in Louisville, Kentucky.

The conference will feature industry presentations, railroad keynote speakers and open committee meetings. There will also be a vendor trade show and reception. Follow the link above for more information or to register.

University of Tennessee Adds Two More Railroad Inspection Courses in 2022

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville [has added](#) two more of its popular Railroad Track Inspection and Safety Standards courses, one [Sept. 19-23](#) and another [Nov. 7-11](#).

The September course will take place in Galveston, Texas, while the November course will be held in Chattanooga, Tennessee. These are in addition to a [June 20-24](#) track inspection course, also in Chattanooga.

This course has been reviewed and approved to meet new federal training rule requirements. The course gives an overview of the principles of track inspection, focusing on 49 CFR Part 213, track safety standards, but applies to any railroad's internal track standards.

Those who attend the track inspection course could be eligible for an ASLRRA scholarship, which can be used by employees of small railroads to pay for course registration fees and travel and lodging costs. Follow this link to access a [scholarship application](#) form, or contact ASLRRA's [Julie Duriga](#) with any scholarship questions.

The university is also offering other railroad-related courses, including [basic railroad track maintenance](#) May 16-17, [railroad track design](#) May 18-20 and [railroad bridge inspection](#) June 27-29.

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.