



June 22, 2022



## ASLRRRA Board Chair Stefan Loeb Talks Railroading and Why He Values the Association

Continuing introductions to the new leaders of ASLRRRA's Board of Directors, the Association's Amy Krouse reached out to new Chair Stefan Loeb, Watco's executive vice president and chief commercial officer. He talks about his experiences at ASLRRRA events, how he'd like to see the short line industry move forward and his ability to handle stress.



Loeb serves as Executive Vice President & Chief Commercial Officer for Watco Companies, LLC. His responsibilities include leading all commercial activities such as marketing and sales, strategic growth, business development, and acquisitions for the Watco family of companies.

Before joining Watco in 2010, Loeb spent nine years at Bank of America and its predecessor LaSalle Bank, mostly in the Surface Transportation Division providing capital and banking services to short line railroads and rail supply companies.

Outside of his role at Watco and his chairmanship of ASLRRRA, Loeb serves as immediate past president of the Midwest Association of

Rail Shippers, founding and executive committee member of the Indiana University Kelley School of Business Transportation Board, and president of the John W. Barriger III National Railroad Library. Loeb holds a B.S. in business, finance from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University – Bloomington and resides in Downers Grove, Illinois.

*AK: What made you get involved/has kept you involved with ASLRRRA?*

SL: Ever since my first ASLRRRA conference in 2004, the association and its events have brought incredible value and opportunity to me personally and to Watco. The number of people you interact with, and the ideas shared, combined with the important content that is presented at events keeps me coming back. One of the main reasons I have been excited to provide more of my time to ASLRRRA is because of these experiences, and the desire to ensure that we continue to be the go-to place for people in our industry to connect, learn, network, and most importantly, build relationships.

*AK: What got you into railroading?*

SL: Railroading has been in my blood for a very long time – almost from birth! Most people know that I have an interest in railroading that far exceeds the time I've spent actually working in the industry. My interest in railroading drove me through my college and early professional years and allowed me to obtain a spot at LaSalle Bank's Chicago-based Surface Transportation Group, a bank group dedicated to serving short line and regional railroads. There, I was able to provide many ASLRRRA members banking and capital needs.



*Loeb is a model train enthusiast, posing here with his current setup.*

Being so young, I often relied on my interest in railroading to gain trust with the company leaders to prove that I knew what I was talking about despite how inexperienced I was. The toughest, by far, was Larry Parsons at the Wheeling & Lake Erie. But one day I was able to slip in a conversation about the D&RGW, a railroad he ran many years before the Wheeling, and that finally got him comfortable! Working at the bank was really a blessing as it allowed me to learn from and work alongside industry giants like Peter Gilbertson and Bruce Lieberman at Anacostia, Dave Parkinson and Tom Schlosser at ParkSierra,

and many many others. This job also allowed me to meet Rick Webb at Watco, which led me eventually to my current position.

*AK: What is the biggest value for joining/participating in ASLRRA?*

SL: To me, it has always been about the relationships. I remember going to my first conference and knowing no one, standing along the walls of the exhibit hall. But soon, several people popped by to say hello and introduce themselves. That is how I met Jim Bowers, an absolute ASLRRA legend, and many other people that I still work and network with. Now, it is hard for me to walk the exhibit hall because I am so often stopped or stop someone else to catch up. ASLRRA provided me a network of people and friends that no other organization can provide. It has helped me personally and Watco as well in so many valuable ways.

*AK: How have you seen the industry change since you became involved in it?*

SL: Fundamentally, the overall mission of the industry is the same: entrepreneurially serve customers by making rail easy and valuable and grow with those customers over the long term. How we do that and the challenges that arise are the things that constantly change. Being part of an organization like ASLRRA allows us, as members, to work together on industry issues with regulatory bodies and Congress so that our teams can focus on delivering the mission. It's a winning combination that keeps the short line industry focused and moving forward.

*AK: As you take up the leadership mantle, what will be your personal mission/goals/ideas that you would like to see the Association and industry move toward?*

SL: The members at ASLRRA are very successful at growing rail and continuing to show how valuable short lines are - not just to the rail industry but to the world's supply chain. I want to ensure everything we do allows our members to continue this amazing performance. There are hurdles out there, those that we know and those that have not shown themselves yet, but the ASLRRA has the skill to tackle the challenges.

While short lines are as old as the rail industry, the short line industry as we know it is really just a few decades old. Our success is tied to so many other partners as our moves constitute a fraction of a customer's overall supply chain. Focusing on how we can be the most efficient mode of transportation, working with all of our various partners, and ensuring that outside forces do not negatively impact us will be my mission. There is a great team at ASLRRA and my role will be to

simply support that team, ensuring that they have the resources to accomplish what I know they can – to help our industry remain strong and growing.

AK: *What's your super power?*

SL: I wish I could say "the ability to fly" but since I can't, I would say the ability to handle an inordinate amount of work and stress and still enjoy life. It's one of the things I am most proud of. Life isn't always fair and it's not always clear sailing. Handling all the distractions and challenges while doing what you enjoy and what makes you happy is a balance I have always focused on maintaining. If I ever do figure out how to fly, I will be sure to change my answer!

The advertisement features a dark blue background on the left with white and green text. On the right, there is a photograph of a modern train in a station with a glowing blue grid overlay. A green button with white text is positioned over the bottom of the image.

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### FAMES Committee Releases Report on RWIC and Lone Worker Fatalities

The Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-way Employees and Signalmen (FAMES) Committee recently updated and released a [new report](#) concerning roadway workers in charge (RWIC) and lone workers.

The report expresses continued concern with the number of RWICs and lone workers fatally injured. These two groups represent 26 percent of the 89 fatalities analyzed over a 25-year period, and

statistics indicate RWICs and lone workers are at a higher risk of fatality than any other roadway worker designation.

In response to these concerns, the FAMES Committee makes several recommendations in its report, such as limitations to the use of Individual Train Detection as a form of on-track safety and issues to address when conducting on-track safety briefings.

Individuals with questions about the FAMES report or related issues should contact ASLRRA's Vice President of Safety and Compliance [JR Gelnar](#), who is also the Association's FAMES committee liaison.

### FRA Final Rule Requires Fatigue Risk Management Programs from Certain Railroads

On June 13, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) [published a final rule](#) requiring certain railroads to develop and implement a Fatigue Risk Management Program (FRMP) as part of a larger railroad safety risk reduction program.

The rule affects Class I railroads, rail carriers with inadequate safety performance (ISP) and carriers providing intercity passenger or commuter rail transportation. For these railroads, an FRMP is a "comprehensive, system-oriented approach to safety in which a railroad determines its fatigue risk by

identifying and analyzing applicable hazards and takes action to mitigate, if not eliminate, that fatigue risk."

ASLRRA and the Association of American Railroads (AAR) [submitted comments](#) on the rule earlier this year when it was still in the proposal stage. Both associations supported the FRA's rule, saying it was consistent with rule text developed by rail industry stakeholders in the FRA's Railroad Safety Advisory Committee. However, the associations did comment on four issues, including timelines for FRMP development and the FRA's proposal to include railroad contractors in railroads' fatigue management plans.



### House Appropriations Subcommittee to Consider Spending Bill

The House is expected to release a draft of its appropriations transportation spending bill for fiscal year 2023 (FY23) soon, after which the Transportation, Housing, Urban Development and Related Agencies (T-HUD) Subcommittee will mark up the bill before sending it to the full Appropriations Committee for additional consideration.

Prior to the draft's release, ASLRRA's Government Affairs team [sent a letter](#) to subcommittee leaders to discuss the short line freight rail industry's priorities. These priorities include robust funding for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) program grants, full funding for other key infrastructure discretionary programs, support for the Short Line Safety Institute and Operation Lifesaver, and continued exclusion of language allowing longer, heavier trucks on the road.

### ASLRRA Staff Meets with Congressional Offices to Talk Short Lines

ASLRRA's Government Affairs team is continuing outreach efforts this summer, connecting with legislative staff members to introduce them to the short line freight rail industry.

This week, Association staff will meet with the offices of Representatives Brian Fitzpatrick (R-Pa.), Seth Moulton (D-Mass.), Troy Nehls (R-Texas), and Michael Guest (R-Miss.). All four representatives are members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

### Associations Sign Letter Concerning Buy America Temporary Waiver

ASLRRA joined a coalition of organizations, including the Association of American Railroads (AAR), in [submitting a letter](#) to Mitch Landrieu, senior advisor to President Biden, concerning the administration's delay of the Buy America, Build America Act (BABAA).

The letter supports the decision to [impose a 180-day waiver](#) on the bill's requirements and urges the U.S. Department of Transportation to use the interim time to thoroughly evaluate domestic manufacturing capabilities, allow enough time for the public to comment on draft rules, and more. The letter also suggests a further extension of the waiver to ensure projects are not delayed unnecessarily.

## ASLRRA's Member Discount Program Includes Grant Writing Services!

Visit [aslrra.org](http://aslrra.org) to learn more!



## ASLRRA New Members

Know a company that would benefit from joining and participating in ASLRRA? Please contact ASLRRA's Senior Vice President of Membership and Business Development [Kathy Keeney](mailto:kathy.keeney@aslrra.org) via email or on (202) 585-3439.

## ASLRRA Welcomes New Member Site Specific Solutions



**SITE-SPECIFIC  
SOLUTIONS**  
solutions for survival

[Site Specific Solutions, Inc.](http://www.sitespecificsolutions.com), based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, provides innovative products and solutions for the rail industry, including Lightning Protection, EMI Mitigation, Grounding, Power Supply Design & Consulting Services. President [Ron Capan](mailto:ron.capan@ssl.com) is our primary contact and can be reached on (412) 512-7772. Many thanks to John Aliberti of Trainyard Tech LLC for recommending that they join our Association.

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## ASLRRA Announcements

### Mark Your Calendars for ASLRRA's Regional Meetings and Other Events

ASLRRA's [regional meetings](#) will take place in the fall, with the General Counsel Symposium and Finance and Administration Seminar to be held in conjunction with the Central and Pacific Region Meeting.

The Eastern and Southern Region Meeting will take place Sept. 26 to 28 in Atlanta, Georgia, while the Central and Pacific Region Meeting will take place Oct. 25 to 27 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The

symposium and seminar will also be held Oct. 25 to 27. Registration for regional meetings will open soon.

### **Get Help with Grant Applications from ASLRRRA's Preferred Providers**

ASLRRRA has tapped industry experts to assist member railroads in the preparation and submission of grant applications for programs currently available from the Department of Transportation (DOT), and other sources.

ASLRRRA's preferred providers for grant writing services include Bergmann, HDR, Inc. and Global Train Services (GTS), and all three companies offer discounted rates, industry expertise, and exceptional service to ASLRRRA members. Visit [www.aslrra.org/discounts](http://www.aslrra.org/discounts) and select Grant Writing Services to learn more about these exceptional preferred providers.

### **ASLRRRA Members to Discuss Short Line Issues at Joint Committee Meeting**

ASLRRRA's [Joint Committee Meeting](#) offers ASLRRRA members on the Association's constituent committees a chance to gather and discuss important issues affecting the short line railroad industry.

This year's Joint Committee Meeting takes place in Boston, Massachusetts on Aug. 2 and 3. MassRobotics will host the first day of events in the company's Boston office. Click [here](#) to view meeting details, or [here](#) to register for the event.

### **Scholarships Aim to Make Vital Training Affordable for Small Railroads**

A generous donation from former ASLRRRA board member and retired Carolina Coastal Railway President Doug Golden's Douglas Golden-Mary Cullen Charitable Fund has allowed the Association to help fund training for small-railroad employees wanting to attend courses in track, bridge and signal inspection and maintenance and/or locomotive and freight car inspection and maintenance.

ASLRRRA's [scholarship program](#) awards \$1,200 scholarships to help eligible recipients offset training, travel and lodging costs. This year, ASLRRRA hopes to award more scholarships to eligible recipients who are employees of short line and regional railroads, defined as small railroads earning \$10 million or less in annual revenues.

The Association is in the process of developing, but does not currently offer, courses on scholarship-eligible topics. Some organizations that offer applicable railroad industry training include the [University of Tennessee Center for Transportation Research](#) and the [American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-Of-Way Association \(AREMA\)](#), among others.

Individuals can apply for scholarships by completing an [online application](#), and scholarships will be awarded to qualified candidates on a rolling basis until all funds are distributed. View profiles of some of ASLRRRA's previous scholarship recipients at the Association's Industry Scholarships website [here](#). Questions may be directed to ASLRRRA's operations manager [Julie Duriga](#).

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## **ASLRRRA Out and About**

## Oelsner Participates in Industry Information Security Meeting

This week, ASLRRA's Vice President of Data and Technology Fred Oelsner attended a meeting of the Association of American Railroads (AAR) Rail Information Security Committee at AAR's Washington, D.C. headquarters. Participants discussed current cybersecurity topics in the rail industry.



**2022 ASLRRA 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 ASLRRA 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



## ASLRRA Webinars – Live or On-Demand

### Learn to Maximize Data and Analytics with Recorded Webinars

CloudMoyo sponsored and presented several webinars focused on data and analytics. Members can find recordings of these webinars in ASLRRA's [On-Demand Webinar Library](#). Look for the following titles:

- Making the Digital Shift to Safety Culture, Using Analytics and Automation to Simplify Crew Manager Tasks
- Effective On-the-Job Training Strategies
- Ops Testing with Employee Performance Tracking for Compliance

These webinars are only a few of the over 170 recordings available on a wide variety of topics including finance, human resources, communications and technology. ASLRRA members can access the On-Demand Webinar for free while non-members can purchase a subscription. [Click here](#) to access the webinar library today.

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

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## Industry Events and Announcements

## SLSI Safety Tip Focuses on Managing Practical Drift

The Short Line Safety Institute (SLSI) has released a new safety tip, "Managing Practical Drift." Statistics from the Federal Railroad Administration show the railroad industry is safe and getting safer, yet each year colleagues are injured. Post-incident investigations have often led to the identification of human factors (i.e., human characteristics that influence behavior) as contributing to the cause of incidents. One behavior that may lead to unsafe conditions and potential incidents is "Practical Drift."

Practical Drift refers to the slow uncoupling of practice from procedure. To learn more about how and why Practical Drift may occur, and what your railroad safety team can do to combat it, access SLSI's new [Minute Video](#) and coordinating [Safety Tip](#). Use one or both in an upcoming safety briefing on your railroad.

SLSI's expert staff conducts [Safety Culture Assessments](#) to help railroads learn more about improving their safety practices. Shown to be the "[most robust safety culture assessment available in the railroad industry](#)," a Safety Culture Assessment:

- is conducted onsite by a team of Short Line Safety Institute professionals with more than 600 years of railroad safety experience;
- combines an online employee survey, onsite employee interviews, safety documents reviews and field observations;
- includes an in-depth review of performance with a railroad's senior management team;
- provides resources and tools to address areas of opportunity on the railroad.

Contact [SLSI](#) today for more information or to schedule an SCA on your railroad.

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.