



Headlines

ASLRRRA Calls on Congress to be Ready to Act on Friday, September 16

ASLRRRA President Chuck Baker [sent a letter](#) to House and Senate leaders calling on them to help avert a rail labor strike that could start as soon as 12:01 a.m. Sept. 16 if a voluntary agreement is not reached before then.

This Friday marks the end of the 30-day cooling off period that followed the release of recommendations from the Presidential Emergency Board (PEB) tasked with mediating contract discussions between rail unions and Class I railroads. Workers cannot initiate a strike before the end of the 30 days.

If no agreement is reached by the deadline employees can go on strike immediately or the negotiation period can be extended. Congress also has the power to intervene and prevent a work stoppage.

As Baker points out, a strike that shuts down the rail system would be "catastrophic for the U.S. economy." While he is hopeful that labor unions and the railroads can come to an agreement based on recommendations from the PEB, Baker urges Congress to be ready to step in and prevent a system shutdown if no agreement is reached.

So far, 10 of the 12 unions, representing approximately half of the workers involved, have tentatively agreed to accept the PEB's recommendations. The PEB's terms include a 24 percent compounded raise over five years, including an immediate 14.1 percent wage increase, and \$1,000 bonuses each of the five years.

Other groups also expressed concern over the potential strike. Like Baker, U.S. Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Suzanne Clark [sent a letter](#) to Congress highlighting the disastrous impact of a strike and asking lawmakers to impose the PEB's recommendations absent a voluntary agreement.

Government officials too have gotten involved with negotiations. Labor Secretary Marty Walsh convened a special mediation session hosted by the National Mediation Board on Sept. 7 that continued for several days. And on Sept. 12, Senator Richard Burr (R-N.C.) and Senator Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) introduced a [joint resolution](#) calling for PEB recommendations to be made binding if both parties cannot reach an agreement before Friday.

Already, Class I railroads have begun securing shipments and scaling back service in preparation for a strike, and Amtrak [has canceled](#) several of its long-distance routes from Chicago to the west coast and Texas that run on freight rail lines that would be impacted by the strike. Amtrak is not involved in the current dispute. Other passenger operations have also announced contingency plans as of September 16 if a strike is not avoided.

To allow the public to send messages to congressional representatives asking them to intervene to prevent a rail shutdown, rail advocacy organization GoRail created an [online form letter](#). Use the link to send a letter with prepared language or include personalized commentary.



Regulatory Update

FRA CRISI Webinar Scheduled for Tomorrow

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) will hold a [webinar](#) on Sept. 15 to help those applying for Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) grants. With over \$1.4 billion available to fund eligible projects, ASLRRA encourages its members to apply for this program.

Recordings of the FRA's previous webinars, including those offering information about other FRA grant programs, can be found on the [FRA Webinars webpage](#) under the "Grants & Loans" tab. The FRA also has a [webpage](#) that breaks down the four key phases in the grant application process.

To further help members with the CRISI application process, ASLRRA has a new webpage with information about the grant program and tips for how to build a strong application. [Click here](#) to learn more.

FAMES Committee Releases Revised Introduction

The Fatality Analysis of Maintenance-of-way Employees and Signalmen (FAMES) Committee released a [revised version](#) of its introduction document, a copy of which can be found on ASLRRA's [website](#).

The document offers an introduction to the committee and provides its mission statement, purpose and scope. ASLRRA Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar represents the Association and its members on the committee and attends FAMES meetings to discuss the risks, trends and factors that affect roadway worker safety.

FRA Report Discusses Results of OBRD System Research

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) recently [published a report](#) discussing research into the feasibility of an Onboard Broken Rail Detection (OBRD) system concept.

The Transportation Technology Center, Inc. (TTCI) conducted the research in collaboration with a rail industry stakeholder technical advisory group. According to the FRA's report summary, the research project used laboratory and field tests to try to validate a usable concept for an OBRD system. Identifying an onboard solution could help implement moving block train control and reduce the life cycle cost of broken rail and occupancy detection.

New Program Helps Contractors Comply with Part 243 Requirements

The ASLRRA Safety and Training Committee has created a Contractor Submission Outline and Periodic Oversight Program. The program will assist contractors with the periodic oversight requirements of Part 243.

Members can access this information by [logging in](#) to the Compliance Templates section on ASLRRA's [Safety & Compliance web page](#) and looking under Part 243 Templates (Contractor Submission Outline). Special thanks to Mitch Harris, Katie Inouye and Mike Ogborn for their work on this project. Please contact ASLRRA Vice President of Safety and Compliance [JR Gelnar](#) with any questions.

Legislative Update

Joint Meeting of House Subcommittees to Discuss Rail Service Challenges, STB Bill is Postponed

A hearing meant to discuss rail service and the agriculture industry scheduled for tomorrow has been postponed due to concerns over the potential rail strike that could start as early as Friday.

Members of the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials and the Subcommittee on Livestock and Foreign Agriculture were to hold a hearing titled "Rail Service Challenges and the Impact on Agriculture" on Sept. 15. The hearing was meant to focus on issues faced by shippers and the Surface Transportation Board (STB) reauthorization bill.

Association of American Railroads (AAR) President and CEO Ian Jefferies was scheduled to testify at the hearing alongside representatives from the National Grain and Feed Association, Nebraska Farm Bureau, Growth Energy and Loop Capital.

When the hearing does take place, ASLRRA will be monitoring the discussion for any issues relating to the short line freight rail industry. The Association is also keeping tabs on the STB bill, the markup of which is now uncertain due to focus on the potential strike.

Save Money with ASLRRA's Member Discount Program Partners

Visit aslrra.org/discounts to learn more.



Announcements

There is Still Time to Register for ASLRRA's Eastern and Southern Region Meeting, and Join Colleagues for Golf

ASLRRA's [Eastern and Southern Region Meeting](#) offers a wide variety of educational sessions and networking opportunities for those in the short line industry eager to keep up with the most pressing issues facing railroads.

Discussions will cover CRISI grants, Class I updates, regulatory issues, short line business opportunities through transit and transload and more. Space is also still available for those interested in the golf tournament.

In addition, networking opportunities include a Young Professionals Social Hour, Sandhouse Sessions for railroads and suppliers. The Association will also honor winners of the Eastern and Southern Region President's Safety Awards. The meeting will be held Sept. 26-28 in Atlanta, Georgia. There is still time to [register](#)! Hotel rooms in the ASLRRR block can be secured [here](#).

Add on the opportunity to golf with colleagues at the Stone Mountain Golf Club's Lakemont course designed by John LeFoy, a Georgia native.

PCA Representative Corthell to Speak at Central and Pacific Region Meeting

ASLRRR is pleased to highlight Packaging Corporation of America's Vice President-Transportation Ross Corthell as part of a strong speaker lineup at the Association's [Central and Pacific Region Meeting](#) Oct. 25-27 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Corthell will join ASLRRR Board Chair Stefan Loeb for a 'Discussion with a Shipper' segment on Oct. 27.

Corthell's talk is only one example of the wide variety of rail-industry subjects being discussed at this year's regional meeting. Participants can also hear from a panel discussing transload operations and listen to presentations on one-person train crews, conductor certification audits, modifying locomotives to reduce emissions and more.

[Register](#) today for the Central and Pacific Region Meeting, or click [here](#) to learn more about sponsorship opportunities.

ASLRRR Finance and Administration Seminar Adds New Education Sessions

Several new education sessions have been added to the agenda for ASLRRR's [Finance and Administration Seminar](#), which takes place in conjunction with the [Central and Pacific Region Meeting](#) Oct. 25-27 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. These include:

- **Considerations in Navigating Through the Labor Environment Today:** F&A Solutions Group Senior Labor Relations Consultant Charlie Woodcock, Fletcher & Sippel Partner Chloé Pedersen and Indiana Rail Road Company Assistant Vice President, Human Resources Shae LeDune
- **Overview of Final Rule Expanding the Scope of Part 219 to Include Mechanical Employees:** Federal Railroad Administration Drug and Alcohol Staff Director Jerry Powers
- **Grant Accounting - You Have Obtained the Grant, Congratulations! Now What?** Angela Schaefer, Accounting Manager, Watco

The General Counsel Symposium will also be held in conjunction with the Central and Pacific Region Meeting. Continuing legal education credits (CLEs) are available to symposium participants. Find a full agenda [here](#).

Discounted room rates in the ASLRRR [hotel block](#) for these events are available until Sept. 26. ASLRRR is also welcoming sponsors for the finance seminar and symposium. Click [here](#) to learn more about sponsorships.

ASLRRR Looking for Background Screening Services Preferred Provider

ASLRRR is seeking a Preferred Provider of Background Screening Services to join the association's Member Discount Program and deliver discount pricing and exceptional service to association members throughout the United States. To receive a copy of the recently issued Request for Information (RFI) and an overview of ASLRRR's Member Discount Program, please email ASLRRR Senior Vice President of Education and Business Services [Sabrina Waiss](#).

Participation in ASLRRRA's Member Discount Program is limited to member companies; non-member companies interested in learning more about the benefits of membership may contact ASLRRRA's Senior Vice President of Membership [Kathy Keeney](#).

We welcome your input! To suggest products and services you'd like the association to include in the Member Discount Program, please email [Sabrina Waiss](#).

ASLRRRA Congratulates Industry Colleagues on Their Retirements this Month

Dan Zink, a long-standing member of the Legislative Policy Committee and board member of ASLRRRA representing the Central Region retired from his position as vice president, economic development and community affairs for Red River Valley & Western Railroad Company effective Sept. 2. His commitment to the furthering of ASLRRRA's goals and mentorship of many of the industry's up-and-comers were especially notable. Farewell Dan, and happy retirement!

Effective Sept. 6, Kathleen Martz, national regions and affiliate program manager for SmartWay, retired from the Environmental Protection Agency. Martz was a key partner for ASLRRRA in creating a path for short line railroads to join the SmartWay program and educating SmartWay shippers about the benefits of freight rail as part of their transportation mix.

"Kathleen has been a fantastic partner, always ready to see the big picture and try to help us figure out our way. She was instrumental in getting so many short lines to join SmartWay and she has been a great friend to us," noted Jo Strang, ASLRRRA's SVP of Safety, Regulatory and Environmental. We wish her well!

Registration Opens for First ASLRRRA Training Seminar in 2023

The first ASLRRRA training seminar in 2023 will be the Association's popular [Drug and Alcohol \(Part 219\) Training Seminar](#), which will be held Jan. 31 to Feb. 1 in Phoenix, Arizona.

The seminar will discuss 49 CFR Part 219, covering all sections of the rule and requirements for all railroads and contractors and including interactive discussion of rule requirements and practices. Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Drug and Alcohol Program Specialist Sam Noe will lead the instruction, joined by ASLRRRA Vice President of Safety and Compliance JR Gelnar.

ASLRRRA expects this training to fill up quickly. [Register today](#) to secure a spot.

October Training Seminar to be Rescheduled

ASLRRRA's final training seminar of 2022 addressing FRA Roadway Worker and Bridge Worker Safety (Part 214), scheduled to take place Oct. 4-6 in Phoenix, Arizona, has been cancelled. We are reviewing options for rescheduling this training in 2023.

Apply for a Scholarship to Fund ASLRRRA Training

Thanks to new and expanded [scholarship programs](#) managed by ASLRRRA's Short Line Education Fund, nearly \$30,000 is available to employees of small railroads to attend ASLRRRA seminars and other industry-specific training programs. The online application takes less than 30 minutes and applicants receive up to \$1,200 for registration, travel and lodging. [Apply now!](#)



ASLRRRA Webinars

Upcoming Live Webinars

[A Case Study in Joining EPA's SmartWay Program](#) – Sept. 21, 2022

Patriot Rail Director of Environmental Compliance Harrison Roughton will share his experience with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) SmartWay program. This webinar will also explain how railroads can apply the SmartWay tool, including which locomotives are included and which are not.

[ASLRRRA Part 219 Education Materials and Correction Affidavits](#) – Nov. 10, 2022

Join Holly Rainwater, vice president of drug and alcohol programs at Spark TS, Mitch Harris, director of safety, training and regulatory compliance at Rio Grande Pacific, and JR Gelnar, vice president of safety and compliance at ASLRRRA to discuss the recently developed Part 219 drug and alcohol educational materials and multiple Correction Affidavits. A working group was established by the Safety and Training Committee to develop these materials to better assist the membership in the requirements of Part 219.

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

Industry Events and Announcements

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.