

1. What's the Shortline Railway Sustainability Program (SRSP)?

It's a Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure 50-50 cost-shared grant program designed to sustain and improve provincially-regulated shortline railway infrastructure. Eligible construction projects can include improvements on ballasts, which is the gravel between and under railway ties, replacing railway ties, repairing bridges, upgrading switch components and stabilizing track. Locomotives and rail cars are ineligible.

2. Why's the shortline railway sector important to Saskatchewan?

It's important because it helps link Saskatchewan's export-based economy to provincial, national and worldwide markets; provides grain producers and other shippers with another effective transportation option; supports economic development in rural Saskatchewan; and contributes to reducing truck traffic congestion, related greenhouse gases and road wear.

3. Why's this 50-50 cost-shared provincial infrastructure grant program needed?

Railways are capital-intensive operations and several of Saskatchewan's shortline are newly formed. These grant provide some relief to ensure safe and sustainable railway operations.

4. What kinds of projects are eligible for these 50-50 cost-shared provincial grants?

Cost-shared provincial grants are available for priority shortline railway infrastructure projects, such as safety improvements and track rehabilitation to improve efficiency.

5. Who determines the provincial grant amounts for each shortline railway?

A five-member panel of two Ministry representatives, two Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) representatives and one Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association (SUMA) representative recommend the grant amounts. This year, they recommended using a formula developed by the Saskatchewan Shortline Railway Association that determines allocation based on how much eligible track each railway currently operates.

6. What's the process after these provincial grant amounts are determined for each shortline railway?

After a shortline outlines in the spring to the Ministry what work it plans to do using the grant, the shortline railway submits invoices of completed work to the Ministry later in the construction season. The Ministry reviews the submitted invoices and re-imburses a railway for half of the cost of eligible work to a maximum of their awarded grant.

7. Who's eligible for grants under the program in 2010?

Nine of Saskatchewan's 10 shortline railways are eligible in 2010 because a shortline has to be operational for one year. Last Mountain Railway is ineligible in 2010.

8. What's Saskatchewan's provincially-regulated shortline railway system?

It consists of 10 privately-owned shortline railways that can operate on about 1,700 km of provincially-regulated track. These provincial shortlines connect to about 7,100 km of federally-regulated rail lines in Saskatchewan.

The shortlines are: Southern Rails Co-operative based out of Avonlea, started in 1989; Carlton Trail Railway based out of Prince Albert, started in 1997; Red Coat Road and Rail based out of Viceroy, started in 1999; Great Western Railway based out of Shaunavon, started in 2000; Thunder Rail based out of Arborfield, started in 2001; Wheatland Rail based out of Cudworth, started in 2004; Fife Lake Railway based out of Coronach, started in 2005; Torch River Rail based out of Choiceland, started in 2008; Great Sandhills Railway based out of Leader, started in March 2009; along with Last Mountain Railway based out of the Regina area, started in late 2009.