

Docket Number: EP-726-0

ENTERED  
Office of Proceedings  
January 29, 2016  
Part of  
Public Record

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I live in Southwest Michigan, about 90 miles from Chicago. I frequently take Amtrak to and from Chicago as well on long distance routes throughout the country. Southwest Michigan has trains which stop both in St. Joseph and New Buffalo.

Many factors are important when riding the train, but on-time performance is one of the most important. When travelling short distance to and from Chicago, I am usually going into the city for pleasure. Arriving late reduces the amount of time I have in Chicago which may result in missing an event, shortening my trip or paying more at my destination.

When we travel on long distance routes it may be for pleasure or business. When for business, being late results in missing meetings, rescheduling trips or costly expenses to make up for lost time. Similar to the short trips, when for pleasure, late arrivals reduces the pleasure of the vacation through added stress, missed connections or additional costs for rebooking.

In any transportation mode, on-time performance is critical. When traveling by train, there are added factors. In most cases the host railroads have negotiated in buffer times at many stations to improve service delivery. Schedules should be much tighter and the host railroads should be held to the same standards they are by suppliers and customers for the freight they transport.

Also, on an Amtrak route, long or short, there are many stops along the way. It is not only important to be on-time at the final destination on the route, but also at intermediate stops. I recommend on time for the end destination should be similar to airlines - within 15 minutes of scheduled arrival. For intermediate stations, I recommend 5-10 minutes be used as the standard.

Again, allowing the host railroads to just add additional time to the schedule to ensure meeting the criteria is not the answer. Expectations must be raised and met by both Amtrak and the host railroads.