

United States Senate

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Chairman Daniel R. Elliott III
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington DC 20423

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Dear Chairman Elliott:

I am writing in support of Amtrak's recently filed complaint calling for an immediate investigation and potential awarding of damages to relieve the abysmal on-time-performance of Chicago-Champaign-Carbondale passenger trains. I have worked in Congress to give the Surface Transportation Board (STB) broad authority to investigate and remedy poor on-time-performance of Amtrak trains, and I strongly encourage you to use this authority in this case and ensure the reliable performance of the *Illini* and *Saluki* trains.

The Chicago to Carbondale route has become the train with the poorest on-time performance of its kind in the country. The main problem along this line is freight train interference by the host railroad, Canadian National (CN). The law gives Amtrak preference on our nation's rail lines, but despite this right, freight train dispatchers make Amtrak trains wait while long, slow trains pass them on the tracks.

To help bring attention to the poor performance of this route, I hosted several discussions about on-time-performance with local elected officials, transportation advocates, university officials and students in downstate Illinois. Stakeholders agreed the increasing number of late trains is hurting the local and regional economies along the route and that the STB must act as soon as possible to remedy the situation.

The Amtrak complaint before the Board is the first on-time performance case brought to the STB since Congress granted it the authority to investigate these matters in 2008. It is particularly important for the STB to take a strong stand in this case so that Amtrak's rights to the rails are retained and protected. Reliable service is vital to the continued success of Amtrak and passenger rail transportation, and it is up to STB to make sure passenger trains are meeting high standards and arriving on-time.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Cc: Ann Begeman; Deb Miller