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As a passenger who travels both for business and pleasure by air and by rail on-time performance by a passenger rail carrier is important to me. A passenger who paid for a ticket and travels by rail should expect to arrive at their destination within a reasonable period of time. Setting a standard for On Time Performance for Amtrak and other passenger rail carriers should not be a complicated issue.

Aside from weather, unforeseen host railroad signal, track and mechanical related issues a reasonable measurement of on-time reliability for a passenger train should be arrival at a mid-point station within 15 minutes of schedule timetable. Why mid-point? Amtrak's timekeeping at mid-point stations such as Longview, Texas for train #21 and #22 Texas Eagles has proven to be far less than desirable. I have experienced delays of one hour or more at several mid-point stations but due to excess padding of schedule the arrival into Dallas, Austin or at end-point San Antonio or Chicago can magically turn into an on-time or ahead of time arrival.

Removing the excess padding from schedules and working with the Class 1 freight railroads to determine where the hiccups are in the system and finding solutions to delays will enhance the traveling experience. Having a train arrive at mid-point within 15 minutes will have everyone from the host railroad to Amtrak sharpen their game and focus on delivering a product on time.

At the end-point of a train that is scheduled to run over 750 miles (or after a minimum of 8 hours of running time) an on-time arrival within 30 minutes of timetable would be acceptable

In a nutshell:

Arrival of 15 minutes or less at mid-point stations and a maximum of 30 minutes at end-point on long-distance trains that travel over 750 miles.

One suggestion is to have a scheduled program of sending train dispatchers "into the field" to visually see the terrain and territory they run trains over and discuss challenges with the subdivision operating crews. This would have a positive payback effect not only for running passenger service on time but for more fluid freight movements as well.

When a passenger train operates over more than one host railroad, cooperation between the host railroads and the passenger carrier is essential. Protocols should be put in place to make hand-offs smooth and orderly in advance of the transition. Potential delays must be communicated to the following host railroad so that a contingency plan for the hand-off of the passenger train can be implemented without additional delays.

Reliability of service is key both for freight and passenger. If there are host railroad capacity issues that affect passenger rail service these need to be identified for future action. If there are dispatching issues

that delay trains these also need to be identified and cured. Amtrak and other passenger rail carriers in the future must be held accountable for late departures from the initial terminal that are self-induced.

For decades there was pride in making sure that passenger trains ran on schedule. That's where the focus should return, along with the pride.