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Tom Barrett
Mayor, City of Milwaukee

April 13, 2016

Surface Transportation Board
Attn: Docket No. EP 726
395 East Street SW
Washington, DC 20423-0001

RE: Opposition to Proposed Policy Statement under 49 U.S.C. § 24308(f) and under 49 U.S.C. § 24308(c). Notice of Proposed Statement of Board Policy, 80 Fed. Reg. 80878.

Dear Chairman Elliott III:

I am writing to respectfully request that the Surface Transportation Board withdraw its policy proposal cited under Docket No. EP 728. As the mayor of a major city served by Amtrak, I am concerned about the severe and negative impact this policy change could have on our passenger rail in the State of Wisconsin.

The policy proposal, which changes how the Surface Transportation Board (STB) will conduct its investigations, including the definition of “on-time performance,” stands to cause further delays in passenger rail and goes beyond the authority of the STB. On-time performance should be measured at all stations across the country. While it is understandable to want work toward standardization as a way to gain more efficiency and better use of resources, this proposed policy statement negatively limits an investigation to a narrowly defined criterion that would involve measuring time in no more than 20 states. Each passenger rail has its own unique circumstances and concerns, and cannot be effectively addressed with a one-size-fits-all approach.

Furthermore, Congress gave the STB the authority to adjudicate disputes and complaints, and limiting the criterion that defines on-time performance, as well as shifting responsibilities over to the railroads, dilutes the complex nature of those investigations. STB should not rewrite federal law as it has proposed, but rather encourage adherence to existing federal law to ensure that railroads continue to grant preference to Amtrak passenger trains operating on their tracks.

I ask that the Surface Transportation Board withdraw its proposed policy statement. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns at 414-286-6202.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Barrett".

Tom Barrett
Mayor