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Policy Statements: Implementing Intercity Passenger Train On-Time Performance and Preference Provisions

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My wife and I love to ride the trains when we travel. As passengers who travel from Pittsburgh to Washington to visit our children and grandchildren, we and I respectfully, but strongly urge the Surface Transportation Board to require the host railroads to give priority to Amtrak Passenger Trains that use the the same tracks as the their freight trains.

Many times - actually more often than not - the Capitol Limited is delayed by 2 hours or more, both east bound and also west bound. It seems to have become worse in recent years, possibly due to increased shipments of oil to refineries and ocean shipping terminals on the east coast. I'm happy that the railroads are transporting the oil - I can only imagine what traffic jams we'd have if that oil were shipped by truck!

When we go to Washington, the train is scheduled to arrive at about 1PM, so we often plan to meet our grandsons after school and walk home with them. So if the train is an hour or so late, it's inconvenient, but not the end of the world. Unfortunately, the last time we went to Washington, we were more than 4 hours late, and were very late in meeting the boys after school. The teachers were not very happy about that. The thing is we didn't know that we would be that late, and the Amtrak staff on the train didn't know either. So we couldn't even let people know until it was already too late to make other arrangements. Coming back to Pittsburgh, the scheduled arrival is just before midnight. When the train arrives on time we can usually find a taxi to take us home. But if it's more than an hour late, it can be very difficult to get a taxi to take us home. Sometimes we have to wait another hour or more. I can't say it's dangerous exactly, but it certainly is inconvenient, to wait that long at that time of night.

Encouraging the host railroads to give highest priority to freight trains, at the expense of passenger train schedules sends the wrong message. Please emphasize that passenger trains should have priority over freight trains again.

Thank you. Russell Long