

240158

Docket : EP-728

Implementing Intercity Passenger Train On-Time Performance

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ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
February 22, 2016
Part of
Public Record

The railroads of this nation were given the right of eminent domain in exchange for providing the public service of passenger transport. Such stipulations for this service were written into the railroads' original charters. Though passenger rail suffered disuse in some or many areas of the country during the mid-twentieth century, the public service obligation of the railroads toward the traveling public has not ceased. Passenger rail is a popular (and in some cases indispensable) travel option today handled mostly through Amtrak and a host of commuter railroads. Though, in the mid-twentieth century, many rail corridors were effectively given exemption from passenger transport obligations where such service was deemed unneeded or redundant, the active passenger rail corridors must abide in their obligation to facilitate good-faith reasonable passenger service through whatever service provider is providing that service. Otherwise, the railroads need to own the onus to provide the service themselves according to their parent companies' original charters.

Reasonable priority for passenger trains should obligate a freight rail company to hold a freight train in a yard or auxiliary track should that freight train pose a real threat of an unnecessary delay to passenger trains. In conjunction with this directive, freight rail companies should be obligated to work in concert with passenger rail providers to identify "bottlenecks" where needed track-capacity improvements or track-restorations should be constructed. The host railroads should then seek tax credits from Congress to build such infrastructure.

A word of personal testimony: I was held up for 35 minutes on an Amtrak train north of Emporia, Virginia in January 2015. The reason: likely, CSX was dropping off cars at Weyerhaeuser. I noted that the corridor used to be double-track there but was reduced to single track. CSX may have had little option but to delay my train (along with 3 of their own and one other Amtrak train, 5 train delays in total). "Passenger train preference" should also call for examination of a passing track around a busy industrial interchange when that interchange is causing long and repeated passenger train delays where the obvious solution of a restored double track would alleviate such delays.