



Champaign County
**CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE**

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November 10, 2014

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

ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
December 11, 2014
Part of
Public Record

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Dear Chairman Elliott:

We are 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. Our understanding is that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) broad has authority to investigate and remedy poor on-time-performance of Amtrak trains, and we 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 route 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 freight trains pass them on the tracks.

Local elected officials, transportation advocates, university officials, students and business leaders in downstate Illinois agree that on-time performance is critical and a factor when making travel choices. 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,

Laura E. Weis, President & CEO
On behalf of the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce
Board of Directors

2014 NOV 18 AM 11:30
OFFICE OF CHAIRMAN

303 West Kirby Avenue
Champaign, Illinois 61820
P 217.359.1791 • F 217.359.1809

www.champaigncounty.org