

Docket # EP-726-0

240061

To the Surface Transportation Board

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ENTERED
Office of Proceedings
February 8, 2016
Part of
Public Record

The following comments are in regard to on-time performance of Amtrak trains.

My wife and I are often users of long-distance Amtrak trains to visit family located on the East coast (NYC, Wilmington, DE and Richmond, VA). Depending on our particular itinerary, we travel often on the Empire Builder, Northeast Corridor, Lake Shore Limited, Capitol Limited, and the Cardinal. On-time performance is very important to us because of the distance we have to travel to get to the station.

We live just over a 2 hour drive to get to our closest Amtrak station (Red Wing, MN) which is served by the Empire Builder. It is very frustrating to get up early, drive two+ hours and then have to wait around for the train to arrive. Of more importance, however, making connections with any of the East Coast trains in Chicago is threatened if the train is late. Amtrak currently only guarantees connections with the Empire Builder for the last train to leave Chicago which is the Lake Shore Limited. Even with about a 5 hour scheduled layover in Chicago, we have numerous times not made this connection and been forced to spend a day in Chicago that cuts into our time with family.

While air travel is an option for us, the cost of an itinerary to go to all three locations on the East coast and the extra time necessary for a trip to the Twin Cities and security clearance makes that option expensive and time consuming.

It is my understanding that on-time performance (OTP) is proposed to be measured only at the endpoints rather than at all stations along a route.

This tells me that even major cities such as the Twin Cities in MN as well as my station of Red Wing do not matter when it comes to OTP.

As poor on-time performance is one of the biggest factors which hurts rail passengers, the STB's proposed rule-making offers the opportunity to provide a significant service improvement for passengers, generating additional revenues for Amtrak, while also reducing operating costs...or it could permanently block Amtrak from taking action to ensure OTP for 65% of its passengers who get off at an intermediate station.

The proposed rulemaking would allow for ten minutes late for each intermediate stop and for up to 30 minutes late at route endpoints. I suggest that we use ten minutes late for all intermediate and end-point stops, period. On-time performance is one of the biggest drivers of ridership on Amtrak. Railroads in bad weather (like MN is having today with many road closures) are one of the most reliable modes of transportation. To drive ridership away will only lead to more road and air congestion.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.