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My wife and I occasionally take vacations on Amtrak out of Philadelphia. Therefore, it was disheartening to hear of the Surface Transportation Board's (STB) decision to reconsider the concept of "Preference" on the nation's railroads.

We have taken numerous trips on European Railways and found the punctuality, prompt and clean service worthy of admiration of other countries. In an era where our highways are clogged, airlines offer more disservice than a quality run transportation system it is most important to have Amtrak as a viable alternative transportation service. How can this improved rail service be achieved if host railroads have the ability to delay a passenger train for freight traffic? Indeed, Amtrak rail traffic into and out of Chicago about a year ago was enduring agonizing delays...we experienced it. After a letter from STB to the host Railroad the delays were significantly reduced...we experienced that as well. The policy of passenger train Preference, when enforced, works!

As one may recall, it was taxpayers who bailed out the railroads by creating Amtrak in the 1970's. One of the terms of that bailout is that Amtrak would have preference over freight traffic. Why should STB now reconsider this policy? Amtrak over the past several years has shown an increase in ridership. All of these riders depend on Amtrak for on time performance which is aided by Preference for passenger trains. With the additional benefits of Amtrak such as less pollution, greater safety (despite derailments in the last few years) and a better travel experience we feel it necessary that the STB withdraw its proposal to change its position on "Preference" and allow Amtrak Passenger Trains to continue operation with higher priority than freight traffic!