



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

Administrator

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

SEP 16 2008

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

~~The Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies~~
Appropriations Act, 2008 (Division K of Pub. L. 110-161) requires the Federal Railroad
Administrator to "submit a report, and quarterly reports thereafter, to the House and
Senate Committees on Appropriations detailing the Administrator's efforts at improving
the on-time performance of Amtrak intercity rail service operating on non-Amtrak owned
property. Such reports shall compare the most recent actual on-time performance data to
pre-established on-time performance goals that the Administrator shall set for each rail
service, identified by route. Such reports shall also include whatever other information
and data regarding the on-time performance of Amtrak trains the Administrator deems to
be appropriate."

I am pleased to submit the third report in accordance with this requirement. I hope that
the information contained in the enclosed report will assist the Committee in its work.

Identical letters have been sent to the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on
Appropriations, and to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on
Appropriations.

Sincerely,

Joseph H. Boardman
Administrator

Enclosures

October 1, 2008

**Third Report on Amtrak On-Time Performance
Submitted by the Federal Railroad Administrator
Under Division K of Public Law 110-161**

This report includes two sections: (1) an update on recent Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) efforts to catalyze improvements in Amtrak's on-time performance (OTP); and (2) in keeping with our July 14, 2008 OTP report, an update on Amtrak OTP results and performance against FRA established goals.

(1) Update: Recent OTP Improvement Actions

Southeast Corridor. Amtrak continues to benefit from reduced freight train interference as a result of the Southeast (I-95) Corridor Performance Improvement Plan, which the FRA required of Amtrak management as part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2007 Grant Agreement between the FRA and Amtrak. During FY 2008 through July, CSX freight train interference delays affecting Southeast Corridor long distance trains fell to under two minutes per 100 train miles, thus contributing to OTP improvements on these routes. The *Auto Train's* endpoint OTP has improved by 21.5 percentage points year-over-year, while the OTP of the other Southeast Corridor long distance trains has improved by 19.3 percentage points. Further OTP improvements on the Southeast Corridor will continue to depend on CSX's ability to reduce slow order delays, which are 20 percent higher than a year ago. At present, slow orders along the corridor amount to 3.5 minutes of delay per 100 train miles.

California Zephyr. The Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and Amtrak continue to implement their agreement reached last year to decrease slow orders on the *California Zephyr*. Although the slow orders on the route have been reduced, Amtrak's OTP is still below the agreed-upon standard as a result of freight train interference in Colorado. The eastbound *Zephyr* in particular has been affected by these delays as its current average lateness at stations in Colorado (64 minutes) is twice as high as the average lateness at stations from California through Utah (32 minutes).

Additional Performance Improvement Programs. In keeping with Secretary Mary E. Peters' request of April 16, 2008 (described in our May 8, 2008 OTP report), Amtrak and the host railroads have refined the list of routes identified for OTP improvement as follows:

- CSX: Southeast Corridor (the *Carolinian*, *Auto Train*, *Palmetto*, *Silver Meteor*, and *Silver Star* - an ongoing initiative, described above)
- Norfolk Southern (NS): Chicago–Porter, Indiana (a segment affecting the *Blue Water*, *Pere Marquette*, *Wolverine*, *Capitol Limited*, and *Lake Shore Limited*)
- Canadian Pacific (CP): *Adirondack* (Schenectady, New York–Rouses Point, New York)¹
- Canadian National (CN): Chicago–Carbondale, Illinois (the *Illini* and a portion of the *City of New Orleans*)

¹ Other than the CP's Schenectady-Rouses Point segment, the *Adirondack's* New York City–Montreal route makes use of other host railroads.

- Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF): *California Zephyr* (the Chicago–Denver portion of the route²)
- UP: Still in negotiations; the *Coast Starlight* and Chicago-St. Louis corridor are among the possible selections.

To further advance the Secretary’s initiative, Amtrak, FRA staff, and management representatives of the host railroads (up to the Vice President/Executive Vice President level) convened in Washington, D.C. on August 19, 2008 for a discussion of procedures and timelines for Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs) for the identified routes. The PIPs are foreseen as collaborative ongoing efforts, between Amtrak and the host railroads, to identify attainable (1) operational improvements, e.g., dispatching changes, (2) slow order reductions, and (3) future possibilities for capital investments, in that order, together with their respective impacts on route performance. Periodic meetings will occur, both bilaterally between Amtrak and host railroads, as well as jointly with all stakeholders, to track the development and implementation of the PIPs and work through any needed adjustments. The action items identified in the PIPs will help Amtrak and the host railroads work toward the FRA’s Fiscal Year 2012 OTP targets of 95% for the Northeast Corridor (NEC), 90% for other corridor services, and 85% for long distance routes. Thus far, Amtrak has had initial bilateral PIP meetings with host railroads CSX, BNSF, and CP, and anticipates meetings with the remaining hosts in the near future.

The intensifying activity in the realm of OTP is beginning to show encouraging results across the Amtrak system, particularly among the long distance routes. In FY 2008 through July, the overall OTP for Amtrak’s long distance routes improved by 14.4 percentage points over the same period in the previous year. While these long distance routes still have a meager average OTP of 54.6 percent, the significant year-over-year improvement is promising as an overall gauge of the freight railroads’ and Amtrak’s collective response to heightened Congressional, FRA, and public interest in Amtrak OTP.

OTP Report by the Department of Transportation’s Office of Inspector General. On September 8, 2008, the Department’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) submitted to the Appropriations Committees a report entitled “Root Causes of Amtrak Train Delays” (OIG Report Number CR-2008-076). Examining in depth the reasons for the unsatisfactory timekeeping that characterizes so many of Amtrak’s routes, the report constitutes a useful addition to the literature on intercity passenger rail OTP. The FRA’s detailed comments on the OIG’s recommendations appear in an appendix to their report and are summarized, with the OIG’s responses, on pages 26 through 28. The report is accessible from the OIG’s web site, www.oig.dot.gov.

(2) Goals and Route Performance

Attachment A contains updated OTP statistics for all routes in keeping with the approach presented in the FRA’s July 14, 2008 OTP report. In terms of route performance in FY 2008 to date versus the same period in the prior year, there have been no significant changes in route performance since our last report. As the attachment illustrates, just over half the routes (22) had improvements in OTP (in terms of both improved percent on time and no decrease in effective

² On the segment of the *California Zephyr* between Denver and the San Francisco Bay Area, the UP is the host railroad; OTP efforts on the UP segment are described further above.

speed) in FY 2008 through July. Of those routes experiencing OTP improvement, eight have met or surpassed the FY 2008 OTP target.

In terms of the 14 routes identified thus far for performance improvement plans, nine experienced an improvement in OTP through July FY 2008. Among the group, the *Carolinian* and *Adirondack* were the only corridor-type routes (out of six) with **improved** OTP, while the *City of New Orleans* was the only long distance train (out of eight) with a **decline** in OTP, from its relatively high performance base in FY 2007. There are two trains within this group, the *Auto Train* and *Silver Meteor*, which have met or surpassed their modest FY 2008 OTP targets.

Looking ahead, the FRA will continue to analyze and refine its methodologies and data presentations regarding OTP, in cooperation with Amtrak and other stakeholders to the extent possible. We will also continue to actively pursue our efforts to drive OTP improvements through joint actions by the freight railroads and Amtrak.

Attachment A
Amtrak On-Time Performance: FY 2008
Fiscal Year-to-Date (YTD) Totals through July 2008

	✓ Indicates both tests were met for OTP Progress	Test 1: Higher Percent On Time YTD - July 2008 vs. YTD - July 2007				Test 2: Constant or Better Effective Speed
		FY08 % On Time	% Change from FY07	Proposed Target for FY08	% Variance from FY08 Target	Change in MPH from October 2007 Baseline
<i>Northeast Corridor Service (Goal proposed for FY 2012: 95%)</i>						
Acela		83.5%	(4.4%)	89.2%	(5.7%)	(0.5)
Regional Service		75.7%	(2.3%)	81.4%	(5.7%)	(0.3)
<i>Other Corridor Services (Goal proposed for FY 2012: 90%. Minimum target proposed for FY 2008: 70%)</i>						
Adirondack	✓	44.9%	33.0%	70.0%	(25.1%)	1.8
Blue Water		29.0%	(4.4%)	70.0%	(41.0%)	0.0
Capitols	✓	84.8%	11.2%	77.7%	7.1%	0.8
Carolinian	✓	38.1%	10.3%	70.0%	(31.9%)	1.5
Cascades		65.1%	7.8%	70.0%	(4.9%)	(1.3)
Downeaster		71.7%	(11.3%)	80.4%	(8.7%)	(0.8)
Empire Service		73.0%	0.7%	75.4%	(2.4%)	(0.1)
Ethan Allen Express		33.6%	(4.0%)	70.0%	(36.4%)	0.5
Heartland Flyer	✓	54.1%	25.4%	70.0%	(15.9%)	2.4
Hiawatha		87.0%	(1.4%)	89.3%	(2.3%)	(0.7)
Hoosier State	✓	43.0%	3.6%	70.0%	(27.0%)	0.3
Illini		50.3%	(20.5%)	73.2%	(22.9%)	(2.0)
Illinois Zephyr	✓	78.3%	14.8%	70.2%	8.1%	1.3
Keystone	✓	87.7%	3.7%	86.3%	1.4%	0.5
Lincoln Service		41.7%	1.1%	70.0%	(28.3%)	(0.3)
Maple Leaf	✓	43.6%	7.6%	70.0%	(26.4%)	0.9
Missouri Services		19.2%	(11.1%)	70.0%	(50.8%)	(0.2)
Pacific Surfliner	✓	76.6%	0.4%	77.8%	(1.2%)	0.0
Pennsylvanian	✓	88.2%	17.3%	75.2%	13.0%	1.0
Pere Marquette		24.6%	2.4%	70.0%	(45.4%)	(0.4)
Piedmont		73.9%	(0.4%)	77.5%	(3.6%)	(0.1)
San Joaquins	✓	84.0%	16.6%	72.4%	11.6%	1.6
Vermont		31.6%	(37.0%)	70.0%	(38.4%)	(1.0)
Wolverines		28.4%	(5.5%)	70.0%	(41.6%)	(0.5)
<i>Long Distance Trains (Goal proposed for FY 2012: 85%. Minimum target proposed for FY 2008: 60%)</i>						
Auto Train	✓	79.8%	21.5%	66.7%	13.1%	1.1
California Zephyr	✓	35.1%	30.5%	60.0%	(24.9%)	3.1
Capitol Limited	✓	35.8%	18.1%	60.0%	(24.2%)	1.8
Cardinal		34.1%	(3.6%)	60.0%	(25.9%)	(1.0)
City of New Orleans		66.9%	(19.8%)	85.0%	(18.1%)	(0.8)
Coast Starlight	✓	65.6%	45.4%	60.0%	5.6%	1.4
Crescent	✓	68.0%	27.1%	60.0%	8.0%	0.9
Empire Builder		66.7%	(5.9%)	75.7%	(9.0%)	(0.2)
Lake Shore Limited	✓	57.6%	27.5%	60.0%	(2.4%)	2.6
Palmetto	✓	49.8%	24.3%	60.0%	(10.2%)	3.2
Silver Meteor	✓	65.4%	24.5%	60.0%	5.4%	1.8
Silver Star	✓	42.3%	18.1%	60.0%	(17.7%)	0.5
Southwest Chief	✓	64.9%	3.7%	65.1%	(0.2%)	0.0
Sunset Limited	✓	22.6%	7.6%	60.0%	(37.4%)	1.4
Texas Eagle		19.2%	(8.8%)	60.0%	(40.8%)	(0.8)