



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

ADMINISTRATOR

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

**Federal Railroad  
Administration**

JAN 27 2012

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye  
Chairman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Section 154 of the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (Pub. L. 111-117) required the Federal Railroad Administrator to “submit a report on April 1, 2010, 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.” The Committee on Appropriations of the House of Representatives expressed the intent to continue this reporting process in the Full Committee Draft Report on the Fiscal Year 2012 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Bill.

I am pleased to submit the quarterly report in accordance with this Congressional intent. 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 C. Szabo  
Administrator

Enclosures

**Amtrak On-Time Performance (OTP) Report  
(As Described in Section 154 of Pub. L. 111-117)**

This report includes (1) an update on recent Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) efforts to improve Amtrak's on-time performance and (2) Amtrak's OTP results and performance against FRA-established goals.

**(1) OTP Highlights through Fiscal Year (FY) 2011**

OTP Benefits of the High-Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR): During the fourth quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, Secretary La Hood announced that over fifteen additional project grants had been awarded through the FY 2010 HSIPR program. These most recent announcements bring the total number of projects to over 145, with a total obligation amount in excess of \$9.2 billion (a complete list of selected investments is available at <http://www.fra.dot.gov/rpd/HSIPR/ProjectFunding.aspx>).

The FRA, Amtrak, the States, and host railroads continue to develop service outcome agreements to ensure the performance improvement(s) contemplated in the intercity passenger rail service improvements are realized upon completion of the respective projects. Most of the HSIPR awards will ultimately raise the effective speed of the benefiting services, through a combination of better reliability (through capacity additions and other means) and/or higher running speeds.

One such award in August was for \$745 million for upgrading the components and/or capacity of some of the most heavily-used sections of the Northeast Corridor (NEC), resulting in improved on-time performance and reliability. Also in August, Secretary LaHood announced a Federal investment of \$729 million to procure new, American-built locomotives and passenger rail cars that will operate on corridors throughout California, Washington State, and the Midwest. These cars will be capable of traveling at speeds up to 125 mph and will improve equipment reliability while increasing passenger capacity. When completed, these and many other HSIPR projects are expected to directly improve the OTP of the affected routes, as measured in this series of OTP reports to Congress.

Additionally, Amtrak is engaged in collaborative efforts to make operational performance improvements with BNSF and the Washington State Department of Transportation. These efforts will benefit the Cascade service in Washington State and Oregon, which recently experienced a 0.5 mph improvement in the train's effective speed over the benchmark set in October 2008. Amtrak has also striven to improve performance on its Ethan Allen route segment over the Vermont Railway. Together, Amtrak and this host railroad have analyzed track conditions in order to pinpoint opportunities for increasing track speeds in certain areas.

Publication of Metrics and Standards: Jointly with Amtrak, FRA developed and published on May 12, 2010, the Metrics and Standards for intercity passenger rail services as required by Section 207 of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA). The fourth quarterly Metrics and Standards report under Section 207 is available on FRA's webpage at [www.fra.dot.gov/Pages/2165.shtml](http://www.fra.dot.gov/Pages/2165.shtml). The latest report provides data on Amtrak's financial, operational, and service quality performance for the third quarter of FY 2011. A key feature of the operational information is the tabulation of delay minutes

that Amtrak experiences on the host railroads for each route. The data collected for the third quarter of FY 2011 illustrates Amtrak's reliability experiences across its system, with host railroads exceeding applicable standards for delay minutes on most of the Amtrak routes.

## **(2) Goals and Route Performance**

Attachment A contains OTP statistics for all Amtrak routes through the fourth quarter of FY 2011. The table provides three pieces of information for each route: 1) progress made toward target goals established in 2008, 2) a comparison between FY 2011 results and the prior year, and 3) a change in effective speed. Effective speed is defined as a metric that uses the scheduled departure time from the origination point of a train, the actual arrival time of that train at the scheduled endpoint, and the normal mileage that the train operates between the normal scheduled origination point and the normal scheduled arrival point. Throughout the history of this OTP report, progress has been focused on the latter two metrics.

As the attachment illustrates, four routes out of forty-one had improvements in OTP (in terms of both improved percent on time versus last year and no decrease in effective speed) through September of FY 2011. Of those routes experiencing OTP improvement, two (one corridor-type and one long-distance train) are meeting, or are surpassing, their FRA-defined OTP target for FY 2011. While the OTP on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor has generally been holding constant or improving, the non-NEC short-distance routes and the long-distance routes have experienced noticeable OTP declines—even in the three-month interval between the report in this series covering FY 2011 through June, and the present report covering FY 2011 through September. Specifically, cumulative OTP for FY 2011 on 13 of the short-distance routes dropped by an average of 2.8 percentage points per route from the June to the September report, while 12 long-distance routes saw an average decline of 4.2 percentage points per route.

While these declines will inevitably reflect conditions that are site-specific to each route and host railroad, Amtrak's publicly-available Monthly Performance Reports (MPRs) point to generally applicable reasons for this declining performance.<sup>1</sup> Of all the causes of delay to Amtrak trains, the most frequently encountered is Freight Train Interference, which rose from approximately 230 minutes per 10,000 train-miles in the September 2010 MPR to 320 minutes in September 2011—a year-over-year increase of 40 percent. The less-important causes of train delays did not experience comparable increases. Amtrak works closely with the freight railroads not only to track, but also to investigate and mitigate, these delays on a route-specific—and even on a delay-specific—basis.

Although a causal relationship has not been proven between nationwide freight traffic levels and passenger train delay minutes on Amtrak routes due to freight train interference, it is interesting to note that, on a year-over-year basis through the end of September 2011, cumulative freight carloads throughout the national rail system were up 1.8 percent or nearly 200,000 cars, and intermodal units were up 5.4 percent or 458,000 units.

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<sup>1</sup> The Monthly Performance Reports are available on the Internet at <http://www.amtrak.com/servlet/ContentServer/Page/1241245669222/1241245669129>. Data are from the chart entitled "Delays to Amtrak Trains by Delay Type and Responsible Party."

**Attachment A**  
**Amtrak On-Time Performance: 4th Quarter of FY 2011**  
(data covers October 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011)

	Test 1: On-Time Percentage (compared to prior year period and target)				Test 2: Constant or Better Effective Speed	✓ Indicates both tests were met for OTP Progress
	Amtrak OTP	Change from Prior Year	FY 2011 OTP Target	Change from OTP Target	Change in MPH from October 2008 Baseline for Last 4 Quarters	
<b>Northeast Corridor Service (Goal proposed for FY 2012: 95%)</b>						
Acela	84.0%	3.5%	93.6%	(9.5%)	(0.8)	
Regional Service	79.1%	4.3%	91.6%	(12.5%)	(0.0)	
<b>Other Corridor Services (Goal proposed for FY 2012: 90%. Min target for FY 2011: 85%)</b>						
Adirondack	61.2%	(1.0%)	85.0%	(23.8%)	(0.5)	
Blue Water	54.5%	(14.2%)	85.0%	(30.5%)	1.9	
Capitol	94.9%	1.7%	86.9%	7.9%	1.8	✓
Carolinian	63.4%	14.5%	85.0%	(21.6%)	(0.0)	
Cascades	70.0%	(3.0%)	85.0%	(15.0%)	0.5	
Downeaster	75.5%	4.6%	87.6%	(12.1%)	(1.4)	
Empire Service	84.5%	(1.5%)	86.3%	(1.8%)	0.6	
Ethan Allen Express	60.6%	(14.2%)	85.0%	(24.4%)	(0.8)	
Heartland Flyer	75.1%	(6.3%)	85.0%	(9.9%)	0.1	
Hiawatha	88.3%	(1.2%)	89.8%	(1.5%)	(0.6)	
Hoosier State	59.8%	(14.9%)	85.0%	(25.2%)	1.8	
Illini	55.0%	(7.9%)	85.8%	(30.8%)	2.1	
Illinois Zephyr	88.5%	(4.3%)	85.0%	3.5%	(0.8)	
Keystone	88.4%	1.3%	89.1%	(0.6%)	(0.1)	
Lincoln Service	64.4%	(7.8%)	85.0%	(20.6%)	1.0	
Maple Leaf	57.6%	(11.4%)	85.0%	(27.4%)	(1.1)	
Missouri Services	85.7%	(5.4%)	85.0%	0.7%	5.9	
Pacific Surfliner	77.6%	1.2%	87.0%	(9.4%)	(0.3)	
Pennsylvanian	85.1%	(5.0%)	86.3%	(1.2%)	(0.6)	
Pere Marquette	51.5%	(1.7%)	85.0%	(33.5%)	2.0	
Piedmont	80.2%	1.1%	86.9%	(6.6%)	2.3	✓
San Joaquins	89.5%	(1.2%)	85.6%	3.9%	0.8	
Vermont	78.3%	(7.3%)	85.0%	(6.7%)	(1.7)	
Wolverines	19.8%	(41.6%)	85.0%	(65.2%)	(3.9)	
<b>Long Distance Trains (Goal proposed for FY 2012: 85%. Minimum target for FY 2011: 78.8%)</b>						
Auto Train	89.9%	2.9%	80.4%	9.4%	0.9	✓
California Zephyr	41.5%	(11.1%)	78.8%	(37.3%)	(1.3)	
Capitol Limited	49.3%	(19.0%)	78.8%	(29.4%)	0.8	
Cardinal	38.8%	(12.3%)	78.8%	(40.0%)	0.6	
City of New Orleans	76.6%	(6.1%)	85.0%	(8.4%)	1.1	
Coast Starlight	76.3%	(13.6%)	78.8%	(2.5%)	1.1	
Crescent	72.0%	(1.0%)	78.8%	(6.7%)	0.3	
Empire Builder	43.8%	(34.0%)	82.7%	(38.9%)	(1.8)	
Lake Shore Limited	55.5%	(20.3%)	78.8%	(23.3%)	(0.6)	
Palmetto	74.9%	10.6%	78.8%	(3.9%)	(2.0)	
Silver Meteor	76.7%	3.9%	78.8%	(2.0%)	0.2	✓
Silver Star	70.3%	(7.2%)	78.8%	(8.5%)	0.9	
Southwest Chief	73.3%	(5.9%)	80.0%	(6.7%)	(1.0)	
Sunset Limited	79.9%	(7.7%)	78.8%	1.1%	(0.6)	
Texas Eagle	55.8%	(13.8%)	78.8%	(23.0%)	0.8	