



**M O V I N G T H E**  
**AMERICAN**  
**ECONOMY**

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**Oral Statement of**  
**Joseph H. Boardman, Administrator**  
**Federal Railroad Administration**  
**before U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer**  
**on Status of Positive Train Control Technology**

**September 23, 2008**

Senator Boxer:

The men and women of the Federal Railroad Administration, along with every railroader that I know are deeply affected and saddened by the deaths and injuries that resulted from the collision on September 12, 2008.

Positive Train Control would have prevented this collision.

Positive Train Control or PTC was first approved and then implemented on parts of the Northeast in 2000 by Amtrak. Through the leadership of Donna Mclean and Hunter Biden, the current Chair and Vice Chair of Amtrak, that PTC system is being scheduled for a full build out between Boston and Washington.

The PTC technology (ACSES) used in the Northeast works very well, and will meet the needs of railroads that are primarily passenger based, and it helps if Automatic Train Control and Cab Signals are already a part of the overall Safety Technology. However, it is a much different problem in the Los Angeles Basin.

Mixed use passenger and freight lines that operate in dense traffic areas such as the LA Basin need a PTC system that takes into account both short, light and faster moving commuter trains, and long, heavy, slower moving freight trains. Furthermore, it needs a PTC system based on new more efficient and effective technology that will add to and enhance safety going forward.

When something like this collision has happened, we all make the judgment that we have been waiting too long for this “elusive” technology and we are impatient in wanting a solution now. I share that impatience. I want action now, and you are providing help in making that happen.

This technology currently has one approved product that can be implemented now. BNSF Railway received FRA approval for its Electronic Train Management System version #1 (ETMS) in December of 2006. BNSF intends on using this product in 35 of its freight-only divisions, and is working on version #2 of the same system to use in mixed passenger-freight locations, but has not yet submitted their plan to the FRA. The Union Pacific Railroad has a similar product that it will begin testing in 2009.

The UP, BNSF and Metrolink must all be on the same basic system. That basic system has been understood and defined since 1999. The core features of any PTC must:

- Prevent train-to-train collisions (positive train separation)
- Enforce speed restrictions, including civil engineering restrictions (curves, bridges, etc.) and temporary slow orders.
- Provide protection for roadway workers and their equipment operating under specific authorities.

But the FRA Railroad Safety Advisory Committee (RSAC) working group that defined PTC understood that there was going to be more that could be done to improve safety with this technology including things like being able to:

- Provide warning of on-track equipment operating outside the limits of authority;
- Receive and act upon hazard information-when available-in a more timely and/or more secure manner (e.g., compromised bridge integrity, wayside detector data);
- Generate data for transfer to highway users to enhance warning at highway-rail crossings.

It is this GPS and wireless technology combined with the microprocessor and its software that holds the most promise for improved rail safety in the LA Basin.

Everyone involved in the development of this PTC technology effort--the NTSB, the FRA and our State partners, Rail Labor, the Railroads, and the RSAC working group--believe that now is the time for PTC. I believe it needs to be done now. Amtrak is leading the way with a system that works in the Northeast, I think we can expect that the UP and BNSF working with Metrolink will lead the way in the LA Basin.

Thank you for holding this meeting today.

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