



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

DEC 17 2008

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 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 fourth 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Clifford C. Eby".

Clifford C. Eby
Acting Administrator

Enclosures

January 1, 2009

**Fourth Report on Amtrak On-Time Performance
Submitted by the Federal Railroad Acting 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 the FRA's October 1, 2008 OTP report, an update on Amtrak OTP results and performance against FRA established goals.

(1) Recent OTP Improvement Actions

Southeast Corridor. In FY 2008, Amtrak benefited from reductions in freight train interference and slow orders 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, CSX freight train interference delays affecting Amtrak's Southeast Corridor trains dropped below two minutes per 100 train-miles for the last quarter of the fiscal year. CSX slow order delays along the corridor were also reduced throughout FY 2008; for example, September 2008 slow orders were 36 percent lower than the previous year.

These reductions in delays contributed to OTP improvements to Amtrak trains along the Southeast Corridor. For example, the *Auto Train's* FY 2008 endpoint OTP improved by 19.8 percentage points year-over-year and achieved a percent on time of 81.9 percent, surpassing the target OTP threshold of 80 percent agreed upon by Amtrak and CSX. The OTP of the other Southeast Corridor trains improved by 21.2 percentage points compared to 2007 and had an overall combined on-time performance of 50.5 percent in FY 2008. Further OTP improvements on the Southeast Corridor will depend on CSX's ability to continue reducing delays and applying strategies that have been successful in improving the *Auto Train's* operation to the other Amtrak trains along the corridor.

California Zephyr. The Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and Amtrak continue to implement their 2007 agreement to reduce delays on UP's portion of the *California Zephyr*, which extends from Denver, Colorado to Emeryville, California. Freight train interference delays affecting this portion of the route have recently decreased significantly as have slow order delays. As Amtrak and UP work toward further delay reductions on the *Zephyr*, Amtrak intends to continue incrementally removing time from the route's schedule that was added on a temporary basis when the agreement with UP was initially formed.

Complementing these efforts, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF) has been actively working with Amtrak to implement a performance improvement plan on the Chicago, Illinois to Denver, Colorado portion of the route.

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 UP have agreed to implement a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) on the Chicago-St. Louis corridor. The PIP along this corridor impacts Amtrak's *Lincoln Service*, which provides four daily roundtrips between Chicago, Illinois and St. Louis, Missouri, as well as the once daily *Texas Eagle*, which traverses the corridor as part of its route between Chicago, Illinois and San Antonio, Texas. Amtrak and UP met to initiate their PIP in

early November 2008. Amtrak has now identified and is making progress on a PIP for at least one route with each of the major class-I host railroads. A complete list of these PIP routes follows:

- CSX: Southeast Corridor (ongoing initiative, described above)
- NS: Chicago–Porter, Indiana
- CP: *Adirondack* (Schenectady, New York–Rouses Point, New York)
- CN: Chicago–Carbondale, Illinois
- BNSF: *California Zephyr* (the Chicago–Denver portion of the route¹)
- UP: Chicago–St. Louis, Missouri

Other Recent OTP Developments. The emphasis on Amtrak’s OTP that has emerged through Secretary Peters’ PIP initiative, the FRA’s facilitation of improvement plans, Congressional OTP Reports, and the recent report from the U.S. Department of Transportation’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) entitled “Root Causes of Amtrak Delays,” (<http://www.oig.dot.gov/item.jsp?id=2356>) in conjunction with Amtrak’s own efforts, has led to recent significant OTP improvements on certain host railroads. Norfolk Southern (NS) in recent months has worked to substantially reduce delays to Amtrak trains across their system. Amtrak observed a 59 percent year-over-year reduction in NS freight train interference (FTI) delays in November 2008. Amtrak has observed similar results from UP as it has heightened its focus on reducing FTI delays across its system as well. At the same time, Amtrak continues to experience significant delays from host railroad Canadian National (CN), which among Amtrak’s host railroads had the highest FTI delays in November 2008; three times greater than the next highest host railroad.

(2) Goals and Route Performance

Attachment A contains updated OTP statistics for all Amtrak routes for FY 2008. As the attachment illustrates, just over half the routes (21) had improvements in OTP (in terms of both improved percent on time and no decrease in effective speed) in FY 2008. Of those routes experiencing OTP improvement, a total of nine (five corridor-type and four long-distance trains) met or surpassed their FY 2008 OTP target.

Percent on time across the entire Amtrak system in FY 2008 was 71.2 percent, an increase of 2.6 percentage points over the previous year. This modest increase was largely driven by a 13 percent increase, year-over-year, in endpoint on time arrivals among long distance routes. Despite the noticeable increase in long distance OTP, these routes collectively produced a meager percent on time of 54.2 percent in FY 2008. Percent on time along the Northeast Corridor in FY 2008 was 78.9 percent, a 3.1 percent **decline** from FY 2007, while the other corridor-type routes had an **increase** of 3.1 percent over the previous year for an overall percent on time of 70.8 percent in FY 2008.

In terms of the 16 routes identified for performance improvement plans, nine experienced an improvement in OTP in FY 2008. Among the group, the *Carolinian* and *Adirondack* were the only corridor-type routes (out of seven) with **improved** OTP, while the *City of New Orleans* and *Texas Eagle* were the only long distance trains (out of nine) with a **decline** in OTP. The *City of New Orleans*, which had a relatively high performance base in FY 2007, suffered the biggest OTP decline in FY 2008 within the Amtrak system (a

¹ 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.

decline of 24 percentage points). Among the long distance routes with PIPs, two trains, the *Auto Train* and *Silver Meteor*, met or surpassed their FY 2008 OTP targets while none of the corridor-type services with PIPs attained their FY 2008 OTP targets.

Attachment A
Amtrak On-Time Performance: FY 2008
Year-End Totals for Fiscal Year 2008

	✓ Indicates both tests were met for OTP Progress	Test 1: Higher Percent On Time YTD – Sept. 2008 vs. YTD – Sept. 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		84.5%	(3.2%)	89.2%	(4.7%)	(0.4)
Regional Service		75.8%	(3.0%)	81.4%	(5.6%)	(0.3)
<i>Other Corridor Services (Goal proposed for FY 2012: 90%. Minimum target proposed for FY 2008: 70%)</i>						
Adirondack	✓	48.2%	38.0%	70.0%	(21.8%)	1.8
Blue Water		27.9%	(4.7%)	70.0%	(42.1%)	(0.2)
Capitols	✓	86.0%	11.4%	77.7%	8.3%	0.9
Carolinian	✓	39.3%	13.3%	70.0%	(30.7%)	1.5
Cascades		64.7%	5.0%	70.0%	(5.3%)	(1.3)
Downeaster		70.6%	(7.4%)	80.4%	(9.8%)	(0.8)
Empire Service		75.2%	13.5%	75.4%	(0.2%)	(0.1)
Ethan Allen Express	✓	43.7%	10.9%	70.0%	(26.3%)	0.8
Heartland Flyer	✓	51.6%	23.0%	70.0%	(18.4%)	2.3
Hiawatha		87.3%	(1.9%)	89.3%	(2.0%)	(0.6)
Hoosier State		41.5%	(1.2%)	70.0%	(28.5%)	0.2
Illini		48.6%	(20.4%)	73.2%	(24.6%)	(2.1)
Illinois Zephyr	✓	77.8%	12.6%	70.2%	7.6%	1.3
Keystone	✓	87.8%	2.4%	86.3%	1.5%	0.5
Lincoln Service		43.1%	0.3%	70.0%	(26.9%)	(0.3)
Maple Leaf	✓	45.8%	13.4%	70.0%	(24.2%)	0.9
Missouri Services		18.6%	(9.3%)	70.0%	(51.4%)	(0.3)
Pacific Surfliner	✓	76.1%	1.3%	77.8%	(1.7%)	0.0
Pennsylvanian	✓	86.7%	15.2%	75.2%	11.5%	0.9
Pere Marquette		22.7%	(0.5%)	70.0%	(47.3%)	(0.5)
Piedmont		70.1%	(4.3%)	77.5%	(7.4%)	(0.4)
San Joaquins	✓	82.6%	14.7%	72.4%	10.2%	1.4
Vermonter		40.7%	(17.9%)	70.0%	(29.3%)	(0.7)
Wolverines		26.3%	(7.2%)	70.0%	(43.7%)	(0.7)
<i>Long Distance Trains (Goal proposed for FY 2012: 85%. Minimum target proposed for FY 2008: 60%)</i>						
Auto Train	✓	81.9%	19.8%	66.7%	15.2%	1.2
California Zephyr	✓	30.1%	19.9%	60.0%	(29.9%)	2.9
Capitol Limited	✓	32.6%	9.2%	60.0%	(27.4%)	1.5
Cardinal		31.3%	(7.7%)	60.0%	(28.7%)	(1.0)
City of New Orleans		62.3%	(23.9%)	85.0%	(22.7%)	(1.0)
Coast Starlight	✓	60.8%	38.7%	60.0%	0.8%	1.3
Crescent	✓	66.9%	24.0%	60.0%	6.9%	0.8
Empire Builder		68.8%	(4.6%)	75.7%	(6.9%)	(0.2)
Lake Shore Limited	✓	58.0%	25.6%	60.0%	(2.0%)	2.6
Palmetto	✓	51.6%	27.2%	60.0%	(8.4%)	3.3
Silver Meteor	✓	66.5%	23.7%	60.0%	6.5%	1.8
Silver Star	✓	45.1%	20.3%	60.0%	(15.9%)	0.5
Southwest Chief	✓	65.4%	5.3%	65.1%	0.3%	0.0
Sunset Limited	✓	27.2%	13.7%	60.0%	(32.8%)	1.4
Texas Eagle		17.9%	(8.9%)	60.0%	(42.1%)	(0.8)