

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 8, 2018

Jean-Jacques Ruest  
Interim CEO  
Canadian National Railway  
935 de La Gauchetière Street West  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Dear Mr. Ruest:

We write to express our strong concern about recent reports that Canadian National (CN) Railway may not meet the statutory deadline to implement positive train control (PTC) safety technology, which could force Amtrak to shut down operations on CN's tracks. If true, this would only be the latest example of CN's continued failure to ensure timely and reliable Amtrak service on its tracks in Illinois.

Last week in his testimony before Congress, Amtrak CEO Richard Anderson revealed Amtrak's growing concern about CN's ability to meet the necessary PTC benchmarks by the end of the year required by statute to qualify for the additional time many railroads will need to complete PTC implementation. If CN does not meet the specific conditions required by Congress for an extension, Amtrak may be required to cease operations on CN's tracks by the end of this year. Given that Amtrak relies on CN's tracks for three of the eleven Amtrak routes that cross Illinois, shutting down Amtrak service on CN's tracks would be devastating for passenger rail in Illinois.

Unfortunately, this would only be the most recent example of CN's disregard for passenger rail service in Illinois. Amtrak routes running on CN tracks in Illinois are notorious for having unreliable on-time performance rates. Last year, Amtrak's Illini/Saluki route that runs from Chicago to Champaign and Carbondale reported only being on time 32 percent of the time because of CN continually giving preference to its freight trains over Amtrak trains despite the decades-old statutory requirement to prioritize passenger trains. Similarly, Amtrak's long distance train, the City of New Orleans, that runs the same route in Illinois before continuing on to New Orleans, reported being on-time only 41 percent of the time.

Aside from interfering with Amtrak's service, any further delay in PTC implementation prevents railroads from assuring the highest level of safety for travelers and rail workers. Congress understands the unique challenges involved with developing and implementing PTC, which is why Congress provided an extension of up to five years after the original deadline for railroads to install PTC if railroads meet specific conditions that demonstrate real progress towards implementation.

Failure to meet the statutory conditions for a PTC extension is simply unacceptable, and we urge you to do all that you can to ensure CN meets the statutory requirements and prevent any loss in Amtrak service. We request an update on CN's current progress on implementing PTC in Illinois as well as an update on what efforts CN is making to improve on-time performance in our state.

Sincerely,



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator