



## Amtrak On-Time Performance

### What's the Problem?

Poor service from many host railroads has caused chronic and excessive delays for millions of riders who rely on the Amtrak system. Freight trains caused 900,000 minutes of delay to Amtrak passengers in 2021—equivalent to traveling to the moon and back 100 times! Interference by freight trains is the most common source of delay for Amtrak passengers and the largest cause of poor on-time performance of Amtrak trains.

- An essential condition to the creation of Amtrak was, that freight or "host" railroads provide Amtrak passenger trains passage on their railroad and give them priority access or "preference" over freight trains, and that's been the law for nearly 50 years.
- Despite the law, host railroads often ignore their obligation to provide Amtrak passengers with preference over freight trains and put freight trains in front of Amtrak trains causing delay to Amtrak passengers.
- Today, a majority of the nearly 20 million passengers traveling on Amtrak National Network do so over freight or "host" railroads.
- 70% of the delays to Amtrak passengers on host railroads are caused by host railroads, yet Amtrak's share of train-miles on Class I railroads is approximately 4%.

### How Does This Impact Communities and Passengers in My District and Across the Amtrak National Network?

- Amtrak's on-time performance on most host railroads is poor and continues to decline today.
  - **In 2021, 14 of the 15 Amtrak long-distance routes operating over freight rail tracks did not meet the minimum threshold of acceptable service established by the Federal Railroad Administration Metrics & Standards ( $\geq 80\%$  OTP)**
- **These delays have real costs.** Amtrak's Inspector General has estimated that if Amtrak trains were able to operate reliably without freight train interference, Amtrak could realize annual savings of \$41.9 million, and one-time savings of \$336 million by reducing equipment replacement needs. This money—provided by America's passengers and taxpayers—could be invested in providing better Amtrak service across the country.
- **State corridor trains are impacted too.** One third of passengers on the *Cascades*, which operates between Seattle, WA and Eugene, OR, arrived late in 2021 due to host railroad delays.
- **Some passengers suffer worse than others.** Amtrak's on time performance on the Capitol Limited and Sunset Limited was only 28% in 2021.

## What Has Been Done to Try to Address the Issue?

- In 2008, in response to a dramatic deterioration in on time performance, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) put in place a process that would allow the Surface Transportation Board to investigate and address poor host performance.
  - PRIIA was effective in improving performance on host railroads, temporarily.
  - After PRIIA's passage, Amtrak's long distance on time performance went from 30% in 2006 to over 75% in 2009.
  - After PRIIA's passage, Amtrak's on time performance overall was above 80%, however, after legal challenges to PRIIA in 2014 it had plummeted below 70%.
- By 2014, the STB's ability to investigate and address poor on-time performance and host delays was effectively eliminated by a series of legal challenges from the host railroads.

## What Now? How Can We Improve On-Time Performance?

### #1 Hold the Host Railroads accountable for making your constituents late

	Host Railroad	2021 Grade
1	Canadian Pacific	A
2	Canadian National	A
3	BNSF	B+
4	CSX	B
5	Union Pacific	C+
6	Norfolk Southern	D-

Long Distance: 14 of 15 routes fail to meet standard			
Route	Class I Host Railroad	Percentage of On-Time Customers	Meet the 80% standard?
City of New Orleans	CN	83%	Met standard
Palmetto	CSX	62%	Failed to meet standard
Crescent	NS	57%	
Texas Eagle	BNSF, UP, CN	57%	
Lake Shore Limited	CSX, NS	56%	
Cardinal	NS, CSX	55%	
Coast Starlight	BNSF, UP	54%	
Empire Builder	BNSF, CP	54%	
Silver Meteor	CSX	49%	
Auto Train	CSX	44%	
Silver Star	CSX, NS	42%	
California Zephyr	BNSF, UP	37%	
Southwest Chief	BNSF	37%	
Capitol Limited	NS, CSX	28%	
Sunset Limited	BNSF, UP	28%	

### #2 Sign-on to the Rail Passenger Fairness Act (sponsored by Sen. Durbin and Rep. Payne) to ensure that passengers aren't illegally stranded by the freight railroads.

- Currently, only the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) can enforce preference in civil action.
- To date, the DOJ has initiated one enforcement action and that was in 1979.
- While that authority should remain with the DOJ, *Rail Passengers* urges that Congress act to extend the authority to enforce preference to Amtrak, just as any other company would have a right to go to court if its rights were being violated.

For more information, please visit [railpassengers.org/leg.resources](http://railpassengers.org/leg.resources)