



Positive Train Control Implementation of Surface Transportation Extension Act

FRCA POSITION

FRCA continues to support the railroad industry's efforts to implement Positive Train Control (PTC) systems by December 31, 2018.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

Overall: The Surface Transportation Extension Act of 2015, H.R. 3819, was signed into law (P.L. 114-73) on October 29, 2015.

The law provides railroads an extension — until at least Dec. 31, 2018 — to implement PTC systems. The U.S. Department of Transportation (US DOT) is allowed to extend the deadline for as long as two additional years in some cases, and be permitted to approve implementation in phases. A 2008 rail safety law, Public Law 110-432, required many freight and passenger railroads to develop plans for implementing a PTC system by Dec. 31, 2015.

PTC systems use communications and signaling technology to prevent accidents caused by excessive speed, train-on-train collisions and incorrect routing. The National Transportation Safety Board publicly stated that PTC technology would have prevented the fatal Amtrak derailment in Philadelphia on May 12, 2015.

With the December 31, 2015 deadline approaching, the nation's Class 1 railroads warned, that despite significant efforts and the expenditure of billions of dollars, they would not be able to meet the year-end deadline. In order to avoid violating the law, the railroads announced plans to phase-out freight and passenger traffic leading up to the December 31, 2015 deadline.

This would have resulted in chaos for the nation's transportation system and for various industrial and agricultural sectors. Numerous commodities, such as coal and grain, can only be shipped by rail, especially from certain areas of our country and/or over long distances. This disruption of rail service would have had a dramatic impact on freight shippers and the customers they serve, let alone negatively affecting our nation's economy.

FRCA joined with the railroads and other industry stakeholders urging the U.S. Congress to extend the PTC implementation deadline and to do so well ahead of the original December 31, 2015 deadline.

STATUS

The Federal Railroad Administration is required by the Act to submit to the U.S. Congress quarterly and annual reports on the data submitted by the railroads demonstrating the progress made on PTC implementation.

These reports can be accessed via <https://www.fra.dot.gov/Page/P0628>