News Release: Commuter Rail Industry Tracking Strong Progress on Positive Train Control

Strong and continuous progress is being made by the commuter rail industry towards installing and implementing Positive Train Control (PTC), according to an analysis by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA). These advancements reflect the commuter rail industry's commitment to safety and to implementing PTC by the statutory deadline.

PTC is a complex signaling and communications technology that commuter rail agencies are installing to offer a critical safety overlay on top of an already safe industry. In fact, rail is the safest surface transportation mode and traveling by commuter rail or intercity rail is 18 times safer than traveling by automobile.

The commuter rail industry is making substantial progress, and as of June 30, 2018:

- 91% of spectrum has been acquired;
- 85% of 13,698 pieces of onboard equipment have been installed on locomotives and cab cars etc.;
- 79% of 14,083 wayside (on track equipment) installations have been completed;
- 78% of back office control systems are ready for operation;
- 74% of 14,847 employees have been trained in PTC; and
- 34% of commuter railroads are in testing, revenue service demonstration, or are operating their trains with PTC.

"Every year, 30 commuter railroads across America safely carry passengers on 501 million trips," said APTA President and CEO Paul P. Skoutelas. "With safety as our number one priority, the commuter railroads are making strong and continuous progress in implementing Positive Train Control."

Under current law (49 U.S.C. 20157), commuter railroads are required to meet the following milestones by December 31, 2018. As defined in 49 U.S.C. 20157(a)(3)(B), they are to have:

- Installed all PTC hardware (wayside and onboard equipment);
- Acquired all necessary spectrum for PTC implementation;
- Completed all employee training;
- Initiated testing on at least one territory subject to the PTC requirement (or other criteria); and
- Submitted a plan and schedule to the Secretary of Transportation for implementing a PTC system.

Upon reaching these milestones by the end of 2018, the commuter railroads must implement PTC as soon as practicable and no later than December 31, 2020.

"Positive Train Control is a critical commuter rail safety enhancement," said SEPTA General Manager Jeffrey D. Knueppel. "Implementing PTC at SEPTA, during a challenging period of capital funding, has been an Authority-wide commitment. Throughout this effort, our in-house team has been working continuously with Amtrak, our freight partners, and third-party contractors to address technical and interoperability challenges. SEPTA trains on all 13 Regional Rail Lines are equipped and operating with PTC, and SEPTA is proud to have implemented this safety technology for our customers and employees."

"Implementing Positive Train Control in Chicago's dense and busy railroad network has been very challenging, but Metra is right where we said we'd be in terms of finishing the job," said Jim Derwinski, Metra's CEO/executive director. "Working with our freight partners, we expect to have PTC implemented or in revenue service demonstration on six of our 11 lines by the end of 2018, and to complete the job by 2020."

The commuter rail industry is moving aggressively to implement PTC as it faces considerable technical and financial constraints. At a time when the national transit state of good repair backlog stands at an estimated $90 billion, the commuter railroad industry's cost to implement PTC will exceed $4.1 billion, diverting funds from other critical infrastructure priorities. Since Congress mandated PTC, the federal government has awarded $272 million in PTC grants. Additionally, another $250 million was made available in May 2018.

PTC is an unparalleled technical challenge in scale, complexity, and time required. The challenges include: a limited number of PTC-qualified vendors simultaneously in demand by both the passenger and freight railroad industries to develop, design, and test this complex safety technology; diagnosing and resolving software issues, securing adequate access to track and locomotives for installation and testing, and achieving interoperability, as commuter rail systems operate in mixed traffic with other freight and passenger railroads.

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