

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 21, 2017

Mr. Norman Carlson
Chairman, Metra
547 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60661

Dear Chairman Carlson, Executive Director Orseno, and Metra Board Directors:

In light of the tragic Amtrak derailment in Washington this week that left at least three people dead and about 100 others injured, we write to ask Metra to provide the Illinois congressional delegation with an update on its ongoing efforts to implement positive train control (PTC) safety technology by the 2018 statutory deadline.

While the official cause of this week's Amtrak's crash is still being investigated, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has confirmed that the train was traveling at a speed more than double the posted limit before it derailed. Given that the train's excessive speed likely played a role in its derailment, it's possible that the fatal rail accident could have been avoided if PTC had been implemented along those tracks. PTC is a congressionally mandated safety system that uses technology to slow or stop speeding trains, preventing collisions and overriding human errors. Amtrak's CEO confirmed that while PTC was installed on the rail segment where the crash occurred, it was still being tested and not yet operational.

PTC could have also prevented two derailments that occurred on Metra trains in 2003 and 2005. These two crashes resulted in two fatalities, almost 200 injuries and millions of dollars in legal costs to Metra. Implementing PTC is vitally important to ensuring that Metra provides the utmost level of safety for the millions of riders who depend on Metra to travel and get to work every day. However, we understand the high costs and technological challenges that Metra has faced in developing and deploying this new technology. Recent reports indicate that implementing PTC will cost Metra around \$400 million and add \$15-20 million to Metra's annual operating costs. Commuter railroads around the country have faced similar challenges since the technology was mandated by Congress in 2008, which is why Congress moved to extend the implementation deadline and authorized \$199 million in the FAST Act to help commuter railroads implement PTC.

More can and should be done to assist commuter railroads in implementing PTC, and we stand ready to work with you to make sure more opportunities and resources are available to achieve the highest level of safety for Metra commuters and workers. In the meantime, we request that you report back to the Illinois congressional delegation on Metra's current progress on implementing PTC, the costs and challenges associated with implementation, and Metra's timeline for PTC installation and operation.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator