

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304

November 21, 2022

Mr. Stephen J. Gardner
Chief Executive Officer
National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak)
1 Massachusetts Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Mr. Gardner,

I am concerned by Amtrak's recent decision to suspend morning train service between Quincy and Chicago. Amtrak passenger service provides a vital link between communities in Illinois that my constituents rely on every day to access jobs, education, healthcare services, and their families. Abruptly cancelling service on these trains will have significant impacts on the daily lives of my constituents and the economies of the communities along the route. While I understand that Amtrak is experiencing workforce shortages due to the lingering impacts of the pandemic, Amtrak must do a better job of addressing foreseeable workforce issues to prevent unnecessary and harmful disruptions in passenger service.

Last week, Amtrak abruptly suspended morning service on the Carl Sandburg and Illinois Zephyr trains between Quincy and Chicago through January. Unfortunately, this is not the first time that Amtrak has reduced service on this route over the last year. These trains provide service to more than 5,000 passengers on average per month. Unfortunately, these riders now will face considerable travel disruptions over the next two months. The suspension also raises reasonable questions about how the reliability of the service Amtrak is providing will impact future ridership on these trains. While I understand you are providing charter bus service for the next two months to replace the suspended trains, this is not an acceptable substitute for reliable passenger rail service. I urge you to do all that you can to restore passenger service as soon as possible.

In the meantime, I encourage you to work together with the rail labor unions to implement a more reliable workforce plan that will avoid any disruptions of passenger service in the future. I also request a briefing on the current workforce plans, including hiring and training timelines, for all Illinois Amtrak routes to better understand Amtrak's efforts to ensure continued, reliable, and on-time passenger service is provided to all Illinois riders.

Sincerely,



Senator Richard J. Durbin