

# **Durbin, Duckworth press Metra, Amtrak, Freight Rail for update on positive train control safety technology**

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WASHINGTON—Following the tragic Amtrak derailment in Washington this week that left at least three people dead and about 100 others injured, U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) today pressed Metra, Amtrak, and the American Association of Railroads (AAR) to provide the Illinois Delegation with an update on their ongoing efforts to implement positive train control (PTC) safety technology in Illinois by the December 31, 2018 statutory deadline. PTC is a federally mandated computerized system that prevents derailments and other accidents caused by excessive speed and increases safety for rail passengers and workers.



“Implementing PTC is vitally important to ensuring that Metra, Amtrak, and the freight railroads provide the highest level of safety for millions of riders and rail workers in Illinois and around the country,” said Durbin and Duckworth. “Despite the challenges

involved, implementing PTC will save lives, and this week's fatal Amtrak crash underscores why more must be done to ensure PTC is operational by the upcoming deadline. We stand ready to work with Metra, Amtrak, and the freight railroads to make sure more resources are available to achieve the highest level of safety for Illinois rail passengers and rail workers.”

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has confirmed that Amtrak Train No. 501, which derailed in Washington this week, 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 had PTC been in operation along those tracks.

PTC safety technology integrates GPS, communications units, and a railroad's centralized dispatching system. Together, these components track trains, convey operating instructions, and monitor the crew's compliance. PTC will automatically stop a train if the system detects that a violation is about to occur.

However, when the 2008 Rail Safety Improvement Act mandated PTC implementation by 2015, there was no technology capable of achieving these safety objectives for all railroads. Our nation's railroads have had to develop it, facing significant costs and technological challenges along the way. In late 2015, Congress extended the December 31, 2015 PTC implementation deadline by at least three years to December 31, 2018, with the possibility for two additional years if certain requirements are met.