



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Railroad
Administration**

SEP 28 2016

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Mr. David Nichols
Vice President and Chief Transportation Officer
National Railroad Passenger Corporation
2955 Market Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

Re: FAST Act Speed Limit Action Plan

Dear Mr. Nichols:

This letter is in response to your July 2, 2016, email (revised on August 2, 2016), regarding the Speed Limit Action Plan (Action Plan) submission requirement contained in Section 11406 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) for the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak).

As stated in your Action Plan, all areas of the Amtrak Northeast Corridor (NEC), except the Main Line—Mill River to Springfield (MRS), (which does have a modified signal system in place), and the Amtrak Michigan Line (AML), have working Positive Train Control (PTC) in effect, specifically the Advanced Civil Speed Enforcement System (ACSES) on the NEC. PTC is scheduled for implementation on the MRS in two phases: Springfield to Hartford by December 2016 and the remainder of MRS by December 2017, after the construction of double track is completed. Incremental Train Control System (ITCS) is installed on the AML. Prior to the installation of PTC, Amtrak complied with the requirements of Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Safety Advisory (SA) 2015-03 and modified the signal system so that the ATC would enforce cab signal changes in order to ensure that safe train speeds were enforced for more than 20 miles per hour (mph) reductions from the maximum authorized approach speed to curves.

On the remainder of Amtrak's Routes outside of the NEC, specifically the Hudson Line and the routes on which Amtrak is a tenant and does not own the infrastructure, Amtrak is implementing its submitted Action Plan with the full cooperation of respective host railroads as necessary.

FRA has reviewed Amtrak's Action Plan and highlights the following Action Plan details:

1. Each main track location is identified where there is a reduction of more than 20 mph from the approach speed to a curve, bridge, or tunnel and the maximum authorized operating speed for trains at the curve, bridge, or tunnel.

2. The Action Plan describes the actions taken at the identified locations for warning and enforcing the maximum authorized speed. Amtrak is working with host railroads to make mandatory the communication between the locomotive engineer and another qualified crew member when approaching the listed speed restrictions.
3. The Action Plan contains milestones and target dates for completion of any action identified. Specifically, Amtrak promises that this Action Plan will go into full effect no later than 45 days after FRA's approval. The Plan states that the 45 days will be used to craft the various General Orders which will be issued for the specific routes and Rules Alerts for the use of supervisors as the basis for briefing Train and Engine (T&E) employees.
4. The Action Plan ensures compliance with the maximum authorized speed at each identified location. Amtrak states that all briefings will be documented in Amtrak's program based on Title 49 §217.9, *Program of operational tests and inspections; recordkeeping*, to ensure that all T&E employees are given instruction. The Action Plan also mentions that conference calls with question and answer sessions will be conducted with crew and supervisors in order to ensure that they understand the Action Plan and its requirements and are thus able to instruct and monitor the T&E employees who report to them. A "Rules Alert and Briefings" will also remind crews to be alert for any signage that protect the speed drops wherever host railroads chose to employ signs. Finally, the Action Plan offers good details and states that "after the Briefings on the Rules Alert have been completed and the Plan starts, there will be periodic efficiency testing of the crews to ensure that the speed restrictions are being observed and that they are communicating according to the General Orders to remind the engineer of the more than 20 mph drop. Amtrak will invite host railroad supervisors to conduct joint testing with Amtrak supervisors. Examination of the 217.9 efficiency testing records by System Operating Practices and field managers will verify that testing is occurring."

FRA has carefully reviewed your Action Plan and takes no exception as long as Amtrak adheres to its terms and conditions. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. John Mardente, Civil Engineer, Passenger Rail Division, at [REDACTED] or John.Mardente@dot.gov.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Karl Henry
Director, Office of Safety Analysis

bcc: Mr. Daniel Knot
Mr. Melvin Smith