

Amtrak Host Railroad Report Card 2018

Who delays passengers?

The Host Railroad Report Card grades each of the six Class I freight host railroads based on delays caused to Amtrak trains over the last 12 months.

1	Canadian Pacific	A
2	BNSF	B
3	Union Pacific	B-
4	CSX	B-
5	Canadian National	D-
6	Norfolk Southern	F

Average grade for all host railroads: **C**

Grades reflect the passenger experience

A	Most passengers are on-time
B	Passengers on some routes are late
C	Many passengers are very late
D	Most passengers are very late
F	Majority of passengers are severely late

Amtrak Route Grades 2018

How often are trains on-time at each station within 15 minutes of schedule?

State-Supported Trains	Route	Class I Freight Host Railroads	Percentage of trains on-time within 15 minutes	
<i>Pass = 80% on-time</i> <i>17 of 28 routes fail to achieve 80% standard</i>	Hiawatha	CP	96%	PASS
	Keystone	(other hosts)	91%	
	Capitol Corridor	UP	89%	
	New York - Albany	(other hosts)	89%	
	Carl Sandburg / Illinois Zephyr	BNSF	88%	
	Ethan Allen Express	CP	87%	
	Pere Marquette	CSX, NS	84%	
	Missouri River Runner	UP	83%	
	Springfield Shuttles	(other hosts)	82%	
	Downeaster	(other hosts)	81%	
	Hoosier State	CSX	80%	
	Pacific Surfliner	BNSF, UP	78%	
	Lincoln Service	CN, UP	76%	
	Blue Water	NS, CN	75%	
	Roanoke	NS	75%	
	Piedmont	NS	74%	
	Richmond / Newport News / Norfolk	CSX, NS	74%	
	San Joaquins	BNSF, UP	73%	
	Pennsylvanian	NS	71%	
	Adirondack	CN, CP	70%	
	New York - Niagara Falls	CSX	70%	
	Vermonteer	(other hosts)	67%	
	Cascades	BNSF, UP	64%	
	Maple Leaf	CSX	64%	
	Wolverine	NS, CN	60%	
	Heartland Flyer	BNSF	58%	
	Carolinian	CSX, NS	51%	
	Illini / Saluki	CN	37%	

Long Distance Trains

<i>Pass = 70% on-time</i> <i>14 of 15 routes fail to achieve 70% standard</i>	Auto Train	CSX	72%	PASS
	Palmetto	CSX	59%	FAIL
	Coast Starlight	BNSF, UP	55%	
	Cardinal	NS, CSX	53%	
	City of New Orleans	CN	51%	
	California Zephyr	BNSF, UP	48%	
	Silver Meteor	CSX	47%	
	Empire Builder	BNSF, CP	44%	
	Southwest Chief	BNSF	43%	
	Lake Shore Limited	CSX, NS	41%	
	Texas Eagle	BNSF, UP, CN	37%	
	Capitol Limited	NS, CSX	36%	
	Silver Star	CSX, NS	36%	
	Crescent	NS	29%	
	Sunset Limited	BNSF, UP	26%	

Why are Amtrak trains delayed by freight trains?

Frequently Asked Questions on Amtrak and Host Railroad Performance

1. What is a “host railroad”?

Most of Amtrak’s network consists of tracks owned, maintained, and dispatched by highly profitable freight railroads, known as “host” railroads where Amtrak uses their tracks. Most of the trains on these rail lines are the freight railroads’ own freight trains. Because the freight railroads make all dispatching decisions about which trains have priority, freight railroads have a tremendous amount of influence over Amtrak’s operations on their lines. Every year, Amtrak pays host railroads millions of dollars for use of their tracks and other resources needed to operate Amtrak trains.

2. Why doesn’t Amtrak own all of its rail lines?

Amtrak owns only 3% of the 21,400 route-miles traveled by Amtrak trains, primarily on the Northeast Corridor. The rest are mostly owned by freight railroads. Prior to Amtrak’s creation in 1971, railroads provided both freight and passenger services. However, because the railroads were losing money on their passenger trains, Congress created Amtrak to relieve the private railroads of their obligation to operate passenger trains while retaining an efficient and economical way to transport large numbers of people in areas all across the country. In return for relieving freight railroads of this obligation, there were two very important conditions:

- a. Amtrak would retain access to the railroads’ lines in order to operate passenger trains; and*
- b. Amtrak trains would receive priority over freight trains.*

3. What distinguishes host railroads with good Amtrak performance?

Host railroads typically achieve good Amtrak performance – meaning Amtrak trains consistently operate with limited delay over their rail lines – through a combination of the following:

- *A commitment to providing quality service for Amtrak’s passengers;*
- *An active partnership with Amtrak, where both sides work collaboratively and the host respects Federal law which protects the rights of our nation’s passengers; and*
- *A well-disciplined operation, which benefits both Amtrak and freight customers alike.*

4. How does Amtrak evaluate host performance?

Amtrak evaluates host performance based on “host responsible delay minutes delay per 10,000 train-miles,” which measures how much delay each host railroad causes to Amtrak trains. The measure is normalized by the number of miles traveled by each train (a “train-mile”) so that routes of different lengths, and hosts with different levels of Amtrak service, can be compared to each other.

5. What does a poor grade represent?

Put in perspective, a host receiving an “F” typically forces each Amtrak train on a particular route to wait more than an hour per trip on average for freight trains alone, and often forces many Amtrak trains to wait for 3 hours or more. This is an unreasonable inconvenience to our nation’s passengers. Imagine you were on a flight and your plane had to circle the destination airport for hours while cargo flights were given priority to use the runway!

6. How much control do hosts have over the problem?

Host railroads are in control: they make all dispatching decisions regarding which trains are allowed to go first and which trains must wait. Federal law requires Amtrak passenger trains to receive preference over freight transportation, but the largest cause of delay to Amtrak trains on host railroads is “Freight Train Interference,” typically caused by a freight railroad requiring an Amtrak passenger train to wait so that its freight trains can operate first.

Host railroads often delay Amtrak trains, carrying hundreds of passengers, in favor of their trains carrying coal, garbage, crude oil, empty freight cars, or any other freight that the host prioritizes over Amtrak passengers. Sometimes a host railroad will make Amtrak passengers follow the same freight train – moving at a much slower speed than a passenger train – for 50 to 100 miles, or may even make Amtrak passengers wait while individual freight cars are switched into or out of industrial facilities.

7. Why are hosts allowed to prioritize freight over passenger?

Actually, the freight companies are forbidden from doing that. By Federal law, with only very few exceptions, Amtrak passenger trains must be given preference over freight trains on any rail line. Unfortunately, only the Department of Justice can enforce this law, and it has brought only one enforcement action against a freight company in Amtrak’s history, and that was 40 years ago! As a result, freight railroads suffer no significant consequences for prioritizing their freight over our rail passengers.

8. If a train is always late, then why not just change the schedule?

Amtrak schedules are negotiated with freight railroads and already include substantial amounts of padding, known as “recovery time,” to allow trains to be on time even when there are delays. Amtrak has sometimes tried lengthening schedules, but this approach is usually ineffective at improving performance on freight railroads because some freight railroads use this additional time in the schedule to continue to prioritize their own trains, resulting in even more delays to Amtrak passengers. Longer schedules also increase Amtrak’s crew and equipment costs and are less convenient for passengers.

9. Is there any incentive for freight railroads to deliver Amtrak trains on time?

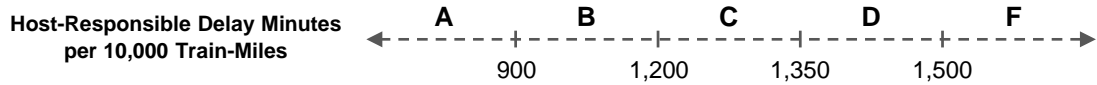
Amtrak offers financial incentives to host railroads for providing reliable performance, however these incentives have proven to be ineffective for some hosts, which continue to prioritize their trains and delay Amtrak passengers even though they could earn financial incentives for good performance.

10. Can trains “make up” lost time?

Trains cannot take a different route or travel faster to “make up” time lost due to host railroad delays. Each stretch of rail line has a specific speed limit that accounts for the characteristics of the track and the train itself, which is reflected in the schedule, and Amtrak crews never compromise safety to get to a destination on-time.

Notes

1. Amtrak measures host railroad performance based on “minutes of host-responsible delay per 10,000 train-miles,” which measures the minutes of delay caused by each host, normalized by the number of miles traveled by each train and multiplied by 10,000.
2. Grades indicate aggregate host-responsible delays across all routes on each host. Performance on specific routes can vary.
3. Grades are awarded on the following scale:



4. 900 host-responsible delay minutes per 10,000 train-miles is roughly correlated to performance that results in Amtrak trains that are 80% on-time.
5. Canadian National’s Quebec operations are excluded from the report card calculations.
6. “On-time performance” (OTP) is defined as the percentage of stations at which a train arrives within 15 minutes of the time in the public schedule.
7. OTP figures are based on 2018 calendar year performance.
8. The route grade table only lists Class I freight host railroads that host more than 15 miles of the given route, using the following abbreviations:
 - BNSF BNSF Railway
 - CN Canadian National Railway
 - CP Canadian Pacific Railway
 - CSX CSX Transportation
 - NS Norfolk Southern Railway
 - UP Union Pacific Railroad