

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Metra marks completion of major PTC milestone

Most of commuter rail industry also on track to meet 2018 requirements

CHICAGO (Sept. 17, 2018) – Metra today celebrated the completion of the installation of Positive Train Control (PTC) components on all its trains and on all its communications and signal systems along its train lines, a major achievement on its way to implementing the federally mandated safety system.

Under the PTC legislation, completing the installation of components is one of the four milestones that must be reached by the end of this year in order to receive more time to implement PTC across the entire system. Of the other three milestones, Metra has already acquired the needed radio spectrum and in October it will have completed the training of its workers and started a revenue service demonstration project on one of its lines, the Rock Island Line.

“Implementing Positive Train Control has been a long, difficult and expensive undertaking, and we are happy that we are now seeing it so close to completion,” said Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski. “I want to congratulate the Metra workers whose dedication and expertise got us here today. And I want our riders to know that our already safe system is about to get a whole lot safer.”

Derwinski was joined by Federal Railroad Administration Administrator Ronald Batory and Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) General Manager Jeffrey D. Knueppel, who also serves as chairman of the Subcommittee on Commuter Rail PTC of the American Public Transportation Association. Mr. Batory and Mr. Knueppel talked about commuter railroads’ commitment to safety and how they are dealing with the unparalleled technological and financial challenges in scale, complexity, and time required for PTC implementation.

Nationwide, as of June 30, 2018:

- 91 percent of spectrum has been acquired;
- 85 percent of onboard equipment has been installed;
- 79 percent of trackside installations have been completed;
- 78 percent of back office control systems are ready for operation;
- 74 percent of employees have been trained in PTC; and
- 34 percent of commuter railroads are in testing, revenue service demonstration, or are operating their trains with PTC.

Metra is responsible for installing PTC on all trains and along the five lines it controls – Metra Electric, Milwaukee District North, Milwaukee District West, Rock Island and SouthWest Service. The owners of the other lines in the Metra system are responsible for installing PTC along their lines and building the back-office PTC system – BNSF Railway for the BNSF Line, Union Pacific Railroad for the three UP lines and CN for the Heritage Corridor and North Central Service lines.

BNSF Railway already has implemented PTC, and Union Pacific is expected to do so later this year. Metra will start a revenue service demonstration on the Rock Island Line in October and on the SouthWest Service Line later this year. The Metra Electric and Milwaukee District West lines will follow next year and the final three will follow in 2020. The entire system will be fully operational by the end of 2020.

For Metra, PTC is expected to cost about \$400 million, and funding that work has been a major challenge. While Metra has received about \$43 million in federal PTC grants, it will have to pay rest of the bill out of its already inadequate capital resources. PTC will also add about \$15 million to \$20 million to Metra’s operating costs each year.

Another challenge is interoperability. Chicago is the most complex railroad network in the country, with 1,300 to 1,400 trains operating over multiple railroads every day, including nearly 700 Metra trains. The PTC mandate requires all PTC systems to be interoperable: any train operating over another railroad’s tracks must be able to communicate with the back office of that railroad’s PTC system, in addition to its own system.

That means Metra trains must be able to talk to freight railroad back offices, such as BNSF, UP and CN, and vice versa, and must be able to do that seamlessly. On the SouthWest Service Line alone, Metra trains must be able to talk to the back offices of five different systems.

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About Metra

Metra is one of the largest and most complex commuter rail systems in North America, serving Cook, DuPage, Will, Lake, Kane and McHenry counties in northeastern Illinois. The agency provides service to and from downtown Chicago with 242 stations over 11 routes totaling nearly 500 route miles and approximately 1,200 miles of track. Metra operates nearly 700 trains and provides nearly 290,000 passenger trips each weekday.

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