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September 18, 2015

The Honorable John Thune, Chairman
United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
United States Senate SD-511
Washington, DC 20510

RE: PTC compliance for Music City Star commuter rail – Nashville,
Tennessee

Dear Senator Thune:

Thank you for your response concerning the upcoming deadline for the
implementation of Positive Train Control (PTC) systems.

In moving forward with the legislation of the DRIVE Act and how it
relates to extending the PTC system deadline, you requested additional
information concerning issues and challenges that could arise should the
statutory deadline fail to be extended, and what actions were being
considered or analyzed as a result of the issues and challenges of the
implementation deadline.

As you are aware, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has been
overwhelmed with the task of reviewing, inspecting, and testing this new
technology for all classes of railroad. The Music City Star operates on
32 miles of track controlled by the Nashville and Eastern Railroad
(NERR, a short line freight railroad). The service carries approximately
1,100 passengers daily during six trips – three in the morning and three
in the afternoon. It is the only commuter rail service in Middle
Tennessee. Presently, we are still awaiting word from the FRA on type-
approval, which has yet to be given. We understand that it will take
approximately one-year from the completion of our PTC installation for
FRA to inspect, review and approve what is being asked to be finished
by December 2015.

To wit, should the installation not be achieved, there is no immediate
safety concern for the continued operation of the Music City Star.
Freight and commuter rail have different operating windows on this line
so that there is very minimal risk of conflict between the two.

The Honorable John Thune

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Safety for the passengers and crew of the Music City Star is already operating at a safety level that is above the expected class of railroad. The safety record for NERR has been excellent during the last nine years. The few at-grade accidents that have occurred have been deemed motorist error, and the train has had no major derailments. Therefore, we can see no negative impact if PTC is not implemented by December 31, 2015.

Let me state, however, that while we do not foresee any negative safety impact for the Music City Star, should there be penalties or liquidated damages for failure to comply with the installation deadline, it could result in the financial crippling of our commuter rail program and the NERR as a short-line railroad. NERR employs approximately 45 employees.

I hope that this information will assist you in your endeavors to modify the December 31, 2015 PTC implementation deadline. Should you have any questions, or desire additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at steve.bland@nashville.gov.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen G. Bland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen G. Bland
Chief Executive Officer
Regional Transportation Authority of Middle Tennessee
and Nashville MTA