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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
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WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

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May 12, 2017

The Honorable Calvin L. Scovel III
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue Southeast
Washington, D.C. 20590

Inspector General Scovel:

It has come to my attention that several commuter railroads are at risk for not meeting the 2018 statutory deadline for the installation of positive train control (PTC) system hardware, completion of applicable employee training, and acquisition of necessary spectrum. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has reported that, as of December 2016, passenger railroads had equipped just 24 percent of route miles and 41 percent of locomotives with PTC.

From the time PTC was mandated in 2008, federal programs have provided grants and loans to assist railroads with installation. The Department of Transportation (DOT), through the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the FRA, has provided support for PTC installation across a variety of programs, including the Railroad Safety Technology Grants Program, Railroad Rehabilitation and Improvement Financing Program, and State of Good Repair Formula Grants Program.

The variety of programs providing direct funding and financing make it difficult to gauge the exact amount the federal government has committed to PTC. Moreover, it is not clear whether the funds have been fully utilized or properly spent. As such, I write to request that your office review all direct funding and financing allocated by the DOT for implementation of PTC since 2008. Please report on the results of this review in accordance with the following schedule.

By September 30, 2017:

- A list of railroads that have received federal funding or financing support;
- To the greatest extent feasible, a description of each project fully or partially funded with federal assistance; and
- To the greatest extent feasible, an evaluation of the visibility FRA and FTA maintain over funding allocation.

By April 1, 2018:

- A comprehensive analysis of whether recipients have used awarded funds completely and efficiently.

Given the approaching 2018 deadline, I consider this request a priority. Therefore, I would greatly appreciate receiving this report in accordance with the schedule above. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



JOHN THUNE
Chairman

cc:

The Honorable Bill Nelson, Ranking Member