

# ON-TIME PERFORMANCE

On-time performance (OTP) is a tool used to measure train performance, calculated by taking the total number of trains arriving “on-time” at the end-point of the run divided by the total number of trains operated on the run.

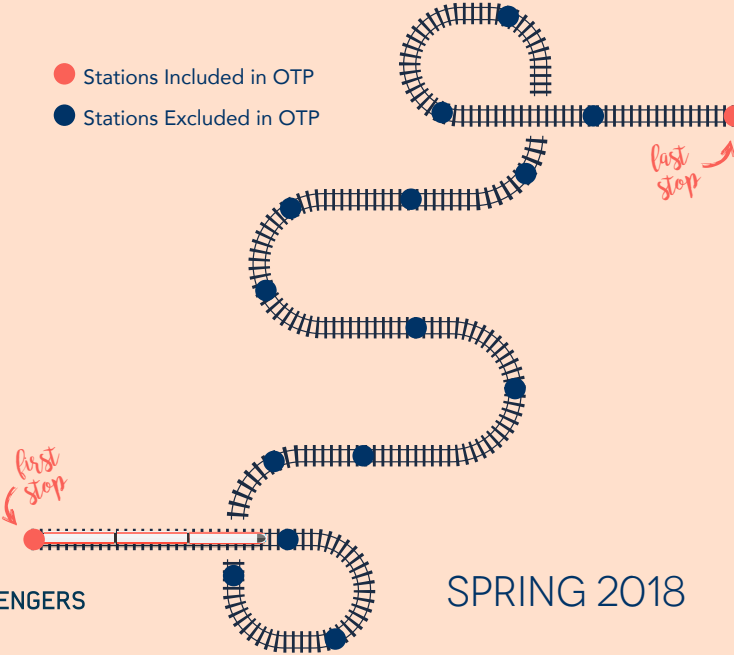
## WHEN IS A TRAIN “ON-TIME”?

- A train must arrive at the station within the allowed number of minutes of its scheduled arrival time. The number of minutes varies based on the number of total miles traveled.
- Trains traveling 250 miles or less are allowed a 10-minute tolerance.
- Trains traveling over 550 miles are allowed a 30-minute tolerance (the maximum cushion allowed).

$$\text{OTP} = \frac{\text{Total number of trains arriving "on-time" at the end-point}}{\text{Total number of trains operated on the run}}$$

## END-POINT... FOR WHOM?

- Amtrak offers financial incentives to host railroads that perform well, but OTP is currently only calculated and measured at the end-point of a train route.
- Rail Passengers has advocated before the Surface Transportation Board that Amtrak should be able to measure “all-stations” OTP rather than just “end-point.”
- End-point measurement means a passenger could get off the Cardinal in Charlottesville, VA three hours late and still be counted as “on-time” if the train arrives in New York City within 30 minutes of its scheduled arrival.
- Only around 10% of train passengers will ride a given long distance train from start to finish. All-stations OTP will ensure fairness for both small town and big city passengers.



# MAIN CAUSES OF PASSENGER TRAIN DELAYS

## TRAIN INTERFERENCE DELAYS

The most common source of delays for Amtrak, these delays are caused primarily when passengers are behind a freight train. By law, Amtrak is required to receive priority over freight trains when operating on freight railroad tracks, though enforcement has proved difficult.

# EXPECT DELAYS

## TRACK & SIGNAL DELAYS

These delays stem from problems with the tracks or the signals, maintenance work being done on the tracks or signaling systems, and speed restrictions.

## OPERATIONS DELAYS

Related to the late arrival and turning of train equipment at an initial terminal, terminal movements, and train crew related delays.

## EQUIPMENT DELAYS

Delays caused by equipment failure and unplanned equipment servicing. Includes delays resulting from disabled passenger trains along the corridor.

## DELAYS BY THE NUMBERS

Only **43%** of passengers on Amtrak's long-distance trains arrive at their destinations on time.  
**70%** of delays are cause by host-railroads.

With over **72%** of Amtrak train miles traveling over freight railroad-owned infrastructure, train interference is the most common source of delays for passengers in the U.S.

Only **16%** of the total freight network is utilized by passenger trains, and many state corridors have invested in significant capacity upgrades to ensure that passengers don't encumber freight operations.

## LEGAL CHALLENGES TO OTP

When Amtrak was formed through the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970, it assumed the common carrier obligations of the private rail companies in exchange for the right to priority access of their tracks. There have been a number of governmental and legal challenges to uphold this agreement.

- With the introduction of the OTP protections included in the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008, Amtrak's overall OTP went from 75% in 2008 to nearly 85% in FY2009.
  - The **Missouri River Jumper** went from 11% to 95%.
  - The **Texas Eagle** improved to 96%, from 22%.
  - The **California Zephyr** was able to jump from 5% to 78% OTP.
- After PRIIA's OTP protections were struck down by the courts in 2014, freight interference incidents tripled, and Amtrak's on-time performance plummeted to 42%.
  - Some passengers suffered worse than others—the **Capitol Limited's** OTP fell all the way to 1.6%.
- That sharp swing tells us that there is no structural basis for the delays and that dispatching and preference are key drivers of delays and interference.
- The Surface Transportation Board—along with thirteen supporting intervenors—including the Rail Passengers Association, its state affiliates, and the U.S. Conference of Mayors—argued that it had the right to establish metrics by virtue of its authority to adjudicate complaints brought by Amtrak, and any other result would thwart the will of Congress.



To learn more about OTP, visit [www.railpassengers.org](http://www.railpassengers.org).