Positive Train Control

Safety is Amtrak’s top priority. Amtrak is a leader in the installation of Positive Train Control (PTC), a safety technology designed to match train speed to track conditions for improved safety. PTC provides an added layer of safety on top of the cab signal and Automatic Train Control safety systems already in place. Installation and maintenance of PTC is the responsibility of the railroad that controls the track. Amtrak owns relatively few miles of the infrastructure we use – about 97% of our system route-mileage is owned by other railroads that host our trains.

Amtrak Infrastructure

In December 2015, Amtrak activated PTC on track between New York and Washington, D.C., completing installation on most Amtrak-owned infrastructure on the Northeast Corridor spine. PTC has been installed between Boston and New Haven since 2000. The only exceptions are seven miles, all of which are located in or adjacent to terminal areas where trains move slower and automatic train control systems are in service.

Of note, Amtrak is not responsible for installing PTC on the following segments of the NEC which it doesn’t control, between New York and Boston: Harold Interlocking east of New York Penn Station is the responsibility of the LIRR, and Metro-North Railroad is responsible for the 56 mile New Rochelle-New Haven segment owned by the states of New York and Connecticut.

Amtrak is scheduled to activate PTC on the 104 mile Harrisburg Line in February.

Amtrak has also installed and is operating PTC along the 97 miles of track it owns in Michigan and Indiana, where PTC was introduced in 2002.

Amtrak is working on installation of PTC on other lines, including the 60 mile Springfield line (where a major double-tracking project funded by the state of Connecticut is underway), the 105 mile Hudson line between Poughkeepsie and the Schenectady area (leased by Amtrak), and the 135 mile Dearborn-Kalamazoo segment of the Michigan line owned by Michigan, as well as the Chicago Union Station terminal areas.

Host Railroads

Most of the 21,000-mile national network that Amtrak operates over is owned by other railroads that host our trains. The host is responsible for installation on their infrastructure. Amtrak has installed PTC on our locomotives that operate over host railroads. Additionally, Amtrak crews will be trained to operate over each host railroad route when PTC is installed and certified by the FRA on the route.