

Preventing Another Railroad Disaster

Senators from both parties proposed a piece of legislation aimed at improving passenger rail safety, reauthorizing Amtrak services, and improve existing rail infrastructure yesterday. The bill, "[Railroad Reform, Enhancement, and Efficiency Act](#)," was introduced by Sen. Roger Wicker (R-Miss.) and Sen. Cory Booker (D-N.J.).

This bill, working its way through Congress, was introduced in the wake of the tragic Amtrak train derailment that occurred in Philadelphia resulting in multiple lives lost and a multitude of passengers suffering serious injuries.

The legislation includes provisions aimed at increasing rail safety such as:

- Advancing deployment of Positive Train Control technology by authorizing grants and prioritizing loan applications to support its implementation.
- Requiring speed limit action plans to address automatic train control modifications, crew communication, and other speed enforcement issues.
- Requiring grade crossing action plans to facilitate and improve state grade crossing safety efforts.
- Encouraging the use of confidential close call reporting system programs to identify hazards before they lead to accidents.
- Addressing other important safety issues such as signal protection, signage, alerters, and track inspection.

The legislation would also implement measures to improve existing infrastructure and services such as:

- Consolidating existing grant programs to focus resources on the most critical safety and infrastructure improvements.
- Establishing a working group for the restoration of passenger rail service east of New Orleans and creates a competitive grant program for fiscally-sustainable routes, potentially including the restoration of service abandoned after Hurricane Katrina.
- Authorizing a federal-state partnership to achieve a state-of-good-repair for infrastructure controlled by states or Amtrak, including on the Northeast Corridor.

At Shapiro, Appleton & Duffan, we believe the health and safety of rail passengers should be paramount when crafting policies affecting Amtrak and other major railroad companies. Hopefully this new legislation will gain traction and help us move in an effort to prevent another terrible derailment tragedy.