United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 30, 2015

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
S-230, US Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Harry Reid
Minority Leader
S-221, US Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader McConnell and Leader Reid:

We write to address the approaching statutory deadline for the full implementation of positive train control (PTC) safety technology. As reported in a recent GAO study, it is increasingly clear that our nation's freight and passenger railroads are unable to meet the December 31, 2015 implementation deadline. We believe it is important to ensure that the railroads complete implementation of PTC in an expeditious manner without any unnecessary disruptions to our national rail network. With this in mind, Congress must act now to extend the looming deadline to provide certainty to businesses and individuals that rely on the railroads while providing a clear timeline for meeting the PTC requirements set forth in the Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (RSIA).

When implemented, PTC will be a critical safety component of our national rail network. Full implementation is critical to the safety of the men and women who operate our nation's trains, the millions of passengers that move around the country and the thousands of manufacturers, farmers and ranchers that depend on rails to move world-class products to market. That is why it remains essential for Congress to hold railroads accountable to efficiently complete the PTC requirements set forth in RSIA. We must also do so in a way that acknowledges current constraints as the Senate did when it passed the bipartisan DRIVE Act.

Railroads play a vital role in our nation's economy. We cannot afford a disruption of rail service, which could occur if Congress does not extend this deadline. Myriad businesses rely on dependable service and would be unnecessarily hurt by a slowdown in service, whether it is a farmer looking to sell this year's harvest, a sawmill moving logs or an energy company delivering fuel. Additionally, millions of passengers that depend on reliable service to commute locally as well as nationally will face preventable challenges.

It is important that we extend this deadline in a responsible way that ensures smooth implementation of this new technology with measurable benchmarks. It is also imperative that Congress take up this issue immediately, as railroads will begin to alter their service standards weeks before the actual deadline. We appreciate your attention to this time-sensitive manner, and stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,

Jon Tester
United States Senator

Jerry Moran
United States Senator

Tom Carper
United States Senator

Orrin G. Hatch
United States Senator

Claire McCaskill
United States Senator

Pat Roberts
United States Senator

Tom Udall
United States Senator

Michael Enzi
United States Senator

Mark R. Warner
United States Senator

Mike Crapo
United States Senator

Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

Johnny Isakson
United States Senator

Joe Manchin
United States Senator

David Vitter
United States Senator

Chris Coons
United States Senator

John Barrasso, M.D.
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

Mark Kirk
United States Senator

Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Dan Coats
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Roy Blunt
United States Senator

Heidi Heitkamp
United States Senator

John Boozman
United States Senator

John Hoeven
United States Senator

Dean Heller
United States Senator

Jeff Flake
United States Senator

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator

Cory Gardner
United States Senator

Steve Daines
United States Senator

M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator

David Perdue
United States Senator

Thom Tillis
United States Senator

Joni Ernst
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

Richard Burr
United States Senator

Roger Wicker
United States Senator

Tim Scott
United States Senator

Ted Cruz
United States Senator

James Risch
United States Senator

James Lankford
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Bill Cassidy
United States Senator