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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

May 12, 2017

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street Northwest
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

Beginning in 2012, both the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Government Accountability Office (GAO) began reporting on railroads' progress to meet the 2015 statutory deadline for the implementation of positive train control (PTC) systems, highlighting specific challenges for commuter railroads such as difficulties securing vendors to provide PTC components. In September 2015, GAO issued a report that found nearly all railroads would not meet the mandated deadline. The report included a recommendation to improve FRA's oversight and transparency in railroads' efforts to implement PTC.

On October 29, 2015, the Positive Train Control Enforcement and Implementation Act of 2015 was signed into law, which extended the deadline for the installation of PTC system hardware, completion of employee training, and acquisition of necessary spectrum to 2018. Although most railroads will implement PTC on schedule, I am concerned that several commuter railroads are at-risk for not meeting the 2018 statutory deadline.

In light of these concerns, I request that GAO complete a study providing a status update on commuter railroads' progress in implementing PTC. Specifically, the report should:

- Identify commuter railroads projected not to meet the deadline;
- Explain the reasons why some commuter railroads are projected to comply with the deadline, while others are not;
- For the commuter railroads that are not projected to meet the deadline, provide recommendations for management, technical, or other changes to ensure compliance; and
- For the FRA, provide recommendations on the ways it can improve its compliance projections using its current legal authority.

I request this report by March 1, 2018, with periodic progress updates to my staff. Thank you for your attention to this request, which I consider a priority given the approaching 2018 deadline.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Thune". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

JOHN THUNE
Chairman

cc:

The Honorable Bill Nelson, Ranking Member