



FIVE PLEAD GUILTY TO WIRE FRAUD AND CONSPIRACY TO COMMIT WIRE FRAUD

Activity Date: July 21, 2026

Date Posted: September 23, 2026

Case Number: 23-0113-I

Web Summary: OIG-WS-2026-350

Three current or former Amtrak employees were among five defendants who pleaded guilty between July 1 and July 21, 2026, in U.S. District Court for the Central District of Illinois to wire fraud and conspiracy to commit wire fraud. The current or former employees were an onboard services employee based in Chicago, Illinois; a trainmaster based in Plainfield, Illinois; and a former conductor based in Peoria, Illinois. Corey Ames of Kankakee, Illinois, and Erica Sangster of Chicago, Illinois, also pleaded guilty.

Our investigation found that the five defendants submitted false information to the Small Business Administration and participating lenders to receive Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) advances, Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans, and PPP loan forgiveness. Octavia Murphy, who was previously sentenced in this case, orchestrated the scheme in which she recruited Amtrak employees and others to obtain EIDL advances and PPP loans using false information, including fraudulent claims that the defendants operated small businesses before and during the pandemic. In exchange, Murphy received kickbacks from the co-conspirators. As a result of the scheme, the defendants fraudulently obtained approximately \$93,000 in EIDL advances and \$74,428 in PPP loans.

Judicial proceedings for seven additional codefendants, including another Amtrak employee, are ongoing.