Each of the seven major railroads in North America owns between 20,000 and 40,000 miles of track and runs between 1000 and 5000 trains per day. Moving trains on such a complex network requires meticulous planning by hundreds of dispatchers. A movement plan is a detailed plan for moving trains in a rail network over a time horizon of 8 to 12 hours. It is also called a meet-pass plan because it involves planning meet locations where trains traveling in opposite directions can get past each other as well as pass locations where fast trains can get past slower trains traveling in the same direction. Dispatchers develop movement plans manually. We developed and implemented a novel algorithm at a major railroad company to automatically dispatch trains to increase average train velocities and save up to $800 million per year.

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