



1 North Dearborn Street | Suite 750 | Chicago, IL 60602

June 8, 2026

The Honorable David A. Fink
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Letter of Support for CRISI

Dear Administrator Fink:

Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership supports the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) application, on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program, for funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program. The CREATE Program is the largest public-private partnership of its kind, involving the nation's rail industry and all levels of government.

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership is the designated Local Workforce Innovation Area and serves as the public workforce system for the City of Chicago and Cook County. In this role, we administer federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds and oversee a regional network of programs that deliver essential services to job seekers. These services include personalized career planning, occupational training, supportive services, and direct job placement assistance, all aimed at building pathways to meaningful and sustainable employment.

Given the scale and economic impact of the proposed project, we believe there is a significant opportunity to align infrastructure investment with workforce development efforts. Through our network of workforce providers, American Job Centers, training partners, and community-based organizations, The Partnership can support outreach, recruitment, candidate preparation, and workforce pipeline development efforts that help maximize the project's impact on local communities.

Federal funding will advance CREATE's Rock Island Connection project (P2), the next phase of the larger 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project, which will construct a flyover bridge to eliminate a major chokepoint and reduce conflicts between freight and passenger trains. P2 directly aligns with the goals of CRISI by improving safety, reliability, and travel times for both passenger and freight trains in the country's most congested rail terminal. P2 is necessary to fully realize the delay reductions for freight rail users at Belt Junction once passenger trains are separated from freight traffic.

A key benefit of the project is to reduce conflicts between freight and passenger trains in the corridor, which use the same tracks at the Belt Junction. Freight operators run 90 trains through the corridor daily, Amtrak runs 6 weekly Cardinal trains (serving 98,583 riders in fiscal year 2025), and Metra currently runs 30 weekday SWS trains through the corridor (serving 976,376 riders in 2024). Because passenger trains are prioritized, freight trains are curtailed at least twice daily on the corridor, during peak morning and afternoon commuting periods (totaling six hours daily) and occasionally during non-peak periods. Rerouting Metra SWS using the P2 bridge will reduce the state of good repair backlog and improve freight flows through Belt Junction, particularly to and from the adjacent NS Landers Intermodal Facility (which handled 352,775 annual lifts in 2024).

The P2 project is also critical to improving passenger rail performance across the Chicago terminal and the Midwest. Chicago's Union Station (CUS) is the National Network's busiest station, home to 17 intercity lines and serving nearly 17 million passengers annually. P2 will greatly improve the reliability of passenger rail service at CUS by allowing Metra to direct 30 weekday trains away from CUS to LaSalle Street Station. This change strengthens Amtrak's ability to provide reliable service with improved travel times and reduced freight conflicts for intercity rail service across the Midwest, including the Cardinal route, which connects New York Penn Station and Chicago Union Station via major destinations such as Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Charlottesville, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis.

The P2 project advances the CREATE Program's overarching goals—increasing the efficiency, capacity, safety, and reliability of passenger and freight rail throughout Chicago and the nation. Chicago is the nation's premier freight hub, handling nearly half of all U.S. intermodal units and one-third of rail cars. This investment is not merely an infrastructure upgrade—it is a pivotal step toward enhancing supply chain resilience and driving economic growth nationwide.

The Chicago Cook Workforce Partnership supports this application and recognizes the significant transportation, economic, and workforce development benefits associated with the P2 project. We look forward to the opportunities to help connect residents of Chicago and Cook County to employment, training, apprenticeship, and career advancement opportunities generated through this important investment.

Sincerely,
George Wright
Chief Executive Officer

Signed by:

51179558385F474...

6/8/2026