

Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors

A American Container & Trailer Leasing

AECOM

Alameda Corridor-East Project, San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments

American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association

California Department of Transportation

Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

Canaveral Port Authority

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

City of Chicago

City of Industry

Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho

DCLI

Florida Department of Transportation

Florida East Coast Railway

Florida Transportation Builders' Association, Inc.

GATX Corporation

Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Company

HNTB Corporation

I-40 TradePort Corridor

Illinois Department of Transportation

Intermodal Association of North America

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Joliet Arsenal Development Authority

Kootenai Metropolitan Planning Organization

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority

Majestic Realty Co.

Memphis Chamber of Commerce

Moffatt & Nichol

June 15, 2026

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

Dear Administrator Fink:

The Illinois Department of Transportation is seeking Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program funds for their **Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program Rock Island Connection Project**. The Illinois Department of Transportation is a member of the Coalition for America's Gateways and Trade Corridors (CAGTC) – a national group dedicated to improving our nation's freight infrastructure.

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 the 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.

National Railroad Construction and Maintenance Association

North American Strategy for Competitiveness

The Northwest Seaport Alliance

Nossaman LLP

Orange County Transportation Authority

Pacific NorthWest Economic Region

Port Authority of New York & New Jersey

Port Houston

Port Newark Container Terminal

Port of Hueneme

Port of Long Beach

Port of Los Angeles

Port of New Orleans

Port of Oakland

Port of San Diego

Port Tampa Bay

Port of Vancouver USA

Ports America Chesapeake

Prime Focus, LLC

Puget Sound Regional Council

Rheia Consulting

San Diego Association of Governments

Southern California Association of Governments

Strong Port Strategies

Tennessee Department of Transportation

Washington State Department of Transportation

Will County Center for Economic Development

WSP

We hope you will consider the merits of **CREATE's Rock Island Connection Project**. As an organization, we support investments in freight infrastructure, and we encourage USDOT to continue investing in goods movement projects through the CRISI Program. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elaine Nettle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Elaine" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Nettle".

Elaine Nettle
Executive Director