



Chicago
Urban League

4510 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60653-3816

P: 773-285-5800
www.chiul.org

December 11, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Chicago Urban League, I am writing to express support of IDOT's application for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program.

One of the oldest and largest affiliates of the National Urban League, the Chicago Urban League works to achieve equity for Black families and communities by helping people find jobs, become homeowners, enhance their educational experiences, and grow their businesses. We promote strong, sustainable communities through advocacy, innovation, and collaborative community, corporate and civic relationships. We believe the CREATE program will help further these efforts.

The grant will fund the Rock Island Connection project, known as P2. The project focuses on constructing a flyover bridge between Belt Junction and Metra Commuter Rail's Rock Island District (RID) line. Implementing P2 will enable Metra to shift its SouthWest Service (SWS) trains to the RID line, ultimately reducing congestion and conflicts between freight and passenger service in and out of Belt Junction, where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross each other's paths each day. By implementing P2, commuter trips will also now terminate at LaSalle Street Station, versus Chicago Union Station (CUS), serving to shorten the average travel time for commuters, and enabling an expansion of Amtrak's intercity passenger rail service in the Midwest, by opening capacity at CUS.

This project is a key part of the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP) - a grouping of four major improvements that make up the most complex portion of the overall CREATE Program. These four improvements are being advanced as a single project due to their logistical and environmental linkages. The first two components of the CIP (projects P3 and GS19) began construction in October 2022 with the support of a 2018 INFRA grant and are on schedule for completion in 2026. In 2024, the next phase of the 75th St CIP (Project EW2A) was awarded MPDG funding for construction, which will commence in 2026. The remaining two project components of the 75th Street CIP, P2 and other segments of EW2, are critical to ensure the full benefits of the overall project.

Project P2 helps achieve the CREATE Program's overall goals to improve rail operations in the Chicago metropolitan area and improve quality of life in neighborhoods near rail. Beyond these local and regional benefits, these improvements will have a significant positive impact on the national supply chain. The efficiencies resulting from this project support the movement of people and consumer goods throughout the nation. The 75th St CIP project includes investments in K-12 education and workforce opportunities as well as community mobility improvements (CMI). These CMIs enhance the safety, accessibility, quality of life, and visual appeal of the community while enhancing local transportation systems for people walking, bicycling, taking transit, and driving. Not only does P2 support broader economic growth, but neighboring communities also benefit from cleaner air, reduced railroad delays, and improved development opportunities.

The Chicago Urban League fully supports this application and looks forward to the project's successful implementation.

Sincerely,

Karen Freeman-Wilson
President & CEO

Officers
Board Chair
Suzet McKinney

Vice Chairs
Maria C. Green
James Reynolds

Secretary
Esther Franklin

Treasurer
Andre P. Hughes

Life Directors
Andrew C. Barrett
Barbara Bowles
Melvin C. Hopson
George E. Johnson
Lester H. McKeever, Jr.
William A. Osborn
Thomas M. Patrick
John W. Rogers, Jr.
Sam Scott
Frederick H. Waddell

Directors
Daniel Anello
Hope Bentley
Jill Billhorn
Dwight Blackman
Marty Castro
Carlos Cubia
Brian W. Duwe
Kimberly Evans
Matthew Fischer
Bryce Fisher
Joseph A. Gregoire
Lori Healey
Mark Ishaug
Janice Jackson
Ajay Joshi
Connie Lindsey
Todd Lohr
Craig C. Martin
Kimberlene Matthews
Anthony R. McCain
Eileen Mitchell
David Nichols
Michael J. Sacks
Steven J. Sherman
Eric S. Smith
James P. Sledge
Tyronne Stoudemire
Gina Stuart
Sheila Talton
Bruce Taylor
Garth Walker
Donald E. Wilbon

President and CEO
Karen Freeman-Wilson



Contributions to the Chicago Urban League are deductible for income tax purposes

An affiliate of the
National Urban League



**Chicago
Urban League**

4510 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60653-3816

P: 773-285-5800
www.chiul.org

Officers

Board Chair

Suzet McKinney

Vice Chairs

Maria C. Green
James Reynolds

Secretary

Esther Franklin

Treasurer

Andre P. Hughes

Life Directors

Andrew C. Barrett
Barbara Bowles
Melvin C. Hopson
George E. Johnson
Lester H. McKeever, Jr.
William A. Osborn
Thomas M. Patrick
John W. Rogers, Jr.
Sam Scott
Frederick H. Waddell

Directors

Daniel Anello
Hope Bentley
Jill Billhorn
Dwight Blackman
Marty Castro
Carlos Cubia
Brian W. Duwe
Kimberly Evans
Matthew Fischer
Bryce Fisher
Joseph A. Gregoire
Lori Healey
Mark Ishaug
Janice Jackson
Ajay Joshi
Connie Lindsey
Todd Lohr
Craig C. Martin
Kimberlene Matthews
Anthony R. McCain
Eileen Mitchell
David Nichols
Michael J. Sacks
Steven J. Sherman
Eric S. Smith
James P. Sledge
Tyronne Stoudemire
Gina Stuart
Sheila Talton
Bruce Taylor
Garth Walker
Donald E. Wilbon

President and CEO

Karen Freeman-Wilson

A Member Agency Of



Contributions to the Chicago Urban
League are deductible for income
tax purposes

**An affiliate of the
National Urban League**