



The Wrigley Building
410 North Michigan Avenue, Suite 900
Chicago, IL 60611
www.chicagolandchamber.org

December 12, 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 more than 1,000 member businesses represented by the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce across the City of Chicago, Cook County, and Collar County region, in addition to the wide array of small business, not-for-profit, and civic partners we represent within our network, I write in strong support of the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) 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. This 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 the 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, cycling, 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.

At a time when the significant focus and attention is being drawn to the transportation system in the Northeastern part of Illinois, now more than ever, it is vital that our transportation ecosystem is preparing for the future. The Chicagoland Chamber has long been a supporter of the CREATE Program, and, as evidenced above, believe that the work that the Program has undertaken has delivered real, actualized results for both residents and businesses in the region. It is essential that the CREATE Program continues its work.

For these reasons, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce fully supports this application and looks forward to the successful implementation of these projects.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Lavin", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

JACK LAVIN
President & CEO
Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce