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JEFF KEICHER

State Representative • 70th District
Republican Conference Chairman

June 4, 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:

As State Representative for Illinois' 70th District, I am writing to express my strong support for 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 represents one of the nation's most significant public-private infrastructure partnerships, bringing together federal, state, local, and private-sector stakeholders to improve the efficiency, safety, and reliability of rail transportation throughout the Chicago region and across the national freight network. Given Illinois' central role as the country's transportation hub, continued investment in these critical projects is essential to maintaining economic competitiveness and supporting the movement of both people and goods.

Federal funding would advance CREATE's Rock Island Connection Project (P2), the next phase of the larger 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project. This project will construct a flyover bridge that eliminates a major rail bottleneck and reduces conflicts between freight and passenger rail operations. By separating these movements, the project directly supports CRISI's goals of enhancing safety, improving reliability, reducing delays, and strengthening the overall rail network.

The benefits of the P2 project extend far beyond the Chicago region. Freight operators currently move approximately 90 trains through this corridor each day, while Metra and Amtrak passenger service also rely on the same infrastructure. The existing congestion results in operational conflicts, delays, and inefficiencies that impact both commuters and freight movement. By rerouting Metra's SouthWest Service via the new flyover, the project will improve freight mobility, increase network capacity, and enhance operational reliability throughout the corridor.

The project will also improve passenger rail performance across the Midwest. Chicago Union Station serves as the busiest station in Amtrak's National Network and is a critical gateway for intercity passenger rail service. By reducing congestion and allowing operational flexibility between Union Station and LaSalle Street Station, the P2 project will improve reliability, reduce travel delays, and strengthen passenger rail connections throughout the region.

Chicago remains the nation's premier rail hub, handling a substantial share of the country's freight traffic and serving as a vital link in national supply chains. Investments such as the Rock Island Connection Project are essential to ensuring that our transportation infrastructure can meet growing demands while improving safety and operational efficiency. This project represents a strategic investment that will benefit Illinois residents, rail passengers, freight carriers, businesses, and consumers across the country.

Thank you for your consideration of IDOT's application. I respectfully urge the Federal Railroad Administration to support this important project through the CRISI Program. I appreciate your commitment to strengthening our nation's transportation infrastructure and look forward to the successful advancement of the Rock Island Connection Project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Keicher". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jeff Keicher
State Representative, 70th District