

STATE OF ILLINOIS



ILLINOIS COMMERCE COMMISSION

Douglas P. Scott

Chairman

May 22, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: CREATE 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project:

- Project P3 - Forest Hill Flyover (*under construction*)
- Project GS 19 - 71st Street Grade Separation (*under construction*)
- Project P2 – Rock Island Connection
- **Project EW2 – Belt Junction & 80th Street Junction Replacements Grant Applications First Segment EW2a (Western Avenue to 76th Street)**

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is fully supportive of the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) applications for the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Programs funding on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. These grants will fund Project Segment EW2a, which will lead the staging efforts towards completion of the Belt Junction & 80th Street Junction Replacements (EW2).


CREATE's most complex project, the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP), is comprised of the four major improvement projects referenced above. The first two components began construction in October 2022 with the support of a 2018 INFRA grant and are on schedule for completion in 2026. The remaining two project components are critical to ensure the full benefits of the 75th Street CIP. Project EW2 will alleviate the most congested rail chokepoint in North America - Chicago's Belt Junction, where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross each other's paths each day.

Project Segment EW2a will reconfigure Belt Railway Company (BRC), Norfolk Southern (NS), and Metra tracks and rebuild 14 century-old railroad structures providing a significant public safety benefit and improved connectivity on local streets in three South Side Chicago neighborhoods. As the agency with authority of public highway-rail crossings in Illinois, the Commission and its Staff are aware of the need to address the City of Chicago's 830+ railroad viaducts and ensure that they are maintained, rehabilitated, or reconstructed to address structural integrity, as well as public safety under the railroad structures. Project Segment EW2a addresses these safety needs and will move the 75th CIP closer towards its goal of providing a safer, more efficient transportation network along the corridor that benefits local neighborhoods, the State of Illinois, and Nation.

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The ICC looks forward to continued coordination and partnership with the Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Highway Administration, Illinois Department of Transportation, and other CREATE Partners to produce safe, efficient, and climate-friendly alternatives for safely moving people and freight. If you have any questions, or need additional information, please contact me at (312) 814-8592 or doug.scott@illinois.gov

Sincerely,


Douglas P. Scott
Chairman

cc: Amit Bose, Administrator Federal Railroad Administration
Shailen Bhatt, Administrator Federal Highway Administration
Omer Osman, Secretary of Transportation Illinois Department of Transportation
William C. Thompson, CREATE Chief Engineer