



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
LANSING

BRADLEY C. WIEFERICH, P.E.  
DIRECTOR

June 14, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Please accept this letter of support from the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) for the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT's) applications for the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) programs. MDOT's support relates to IDOT's applications for the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program. These grants will fund the first segment of the Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction replacements project, known as EW2a. The project includes reconfiguring the Belt Railway Company (BRC) main tracks between the Dan Ryan Expressway and Belt Junction where four freight railroad tracks intersect with each other and Metra's SouthWest Service operations.

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 Infrastructure for Rebuilding America grant and are on schedule for completion in 2026. The remaining two project components of the 75th Street CIP, projects EW2 and P2, are critical to ensure the full benefits of the overall project. Project EW2 is being designed as multiple project segments due to the scope and scale of the project, with EW2a being the first phase of the effort.

Project segment EW2a will reconfigure BRC, Norfolk Southern, and Metra tracks and rebuild 14 century-old railroad structures, including 86 bridges, over local streets in three South Side Chicago neighborhoods. A third dedicated BRC main track will be constructed, eliminating route conflicts for freight and Metra trains. This project will begin to 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. The project will also improve neighborhood connectivity by replacing railroad structures over city streets and will set the stage for re-routing Metra's SouthWest Service trains out of

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Union Station and into LaSalle Street station via upcoming CREATE project P2, which will greatly increase Union Station capacity for future Amtrak intercity and Metra commuter rail service.

Project segment EW2a 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. Beyond the national supply chain benefits, the increased Chicago Union Station capacity will be of great benefit to the Amtrak intercity passenger rail routes in which MDOT provides operating support for, and the project also aligns with Amtrak's vision for future service in and out of the Chicago region,

Thank you for your full and fair consideration. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact either me or Peter Anastor, Office of Rail Director, at 517-243-2710 or [anastorp@michigan.gov](mailto:anastorp@michigan.gov).

Sincerely,

Bradley C. Wieferich, P.E.  
Director

cc: Peter Anastor