

**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304

May 30, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing in support of the Illinois Department of Transportation's application on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program for the U.S. Department of Transportation's Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program. These grants will fund the first segment of the Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction Replacements project, known as EW2a.

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 CREATE Program. These 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. The remaining two projects of the 75th Street CIP, projects EW2 and P2, are critical to ensure the full benefits of the overall project. Project EW2 is divided into multiple project segments, due to the scope and scale of the project, with EW2a being the first phase.

Project segment EW2a will reconfigure Belt Railway Company (BRC), Norfolk Southern (NS), and Metra tracks and rebuild 14 century-old railroad structures, including 86 bridges that cross 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 Union Station and into LaSalle Street station via upcoming CREATE project P2, which will increase Union Station's capacity for future Amtrak intercity and Metra commuter rail service.

Project segment EW2a will improve rail operations in the Chicago metropolitan area and quality of life in underserved neighborhoods that have been negatively impacted by their proximity to rail. These improvements will increase efficiency of the national supply chain. The 75th St CIP project also 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.

Please give full and fair consideration to CREATE's application. If you require additional information, please contact my State Director, Clarisol Duque, at (312) 353-4952.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator