



January 14, 2026

The Honorable David Fink
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Support for CREATE's 75th Street CIP: Rock Island Connection P2 Project

Dear Administrator Fink:

Metra is pleased to provide this letter of support and confirmation of our \$30,000,000 financial match for Illinois DOT's **CREATE 75th Street CIP: Rock Island Connection P2** (P2 Project) application to FRA's FY2024-2025 National Railroad Partnership (NRP) Program.

The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) is a public-private partnership founded in 2003 by the public agencies of Amtrak, IDOT, Metra, Cook County, and the City of Chicago, five of the nation's six Class I freight railroads, and several short line railroads in the region. The partnership grew out of a Federal Surface Transportation Board (STB) task force that was formed in response to the growing urgency around the Chicago region's freight and passenger rail capacity needs.

Metra, IDOT, and the CREATE Partners have coordinated consistently during the scoping and design of the P2 Project. The broader 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (75th St. CIP), the largest project in the CREATE's Program, which will drastically improve the movement of freight through one of the most congested railroad corridors on the National Freight Network. The P2 Project will continue to build upon three other critical 75th St. CIP Projects: 71st Street Grade Separation (GS19) project and 80th Street Junction Replacements (EW2), both of which are currently under construction, and the Forest Hill Flyover (P3) that was completed in November 2025.

The P2 Project improvements will also help sustain and grow the United States' freight economy, a primary goal of the CREATE Program. The implementation of P2 as a component of the 75th St CIP is critical to address increasing travel times in the Terminal that will reduce the competitiveness of the regional market. Chicago's rail system handles nearly half of the nation's intermodal rail containers, 28% of all rail cars, and \$641 billion of goods transported on rail annually. The region's freight industry cluster accounts for approximately 190,000 jobs and over \$14 billion in personal income for the American workers, with freight railroads directly employing nearly 12,000 people and indirectly supporting an additional 26,000 jobs.

Grant funding for CREATE's P2 Project application will enable Amtrak to continue building upon their service across the center of the country as is called for in FRA's Midwest Regional Rail Plan. Amtrak recorded the best ridership ever in 2025, and Chicago Union Station has consistently been the nation's fourth-busiest Amtrak station. Currently, Amtrak operates over 50 daily trains that originate from Union Station. Completion of the P2 Project will open some additional train slots for additional Amtrak intercity passenger rail and Metra regional rail service as the project allows Metra's SouthWest Service (SWS) Line trains to shift from Union Station to instead terminate at Metra's LaSalle Street Station. Federal funding from this round of FRA's NRP Program will allow the public-private-partnership to continue construction of the next 75th St. CIP program element without delay, supporting thousands of construction jobs.

In 2025, ridership on Amtrak's Cardinal service was nearly 100,000 riders, and Metra had nearly 1,000,000 riders on the SWS Line and over 2,000,000 passengers on the Rock Island (RI) Line. Upon completion of CREATE Project P2, the Amtrak Cardinal service performance is expected to improve by eliminating freight conflicts. Amtrak can add more service capacity for intercity passenger rail trains while reducing conflicts with freight trains and Metra's regional passenger trains. Metra will have the capability to revise passenger train schedules to meet changing ridership characteristics and better serve Historically Disadvantaged Communities along these two lines.

Constructing CREATE Project P2 will eliminate the most congested rail chokepoint in the Chicago Terminal, Belt Junction, where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains per day cross each other's paths. The rail-rail flyover at 75th Street will eliminate conflict between 30 SWS Line Metra trains and 35 freight trains operating on the Western Avenue Corridor (CSX). The railroad infrastructure will be grounded with numerous community mobility improvements.

Metra strongly supports IDOT's CREATE P2 Project application.

Sincerely,



Jim Derwinski
CEO/Executive Director