



June 2, 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 – FY25-26 CRISI

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 FY2025-2026 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) 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.

A key benefit of the project is to reduce conflicts between freight and passenger trains in the corridor, which use the same tracks at the Belt Junction. Freight operators run 90 trains through the corridor daily, Amtrak runs 6 weekly Cardinal trains (serving 98,583 riders in fiscal year 2025), and Metra currently runs 30 weekday SWS trains through the corridor (serving 976,376 riders in 2024). Because passenger trains are prioritized, freight trains are curtailed at least twice daily on the corridor, during peak morning and afternoon commuting periods (totaling six hours daily) and occasionally during non-peak periods. Rerouting Metra SWS using the P2 bridge will reduce the state of good repair backlog and improve freight flows through Belt Junction, particularly to and from the adjacent NS Landers Intermodal Facility (which handled 352,775 annual lifts in 2024).

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.

The P2 project is also critical to improving passenger rail performance across the Chicago terminal and the Midwest. Chicago's Union Station (CUS) is the National Network's busiest station, home to 17 intercity lines and serving nearly 17 million passengers annually. P2 will greatly improve the reliability of passenger rail service at CUS by allowing Metra to direct 30 weekday trains away from CUS to the LaSalle Street Station. This change strengthens Amtrak's ability to provide reliable service with improved travel times and reduced freight conflicts for intercity rail service across the Midwest, including the Cardinal route, which connects New York Penn Station and Chicago Union Station via major destinations such as Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Charlottesville, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis.

The P2 project advances the CREATE Program's overarching goals—increasing the efficiency, capacity, safety, and reliability of passenger and freight rail throughout Chicago and the nation. Chicago is the nation's premier freight hub, handling nearly half of all U.S. intermodal units and one-third of rail cars. This investment is not merely an infrastructure upgrade – it is pivotal step toward enhancing supply chain resilience and driving economic growth nationwide.

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 and commits \$30,000,000 in matching funds to support this CRISI grant application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Derwinski', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jim Derwinski
CEO/Executive Director