



June 9, 2026

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

Dear Administrator Fink:

On behalf of the Union League Club of Chicago (ULCC), I write to fully support the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) application, on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program, for funding through the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program. The CREATE Program is the largest public-private partnership of its kind, involving the nation's rail industry and all levels of government.

Federal funding will advance CREATE's Rock Island Connection project (P2), the next phase of the larger 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project, which will construct a flyover bridge to eliminate a major chokepoint and reduce conflicts between freight and passenger trains. P2 directly aligns with the goals of CRISI by improving reliability, travel times, and safety for both passenger and freight trains in the country's most congested rail terminal. P2 is necessary to fully realize the delay reductions for freight rail users at Belt Junction once passenger trains are separated from freight traffic.

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 Southwest Service (SWS) trains daily 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 improve freight flows through Belt Junction, particularly to and from the adjacent Norfolk Southern (NS) Landers Intermodal Yard (which reported 352,775 annual lifts in 2024).

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, including customers traveling direct from 33 states and the District of Columbia. P2 will greatly improve the reliability of passenger rail service at CUS by allowing Metra to direct 30 daily trains away from CUS to 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 CUS via major destinations such as Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Charlottesville, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis. Increased capacity at CUS due to shifting of the SWS also allows for major upgrade projects at CUS to take place.

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 intermodal containers** 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.

The ULCC, through its Public Affairs Committee, has long recognized the critical role that rail infrastructure plays in the economy of the State of Illinois and in sustaining Chicago's role as the transportation hub of the Midwest. As part of the ULCC's advocacy of a robust transportation network for the Chicago region, the Club has strongly supported the CREATE Program since its inception.

It is a stated goal of the ULCC's Public Affairs Committee to "support...policies and programs that strengthen the country and our communities." This Project does exactly that.

Thank you for your consideration of this important project and please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Robert D. Kreisman
137th President
Union League Club of Chicago