

February 24, 2009

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Joseph P. Clary, Director
ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation
300 West Adams Street
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Director Clary,

As one of Chicago's leading staffing firms for temporary and permanent workers since 1970, Banner Personnel recognizes that employment activity in the region is extremely dependent on Chicago area remaining the nation's passenger and freight transportation hub. Many of our clients with industrial and manufacturing operations are dependent on reliable freight rail and trucking to get materials and equipment into their plants, and move their finished products and goods throughout the world. With the entire Chicago area experiencing delays that back up rail freight in excess of 36 hours, modernizing our freight rail transportation system is crucial to their ability to remain profitable and retain high wage workers.

According to the Illinois Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, last year's prevailing hourly wage for a machinist in Cook/DuPage County was slightly over \$40/hr. Just imagine--If 36 hours of freight rail shipping delays results in reduced work schedules at local plants and factories, these lost wages resulting from idle factories directly impacts and slows our local economy, which adversely affects both individual earnings and commercial activity. Needless to say, if factories and manufacturing firms cannot provide work and benefits for their existing employees, it is unlikely they will make plans to hire and train new workers.

Illinois is taking bold steps to address much-needed infrastructure improvements as a charter member of a public-private partnership of federal and local government agencies, along with the national railroads to modernize the Chicago area rail system. This partnership founded the **CREATE** program to reduce passenger rail, freight rail and highway-rail grade crossing congestion. Improvements include additional tracks, improved connections, improved control systems, rail-over-rail grade separations and highway-rail grade separations.

Of the seventy-eight **CREATE** projects, thirty-nine are expected to be in the design or construction phase by the end of 2009. However, much more remains to be done. Without additional funding from US Congress and the Illinois State Legislature, the **CREATE** program may not be completed, and freight chokepoints in and through Chicago may thwart the economic vitality of the region; limit Chicago's competitiveness with other freight rail communities dependent on intermodal transportation; and adversely affect business development, jobs, and overall quality of life in the entire region.

Banner Personnel Service, Inc. is a strong advocate for **CREATE** and infrastructure improvements throughout the US that modernizes our aging freight rail infrastructure and lessens shipping delays. We support **CREATE** and its efforts to decrease the time and costs involved in moving goods across America and to points beyond.

Sincerely,

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President/CEO

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