



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
OF THE BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL AREA

Investing in McLean County

February 12, 2009

Joseph P. Clary
Director
Illinois Department of Transportation
Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation
300 West Adams St.
Chicago, Illinois 60606

Dear Mr. Clary:

As McLean County's leading organization for business development, we recognize that reliable freight rail in northeastern Illinois drives economic development and commercial vitality throughout Central Illinois. With Chicago moving nearly one-third of all U.S. freight rail traffic and experiencing delays that back up freight in excess of 36 hours, modernizing Chicago's freight rail transportation system is crucial to all Illinois businesses and our ability to create and keep jobs in Illinois.

Improving the flow of the freight rail around Chicago will have a tremendous impact on our community. It will help to increase our capability to ship goods, which will lead to reduced shipping costs and delays. The above actions will help entice new businesses to relocate Central Illinois. If Illinois can remain the nation's transportation leader, we're confident that McLean County can support the movement of freight rail by continuing its investment in its trucking network, and exploring the potential for new intermodal facilities here in Central Illinois. McLean County can attract more businesses, and create more jobs if the transportation network is not hindered by massive shipping delays in and around Chicago.

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.

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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 region.

The Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area is a strong advocate for CREATE and infrastructure improvements throughout the United States that modernizes our aging freight rail infrastructure and lessens shipping delays. We support CREATE and its efforts to decrease the time and cost of moving goods across America and to points beyond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Martin K. Vanags', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Martin K. Vanags
CEO

Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area