

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

Dear Mr. Clary:

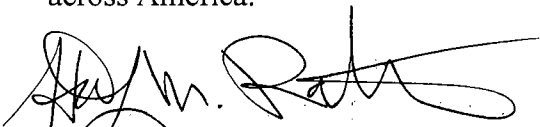
For 23 years the Women’s Business Development Center (WBDC) has helped new and established women-owned businesses grow and prosper. The Women’s Business Development Center (WBDC) is the oldest, largest, most comprehensive, and successful women’s business assistance center in the United States. We’re nationally and internationally recognized for our responsive, innovative, and effective programs and advocacy efforts. We are the nation’s leader in women’s economic development, assisting more than 55,000 women in the greater Chicago area and in six states in the US.

Today, over 40% of businesses are owned by women. These 10.1 million firms employ 13 million people—generating nearly \$2 trillion in annual revenues. With transportation representing 10% of America’s economic activity, and Chicago being the transportation hub of the nation, women owned enterprises play a pivotal role the transportation industry and generate significant economic activity for the region.

For many of our members, the ability to develop and retain business is dependent on a freight rail system that can deliver people, products and goods without unnecessary delay. We are pleased that the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is taking a major step towards modernizing its freight and passenger rail infrastructure through CREATE. CREATE is a program founded by a public-private partnership of federal, state, and local government agencies, along with the national railroads to build new track; make connection and control system improvements; and construct grade separations throughout the greater Chicago area. Significant investments have been made in 39 of the 78 designated CREATE projects. However, more monies are needed from the US Congress and the Illinois Legislature to complete all of the CREATE projects.

CREATE is a vital and necessary initiative of regional and national significance. If immediate steps are not taken to mitigate the rail chokepoints in the region, Chicago will not be able to provide transportation infrastructure this region needs to support a strong economic recovery.

The WBDC is a strong advocate for CREATE. CREATE is a program of regional and national significance. We support CREATE and its efforts to decrease the time and cost of moving and goods across America.

  
Hedy Ratner  
Co-President