



CENTER for ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
A Step Ahead of Tomorrow.

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February 12, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Clary:

Over the past 27 years, the Will County Center for Economic Development has shaped the county to be the fastest growing in the state and the 54th fastest growing county in the nation. Will County's BNSF Logistics Park is the largest Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) inland port in the US completing over 850,000 lifts in 2008 and employing many high wage workers.

As more intermodal rail and logistics facilities take root in Will County, Joliet and its surrounding communities becomes better positioned to lead the nation in business development and jobs. With the region moving nearly one-third of all US freight rail and truck traffic and experiencing delays that back up freight in excess of 36 hours, modernizing Chicago's freight rail system is crucial to our ability to attract and retain commercial activity. For Will County to maximize the benefit of having the largest inland port in North America and use this platform to draw in more business, the freight and passenger rail chokepoints here in and around Chicago must be mitigated.

We have worked closely with the State of Illinois to make northeastern Illinois a first-rate place for business. 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, 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.

Of the 78 CREATE projects, 39 are expected to be in the design or construction phase by the end of this year. However, more funds are needed. Without additional appropriations from the US Congress and the Illinois Legislature, the CREATE projects identified over five years ago may not get completed. If Illinois cannot eliminate the major freight congestion in and around Chicago, we could limit our competitiveness with other freight rail communities and as a consequence, adversely affect business development, jobs, and the quality of life in the region.

The Will County Center for Economic Development is an advocate for infrastructure improvements that can stimulate the economy and keep jobs in the region. The CREATE program's efforts to decrease the time and cost of moving goods across America and to points beyond is a needed step in that direction and we encourage your continued support of it.

Sincerely,

John E. Greuling
President & CEO