

passenger rail benefits



Passenger Rail Benefits of the CREATE Program

A primary objective of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) is to expedite the movement of passenger trains at chronically congested locations in the Chicago region.

- **21 CREATE projects will directly benefit Metra commuter service.**
- **19 CREATE projects will directly benefit Amtrak intercity service.**

Regional Passenger Rail Ridership

- Demand for Amtrak and Metra rail service is growing.
- Ridership between Chicago and destinations in downstate Illinois has grown 27 percent since 2007, to 1.2 million in 2010
- Metra provided over 81 million commuter rail trips in 2010. Ridership has grown 6 percent between 2005 and 2010.

Passenger Rail Uses Freight Railroads' Right of Way

- Freight and passenger trains in the Chicago region operate on the same tracks in most locations, which can result in schedule conflict and delay. Freight railroads defer the right of way to Amtrak and Metra by protocol, so when passenger trains move, freight trains usually stand aside. However, when freight trains are moving, passenger trains must often stand aside in many locations, due to railway capacity constraints.
- In order to reach its own trackage at Chicago Union Station, Amtrak depends on the freight railroads and Metra to handle 56 Amtrak arrivals and departures on eight routes to and from Chicago every day.
- In 2008, trains on Amtrak routes to the east and south suffered more than 3,400 hours of delay entering and exiting the Chicago area due to interference from freight, commuter and other Amtrak trains – equivalent to nearly nine hours of delay every day to the 18 daily Amtrak trains to downstate Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and other points to the east and south.
- Nine of eleven Metra lines operate on freight-owned or controlled tracks.

Key CREATE Benefits to Commuter and Intercity Rail

CREATE will eliminate conflicts between freight and passenger trains in several locations on the south side of Chicago, solving the problems that currently reduce reliability and constrain expansion opportunities for regional Metra commuter service and Midwest Amtrak trains from southern Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. In 2010, 2.4 million passengers boarded or alighted Amtrak trains in Chicago on routes that will be benefited by CREATE. Once CREATE is complete, significant segments of the Amtrak corridors connecting Chicago's Union Station with points to the south and east will be grade-separated. The planned CREATE improvements are consistent with the future Midwest Regional Rail plan for high speed rail in the affected corridors.

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CREATE will also provide significant benefits to five Metra routes: the SouthWest Service, Heritage Corridor, Rock Island, BNSF, and UP-West Lines. Each will experience less delay and improved reliability when conflict points with freight trains are reduced. The total number of passengers in 2010 on Metra routes benefited by CREATE is almost 35 million. Specific passenger benefits of key projects are as follows:

- The **75th Street Corridor Improvement Project** (Projects P2, P3, EW2 and GS19) will eliminate the most congested rail location in the region, “Belt Junction,” where the routes of four freight railroads conflict with each other and with Metra’s SouthWest Service. With this project the reliability of 30 daily Metra SouthWest Service trains will increase because they no longer will need to cross tracks handling 50 freight trains per day. Currently, Metra trains experience an annual average of more than 5,000 passenger hours of delay at the location of the future P3 passenger/freight flyover and more than 9,000 annual passenger hours of delay at the project EW2 location (Belt Junction), which would be relieved by this project. The 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project will also enable shifting of Metra SouthWest Service trains from its current downtown terminal at Union Station, which is at or near capacity, to LaSalle Street Station, which has additional capacity. This will allow Amtrak and Metra service growth at Union Station. This project will also improve the reliability of the daily Amtrak *Hoosier State/Cardinal* service to Indianapolis/Cincinnati and the East Coast because Amtrak trains will no longer cross freight trains at grade in the vicinity of 80th Street. For more information visit www.75thstcip.org.
- The **63rd and State Flyover** (Project P1) will eliminate conflict between 68 daily Metra Rock Island trains that currently cross Norfolk Southern tracks at grade and face potential conflict with 60 freight and 14 Amtrak trains daily. This location currently experiences more than 7,500 passenger hours of delay annually, which would be relieved by this project. The new bridge over the NS/Amtrak trains will also benefit future high speed rail from the east. Project EW4 (completed) signal improvements (to the east of P1) also benefits Amtrak trains to Indiana, Michigan and the East Coast.
- The **Grand Crossing** (Project P4) connection will make trips for Amtrak service to/from Champaign/Carbondale/New Orleans into Union Station more direct and shave approximately 15 minutes from the current schedule for six daily trains.
- The **Brighton Park Flyover** (Project P5) will separate CN tracks handling 5 daily CN freight trains, 10 daily Amtrak *Lincoln Service* & *Texas Eagle* trains serving Bloomington-Normal/Springfield/St. Louis and 6 weekday Metra Heritage Corridor trains, from five freight tracks handling 55 daily freight trains. Between Joliet and downtown Chicago, Amtrak now experiences a daily average of two hours delay to its 10 daily trains, which will be reduced by this and the CP Canal Flyover project. These projects are key to enabling high speed rail between Chicago and St. Louis via Bloomington-Normal and Springfield. Annually at this project location, Metra suffers an average of 4,500 passenger hours of delay due to freight conflict, which will be alleviated with the Brighton Park Flyover.

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- The **CP Canal Flyover** (Project P6) will separate CN tracks handling 5 daily CN freight trains, 10 daily Amtrak *Lincoln Service* & *Texas Eagle* and 6 weekday Metra Heritage Corridor trains from two Indiana Harbor Belt tracks handling 76 daily freight trains. This project will alleviate nearly 3,000 annual Metra passenger hours of delay due to freight conflict at this location.
- The **Chicago Ridge Flyover** (Project P7) will separate NS tracks carrying 30 daily Metra SouthWest Service trains from Indiana Harbor Belt tracks handling 76 daily freight trains. This project will alleviate more than 6,000 Metra passenger hours of delay experienced annually due to freight conflict at this location.
- Several other freight rail projects to enhance the speed of freight operations along the Indiana Harbor Belt (CREATE Beltway Corridor) also reduce the potential for conflict with Amtrak *Lincoln Service* and *Texas Eagle* trains and Metra Heritage Corridor trains, including B6 (completed), B8 (completed), and B9. Project B12 will improve reliability of the Metra Rock Island service by reducing the potential for conflict with freight trains on the Beltway Corridor.
- Projects WA2, WA3, WA5 (completed) and WA7 near the Brighton Park rail crossing will speed freight operations and reduce conflict for Amtrak *Lincoln Service* and *Texas Eagle* trains and Metra Heritage Corridor trains. Project WA3, to upgrade signals and power switches over approximately a five-mile stretch of track also will improve reliability for the 14 Amtrak trains traveling to the south and east of Chicago, as well as Metra's SouthWest Service.
- Projects B15 and WA11 to improve freight operations will reduce the potential for freight conflict with daily Amtrak *Hoosier State/Cardinal* service to Indianapolis/Cincinnati and the East Coast, improving its reliability.
- Project WA1 and B2 will reduce freight conflict on the Metra UP-West line. Metra experiences nearly 5,000 annual passenger hours of delay at the WA1 project location and nearly 20,000 annual passenger hours of delay at the Project B2 location, which will be relieved by these projects.
- Three grade crossing separations (Belmont Rd. in Downer's Grove - GS7, Harlem Ave. in Berwyn - GS18, and Maple Ave. in Brookfield - GS24) on the Metra BNSF Line (94 daily trains) and the Amtrak route to Galesburg/Quincy and the West Coast (8 daily trains) will reduce the potential for conflicts with highway traffic crossing the tracks and improve rail service reliability.

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Map of CREATE Projects Benefiting Passenger Rail



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