

2/16/2007 Public-Private Partnership

## **Feds release funds for Chicago's CREATE program; seven projects slated to start construction**

After more than three years of planning, coordinating and fundraising, the public and private partners behind Chicago's CREATE program are transitioning to the construction phase.

Yesterday, the partners announced the Federal government has released the first \$25 million of an initial \$100 million commitment to the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency, or CREATE, program, which is designed to reduce rail and highway congestion in and around the Windy City. Now, the partners – six Class Is, the Northeast Illinois Regional Commuter Railroad Corp. (Metra), state of Illinois and city of Chicago – plan to begin construction on seven CREATE projects by year's end.

Eight highway-rail grade separation projects already are in the design or construction phase, and another seven projects will get under way in 2008.

"This is good news not just for Chicago and the state of Illinois, but for the entire nation," said Association of American Railroads President and Chief Executive Officer Edward Hamberger in a prepared statement. "Some 1,200 freight and passenger trains a day go through Chicago. Congestion here can have a ripple effect across the economy."

Designed to eliminate bottlenecks, boost grade crossing safety and improve commuter-rail service, the CREATE program calls for creating five rail corridors (including one primarily for passenger trains), grade separating 25 crossings, building six flyovers and underpasses, and removing a downtown rail corridor.

Under an initial \$330 million funding pact, the Federal government authorized \$100 million in SAFETEA-LU, the state of Illinois committed \$100 million, the six Class Is agreed to provide a combined \$100 million and the city of Chicago pledged \$30 million. The entire program – first proposed in June 2003 – is estimated to cost about \$1.5 billion.

"CREATE stands out as a prime example of what a public-private partnership can accomplish," said Hamberger. "The projects that are part of CREATE might never be built without a public-private partnership."