



August 17, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Letter of Support for CREATE's FY2023-24 Mega/INFRA Grant Application for Project EW2A

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

Metra is pleased to provide this letter of support for Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency's (CREATE) application to the Mega and INFRA Programs in the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity to support the construction phase of Project EW2A. CREATE is an ambitious and trailblazing public-private partnership founded 20 years ago between public agencies including Metra, Amtrak, Cook County, and the City of Chicago, and six of the nation's seven Class I railroads. The partnership grew out of a Federal Surface Transportation Board task force that was formed in response to the growing urgency to improve how passengers and goods move through the nation's rail hub.

Metra and the CREATE Partners have coordinated throughout the scoping and design phases of Project EW2A. The project is a major component of the broader 75th Street Corridor Improvement Program (75th St CIP), which will remove one of the worst railroad conflict points in the country. Project EW2A is the next crucial step in completing the 75th St CIP and builds upon the Forest Hill Flyover (P3) and 71st Street Grade Separation (GS19) project, both of which are currently under construction. Federal grant funding support from Mega or INFRA will enable the Project EW2A construction phase to commence on this nationally significant project that will ease the movement of our country's supply chain.

Northeast Illinois' enviable transit system will also benefit from the project. Project EW2A is a critical path to advance the planned P2 Flyover, which is a passenger rail-focused component of the 75th St CIP. The P2 Flyover will reduce interference with freight traffic and allow Metra to reroute the SouthWest Service (SWS) Line trains to the Metra-owned Rock Island (RI) Line tracks. Constructing Project EW2A and the P2 Flyover will support Metra's efforts to move the SWS terminal station from Amtrak's crowded Chicago Union Station (CUS) to Metra's LaSalle Street Station, which will open additional train schedule slots for expanded Amtrak intercity and Metra commuter services to meet changing ridership characteristics.

Metra strongly supports CREATE's EW2A project and commits \$10 million in matching funds to support CREATE's Mega/INFRA application for the EW2A project. The project will provide benefits for passenger and freight trains and remove one of the greatest conflict points at the center of the nation's railroad network. Metra is eager to advance projects with the CREATE Partners such as Project EW2A to realize Metra's move from a commuter rail to a regional rail system. As such, I urge you to consider funding CREATE's grant request to the FY2023 Mega/INFRA discretionary grant program.

Sincerely,

Jim Derwinski
CEO/Director