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November 2010

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CREATE *update*

■ Switch stands,
switch machines

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CREATE update

CREATE is a multi-billion-dollar public-private partnership project designed to reduce congestion and remove bottlenecks in the vital Chicago gateway.

CREATE, the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency program, is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the U.S. DOT, the State of Illinois, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak and the nation's freight railroads. This project of national significance will invest billions to construct critically needed improvements to increase the efficiency of the region's rail infrastructure.

There's been a lot happening with CREATE since the last update appeared in *RT&S* this past fall.

Early this past summer, the CREATE partners said that the program will receive \$133 million as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for a critical rail/rail flyover near 63rd and State Streets in the Englewood community on the south side of Chicago. The flyover will carry the north-south Metra Rock Island commuter rail line over the east-west Norfolk Southern/Amtrak line, eliminating conflict between 78 Metra Rock Island trains and approximately 60 freight and Amtrak trains that presently cross at grade each day.

The \$133-million CREATE-related grant was part of a larger \$1.2-billion federal award to bring high-speed passenger rail service to Illinois by 2014. Governor Pat Quinn and U.S. Senator Dick Durbin were joined by Chicago Mayor Richard Daley as they kicked off a series of announcements at Chicago's Union Station to discuss details about Illinois' grant award.

In February, the Metra Board of Directors approved the final design

CREATE Program Status					
	Freight Railroad Projects	Passenger Projects	Highway Grade Separation Projects	Other Projects	Project Totals
Environmental (IDOT Phase I)	10	3	4	0	17
Design (IDOT Phase II)	2	1	3	1	7
Construction (IDOT Phase III)	6	0	1	0	7
Completed Projects	10	0	1	0	11
Remaining Projects	8	3	16	2	29
Total Projects in CREATE	36	7	25	3	71

CREATE has many projects at different stages of completion.

contract for the flyover project. TranSystems Corp. was awarded the \$5.65-million contract.

Also this past summer, Governor Quinn announced that the Illinois Department of Transportation along with the CREATE Program partners received a \$100-million TIGER (Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery) grant under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

The CREATE grant funding is targeted to six projects benefiting 13 Illinois communities. The projects will range in scope from rail line and viaduct improvements to a highway-rail grade separation. The completion of these projects by 2012 will support an estimated 1,087 jobs.

As a project of regional and national significance, CREATE has received tremendous support from lawmakers,

public and private organizations and trade unions from across the U.S. For example, CREATE has received letters of support from as far away as Los Angeles and Long Beach, Calif. – vital U.S. port locations that often see originating shipments that travel through Chicago.

McCook connection

One key rail connection and capacity expansion project of the CREATE Program became operational this year in McCook, Ill. The \$13.1-million federally- and privately-funded McCook Connection project (Project B6) provides additional connectivity between the Indiana Harbor Belt, CSX Transportation and BNSF rail lines. Trains that had to wait or travel at a maximum speed of 10 mph are now able to proceed through the area at 25 mph as they move onto main line tracks near the United Parcel Service

CREATE update

Willow Springs Distribution Center.

The connection will provide additional capacity and congestion relief in the Northeastern Illinois region, benefiting approximately 15 to 20 freight trains that travel through the connection per day. Because of the increased speed on this connection to the IHB, trains will be able to clear the adjacent IHB/CN crossing more quickly, thus reducing potential freight conflicts with six weekday Metra Heritage Corridor trains and 10 daily Amtrak trains to and from St. Louis traveling on the CN tracks.

Approximately 70 workers from CSXT, BNSF and private contractors worked on the project, which began construction in 2009.

The McCook Connection was the seventh CREATE Project to be completed to date.

In February, U.S. DOT announced that the CREATE Program would receive \$100 million in TIGER funds under the ARRA to complete five projects. Work on the first of those five projects began in July. The Broadview/LaGrange



Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn with dignitaries at ceremonies at the site of the Englewood Flyover on Chicago's south side.

signalization (Projects B4/B5) will install a new bi-directional computerized Traffic Control System (TCS) along a seven-mile segment of IHB. This project will upgrade 21 hand-thrown switches to power switches. The TIGER grant funded \$11.7 million of the \$13.7-million project. The remainder of the funds was contributed by the freight railroads.

Most trains currently spend up to

two hours traversing the limits of this project due to the hand-thrown switches and restricted speeds. The signal improvements will allow trains through this segment in as little as 20 minutes. These improvements will allow increased operating speeds to 30 mph from a "restricted speed" (between one and 20 mph).

The project also allows greater flexibility for simultaneous and bidirectional train movements through the addition of two control points. At the northern end of the project area trains enter and exit Proviso Yard. With the signal improvements, more options will exist to move trains in and out of the yard and pass around stationary trains waiting for route availability.

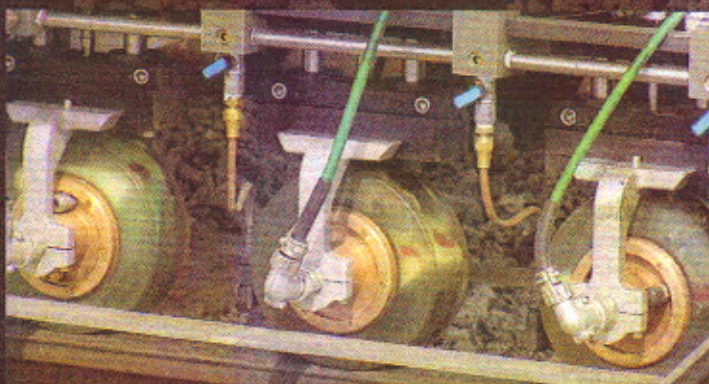
The signal system upgrades will provide greater visibility, enabling train dispatchers to know the exact locations of trains in the area. This enhances the dispatcher's ability to route more trains through the territory, expanding overall capacity. Additionally, greater flexibility to keep trains moving reduces conflict with at-grade highway crossings at the south end of the project area

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CREATE update

in LaGrange and LaGrange Park.

In June, 35 signal and trackmen from IHB were slated to be put on "unpaid leave." As was the intent of ARRA, quick document review by U.S. DOT and IDOT resulted in release of the TIGER funds in late July, enabling this project to start and these 35 employees to retain their jobs. Per the federal guidance for ARRA grant applications, this grant is estimated to support a total of 149 job-years, including direct, indirect and induced jobs.

Grade separation funding

In late October, Governor Quinn announced a \$64-million investment from *Illinois Jobs Now!* to build a grade separation in Bensenville (GS16), a key component of the CREATE Program. The project will improve regional transportation by separating Irving Park Road from the Canadian Pacific Railroad east of York Road. The project will support more than 830 jobs.

The grade separation will reduce

roadway congestion and improve safety along Irving Park Road (Ill.-19), a primary arterial road. The improvements include reconstructing the intersection by lowering Irving Park Road and raising the Canadian Pacific Railroad Bridge. Every day approximately 37,000 vehicles pass through the Bensenville crossing, which includes 25 freight trains. Nearly 6,400 vehicles are delayed at this location every day, leading to 1,500 daily motorist hours of delay that would be alleviated through this project.

This grade separation is located at the southwestern edge of O'Hare Airport, and is being coordinated with construction of the adjacent grade separation of the Union Pacific over Irving Park Road, as part of the O'Hare Modernization Program. Construction is anticipated to begin in the spring and will be completed in the fall of 2013.

The largest CREATE grade separation began the construction bid process in mid-August. CDOT posted an invitation to bid for work on the

CREATE GS15a Project - Realignment and Grade Separation of E. 130th St./S. Brainard Ave./S. Torrence Ave.

The 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project combines CREATE projects P2, P3, EW2 and GS19 into a single project for the Environmental Impact Study. The Website for the 75th Street CIP was launched and community outreach began. This Website provides study information and links to environmental documents, newsletters, project schedule and upcoming public events.

The purpose of this combined project is to reduce rail congestion and delays between the Dan Ryan Expressway and Ashburn, to increase capacity for Metra trains, move SouthWest Service to LaSalle Street Station and to eliminate rail traffic conflicts between the Metra SouthWest service passenger trains, Amtrak and CSXT, NS, UP and BRC freight lines. Additionally, the grade-crossing separation will reduce auto traffic congestion resulting from freight trains blocking the roadway. □

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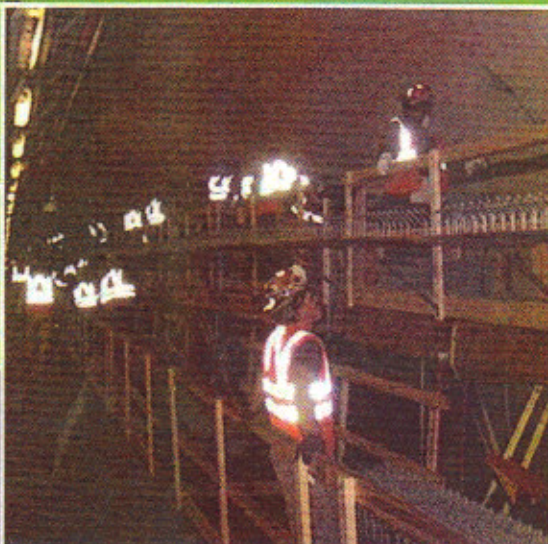
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