INTRODUCTION

Chicago’s critical location in the North American railroad network has made it the nation’s rail hub for more than a century. The Chicago region currently handles nearly half of intermodal rail containers and nearly a third of all carload rail freight in the U.S. The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program is implementing critically needed improvements to Chicago’s rail infrastructure through a unique partnership between the U.S. Department of Transportation, State of Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Metra Commuter Rail, Amtrak, and the nation’s largest freight railroads. Like the railroad network that converges in Chicago, CREATE’s benefits extend throughout the country and across industries. This fact sheet highlights how Chicago’s rail infrastructure supports the chemical industry.

WHY RAIL IS IMPORTANT

Rail is the most sustainable way to move people and freight:

- Rail is 4 times more fuel efficient than trucks
- One train can carry the equivalent freight of hundreds of trucks
- 1 gallon of fuel can move 1 ton of rail freight over 480 miles

Chicago’s rail system handles 47% of intermodal rail containers & 29% of rail cars in the U.S. $652 billion worth of goods each year

Source: Annual Carloads and Value, 2019 STB Confidential Waybill Sample.

CHICAGO REGION TOP COMMODITIES BY RAIL

- **CONSUMER PRODUCTS**: 4.9M carloads, $345 billion
- **CHEMICALS**: 712K carloads, $69 billion
- **FOOD PRODUCTS**: 681K carloads, $31 billion
- **VEHICLES AND PARTS**: 663K carloads, $105 billion
- **ENERGY PRODUCTS**: 317K carloads, $18 billion
- **PULP AND PAPER**: 300K carloads, $14 billion
- **AGGREGATES**: 158K carloads, $1.2 billion
- **COAL**: 361K carloads, $1.5 billion
- **FIELD CROPS**: 351K carloads, $6.8 billion
- **ENERGY PRODUCTS**: 317K carloads, $18 billion
- **PULP AND PAPER**: 300K carloads, $14 billion
- **AGGREGATES**: 158K carloads, $1.2 billion
- **COAL**: 361K carloads, $1.5 billion

Top three origin or destination states for chemicals rail traffic:
1. Iowa
2. Saskatchewan
3. Ontario

48% of containerized (intermodal) chemicals rail traffic in the U.S.

20% of all chemicals by tonnage that travels by rail in the U.S. through Chicago.

19% of carload chemicals rail traffic in the U.S.

2023