



CREATE

KEEPING THE GO IN CHICAGO

2024 NEWSLETTER

CHICAGO REGION ENVIRONMENTAL AND TRANSPORTATION EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

The CREATE Program: A National Model for Public-Private Partnerships

As we continue through 2024, the CREATE Program continues to improve freight and passenger transportation by building bridges and improving connections serving the Chicago region's rail system and our communities. By reducing delays across many transportation modes, these projects also improve the environment for local communities and the state overall. Through the CREATE Program, thousands of metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions will be saved from entering the atmosphere every year. The CREATE Program partners look forward to building on this momentum throughout 2024. Modernizing our region's railroads is a significant endeavor, requiring the close coordination and partnership between the railroads, city, county, state, and federal government. We're honored to lead this nationally recognized effort!

The CREATE Program is a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership that is improving the rail and roadway transportation network within the Chicago region through the completion of 70 interrelated infrastructure projects. The CREATE Program includes the U.S. Department of Transportation, State of Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, and the Association of American Railroads (AAR) representing freight railroads Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), Belt Railway of Chicago (BRC), Canadian Pacific Kansas City (CPKC), Canadian National (CN), CSX, Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB), Norfolk Southern (NS) and Union Pacific (UP). The Program is designed to eliminate bottlenecks resulting from insufficient rail capacity as well as rail intersecting with trucks, cars, buses, bikes and pedestrians. CREATE's infrastructure improvements intend to boost the economy of northeastern Illinois and improve the national supply chain, while enhancing the overall safety and environment of the region, improving life for people who live along and/or travel through the region's rail corridors.

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Project Status

The CREATE Program continues to move full steam ahead on projects throughout the Chicago region in 2024!

Completed projects

33

Projects under construction (Phase III)

4

Projects in final design (Phase II)

9

Projects in environmental review (Phase I)

6

Remaining projects

18

PROJECT **PROGRESS**

WA1 Highlight

Ogden Junction (project WA1) is a UP-led project consisting of a 1.9 mile-long segment along the Western Avenue Corridor. This corridor provides critical connectivity for regional and national freight traffic, accommodating approximately 20 to 30 freight trains a day within a network that serves more than 180,000 freight and 300,000 passenger trains annually. This project will replace 14 viaducts, rehabilitate two viaducts, remove two viaducts and upgrade all bridges to modern standards within the corridor. Other community investments include new lighting, sidewalks, vertical clearance improvements and roadway paving. This will enhance accessibility and safety for people walking, bicycling, taking transit, or driving in the corridor as well as support community efforts to bring development, jobs and housing into surrounding neighborhoods. The project will also install new Centralized Traffic Control, traffic signal control points, and upgrade the existing hand-thrown switches to power switches to improve operational capacity, speed, and fluidity to prepare the corridor to efficiently serve future freight rail demand. A reduction in idling trains will also reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. If you are interested in learning more or working on this project, watch this [video](#) and sign up [here](#) to receive procurement updates.

WA1 is finalizing design documents in preparation of Phase II Report submission and anticipates starting construction in 2025.



Ogden Junction (project WA1)

EW3A Highlight

Pullman Junction (project EW3A) is a NS-led project to construct rail, track, and signal upgrades at Pullman Junction on the CREATE East-West Corridor, near 95th Street between Woodlawn Avenue and Stony Island Avenue in Chicago. Construction of EW3A will improve efficiency of this key junction in the Chicago Terminal by adding track capacity and increasing track speed where necessary to relieve congestion as well as upgrading signal systems for improved safety and efficiency. As currently configured, approximately 37 freight trains travel through Pullman Junction each day, but only one train can operate at a time and track curvature currently limits speeds on the NS Main Track to 15 miles per hour (mph). The improved geometry after project completion will increase speeds on the NS mainline to 25 mph. In addition, the project will install powered switches and upgraded signals, allowing trains to move through the junction more safely and efficiently.

EW3A just reached an important project milestone

with the Phase II Report being approved in January 2024. The project is now finalizing grant documentation, has procured a construction manager, and is preparing to enter construction in 2025.

WA11 Highlight

Dolton Interlocking (project WA11) is a CSX-led project to reconfigure the Dolton Junction Interlocking with most of the work taking place between 137th St. and 144th St. in the villages of Dolton and Riverdale in Cook County, Illinois. The main objectives of the project are to increase freight capacity through the junction, reducing delays to Amtrak passenger service and improving train movements in and out of major CSX and UP yards. The project will involve adding or renewing track (including a new third main track), re-profiling existing track and improving geometry, installing new turnouts, and upgrading five at-grade crossings to improve safety.

WA11 is finalizing design documents in preparation of Phase II Report submission and anticipates starting construction in 2025.

75TH STREET CIP MOVING FORWARD

The 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (75th St. CIP) is a group of four projects that make up the most complex piece of the overall CREATE Program. These projects are being implemented together due to their logistical and environmental commonalities as well as their proximity. The four projects are located along two passenger and four freight rail lines in the neighborhoods of Ashburn, Auburn Gresham, Englewood, and West Chatham. By removing conflicts between freight and passenger trains and eliminating the grade crossing at 71st Street, the 75th Street CIP will eliminate 18,500 annual train passenger hours of delay; increase train reliability, speed and capacity; as well as eliminate congestion, delays and idling for people driving, walking, bicycling, or using transit.



Promoting Upcoming Grant Applications

In October 2023, the CREATE Program sponsored a panel discussion at the Union League Club regarding the role the second segment of the 75th St. CIP will play in transforming the nation’s passenger and freight rail system. This 80th Street Junction and Belt Junction Replacement Project will remove the largest chokepoint in North America’s freight rail network and result in significant positive impacts to the global and national supply chain, improved Amtrak intercity rail and Metra commuter rail service at the regional level, and community mobility benefits at the local level. It will involve a suite of

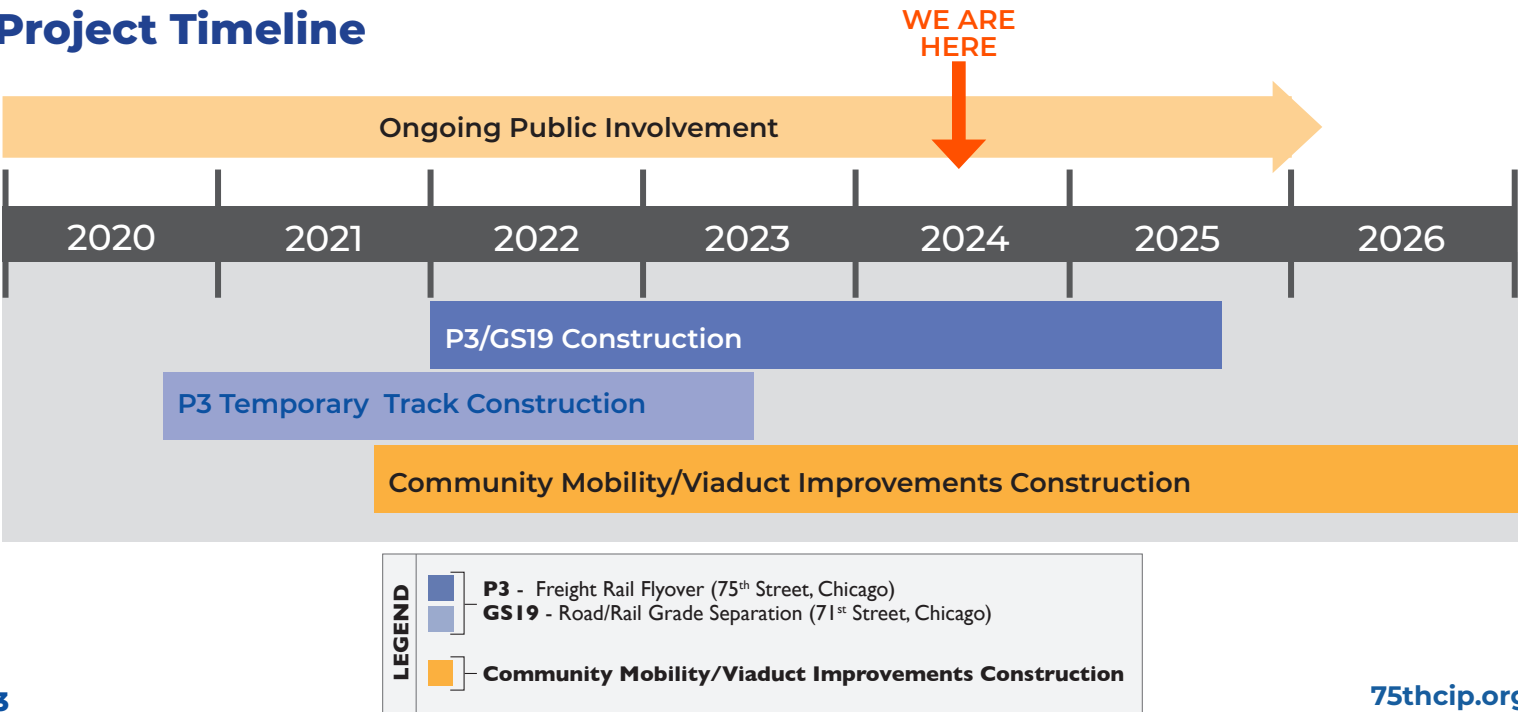
improvements that address travel time, safety, and state of good repair along a 3-mile elevated rail corridor on Chicago’s South Side. Serving the BRC, CN, CSX, NS, and UP railroads, the corridor handles 90 freight trains daily, as well as 30 Metra commuter trains, and one Amtrak passenger train. This project will reconfigure track segments and signals at Belt Junction; add a third track to a NS line; replace and restore 14 aging bridge and viaduct structures; and implement mobility improvements on surface streets throughout the corridor. It will also allow for the rerouting of



Metra’s Southwest Service trains from Chicago Union Station to the LaSalle Street commuter rail terminal. This shift will enable expansion of intercity passenger rail and other commuter rail service at Union Station which now hosts 16 Amtrak lines and

six Metra lines. The CREATE Program partners will continue to seek federal funding for the remaining 75th St. CIP segments.

Project Timeline





75th Street Community Mobility Improvements

During 2021-2023 the CREATE Program completed implementation of 154 community mobility improvements within the 75th St CIP' P3/GS19 project area. These improvements, led by the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), included neighborhood street repaving, curb and sidewalk repair, street tree planting, bus stop improvements, and ADA ramp improvements. Remaining improvements include upgrades to streets and sidewalks under rail viaducts that will be completed in conjunction with upcoming structural work at those locations. CDOT has also begun surveying the EW2 and P2 project areas for future community mobility improvements that will be implemented in coordination with those upcoming projects. The CREATE partners will coordinate with members of the surrounding communities to finalize the lists of future improvements.



Education Commitment

The CREATE partners continue to promote Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) educational programs for elementary and high school students in the 75th Street CIP project area. This includes in-classroom activities, hosting field trips to rail related sites, junior mentor-protégé internships, and more. This year's in-class activities include a bridge building competition for elementary schools and a Request for Proposal (RFP) competition for high schools. For the 2023-2024 school year, the Program partners donated a total of \$200,000 across several recipient organizations including schools in the project area, the Museum of Science and Industry, and the Chicago Public Library Foundation. These grants are being used for science labs, on-site visits, internships, after-school clubs, new equipment, at-home science kits, online programs and more.



P3/GS19 Project Updates

The Forest Hill Flyover (P3) project is constructing more than a mile of elevated railroad structure that will eliminate conflicts between CSX trains traveling north-south and BRC, NS and Metra trains traveling east-west. The project includes a grade separation at 71st Street (GS19) that will eliminate conflicts between railroad operations and people driving, walking, or bicycling on the local street below.

Since the P3/GS19 project broke ground on October 24, 2022, activity has steadily increased at the work site. The GS19 project has linked stage 1 construction work schedules with the P3 project, allowing design and construction efficiencies between the two projects. After P3 structure construction is complete, the final roadway section of GS19 will begin construction in 2025-26.

Please read our [quarterly construction update](#) for more information! We also encourage you to follow along with our social media channels to stay up to date on project progress as seen in this [post](#)!



P2/EW2 Updates

The CREATE Program continues to advance Phase II final design plans for the remaining segments of the 75th Street CIP. The Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction Replacements project (EW2) will reconfigure the BRC main tracks between the Dan Ryan Expressway and Belt Junction, eliminating multiple conflicting paths between BRC, NS, UP, Metra and Amtrak trains. The Rock Island Connection project (P2) will link Metra's Southwest Service with Metra's Rock Island District mainline so Southwest Service trains may move their downtown Chicago operations from capacity-constrained Union Station to LaSalle Street Station, thereby freeing up capacity at Union Station for expanded Amtrak and Metra service on other lines. It will also construct a second main track for the Southwest Service from near Wrightwood Station to east of Halsted Street to increase capacity and reduce delays. The CREATE partners are continuing to seek construction funding for upcoming segments of EW2 and P2.

Several procurements have been initiated and contracts awarded to advance final design work for the remaining segments of EW2 and P2:

1. **EW2 Design Services** - Union Pacific selected a team led by HDR in September 2022 to provide final track design and engineering services for the Union Pacific-led portion of the EW2 project.
2. **EW2 Rock Island Bridge Raise 87** - This Metra project consists of modifying and raising selected spans of Rock Island Bridge 87 at Metra Rock Island District to provide

additional clearance for NS and BRC tracks under the bridge. Final design is expected to be completed in 2024, with construction bids to follow soon after.

3. **EW2 Right-of-Way (ROW)** - Union Pacific issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) in October 2023 for track management, bridges, and property acquisition services for their segment of the EW2 project.
4. **EW2/P2 Preliminary Signaling** - This BRC-led work will coordinate design of all signal modifications between the Ashburn Interlocking at the west end of the project and the Dan Ryan Expressway at the east end. IDOT issued a Notice to Proceed (NTP) in November 2023.
5. **Project P2 ROW Assessment Services** - Project P2 will create a Metra flyover structure connecting the Southwest Service (SWS) line with the Rock Island District (RID) line. This new structure will require right of way acquisition; Metra issued a Letter of Interest and Qualifications (LIQ) in April 2022 for related professional services. Metra and other professional service consultants also continue to prepare final design plans for this ROW assessment work.

To stay up to date on bid advertisements and upcoming professional development events such as the Get-on-Board events, Union Pathways Workshops, and other opportunities, visit createprogram.org.

ENGAGING CHICAGO'S WORKFORCE

Over the past year, the CREATE partners continued their effort to provide procurement opportunities/updates to encourage Program participation by certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE), small businesses and rail-industry prime contractors specializing in engineering, design, land acquisition and construction. The Program's goal was to award 23% of the 75th Street CIP P3 contracts to firms registered as Disadvantaged Enterprises. The Program has significantly exceeded this DBE goal for the Forest Hill Flyover, which currently stands at 73%.

In addition, the IDOT Highway Construction Careers Training Program (HCCTP) at Dawson Technical Institute of Kennedy King-College provides training for construction job opportunities on CREATE's 75th St. CIP. Students are trained in highway construction-related skills in a 16-week intensive training, eight hours a day, five days a week. As a result of the HCCTP Program, in 2023 twelve (12) graduates were hired by CREATE partners, one of which was promoted from an internship position to a full time-position.

To learn about contracting opportunities and training programs affiliated with the 75th St. CIP, please visit www.75thcip.org/doing_business/. Firms are encouraged to register through the CREATE website, www.createprogram.org/get-involved/bids-rfps/, for email invitations to respond to professional services bid opportunities for contracted work.



Recent HCCTP graduates were recognized at the 75th St. CIP April 2024 Open House, pictured with 17th Ward Alderman David Moore.

PROMOTING CREATE AROUND THE COUNTRY

2023 brought many opportunities for the Program partners to discuss CREATE's regional and national impacts with key stakeholders at the federal, state, and local levels. We are grateful for the continued support and encouragement from these CREATE supporters.



WA1 Tour with FRA Administrator Amit Bose

In May 2023, the CREATE Program had the pleasure of hosting Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Administrator Amit Bose during his visit to Chicago. Program partners updated the Administrator on the Program status, including its national and regional impacts on freight, Amtrak, and Metra rail operations. Our partners, including Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Omer Osman, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways Superintendent Jennifer "Sis" Killen, Association of American Railroad's William Thompson, Chicago Department of Transportation's Jeffrey Sriver, UP's Lindsey Douglas and others, had the opportunity to showcase the site of the Westside Gateway – Ogden Junction (WA1) project. Located on the Union Pacific Rockwell Subdivision on Chicago's West Side, this project recently received a \$70 million INFRA grant. The CREATE partners look forward to continuing our successful partnerships with FRA.



Civic Briefing and Tour

During Summer 2023, Program partners hosted a tour for staff from Senator Durbin, Representative Casten, Representative Angelica Guerrero-Cuellar, Representative Harry Benton, Representative Bradley Fritts, Representative Matt Hanson, Representative Hoan Huynh, Cook County Commissioner & Transportation Committee Chair Stanley Moore, Alderman David Moore, Alderman Derrick Curtis, Alderman Raymond Lopez, and stakeholder groups that included Operating Engineers Local 150, Illinois Chamber of Commerce, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, Illinois Railroad Association, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, and the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus. Program partners met tour goers at Chicago Union Station before visiting Norfolk Southern's Landers Yard to discuss its operation and goods that move through the Chicago region and their relation to the CREATE Program. The group then headed to the Forest Hill Flyover (P3) and 71st Street Grade Separation (GS19) project sites to see the 75th St. CIP's latest progress. The CREATE Program partners appreciate the tour attendees' continued support as we modernize Chicago's rail network!

BENEFITS

BENEFITS OF CREATE

- Reduces passenger train delay by more than 1.3M passenger hours annually
- Saves 92K hours of truck delay and 230K hours of motorist and bus delay
- Avoids 200 vehicle crashes with trains
- Avoids 2.8K metric tons/year emissions from idling vehicles
- Enables 50K more freight trains to travel through greater Chicago rail network annually
- Avoids 18.5K truck trips a day on highways since 122M tons of freight per year would travel by rail

WTS Conference

In September 2023, Program partners were excited to participate in a panel discussion at the Women's Transportation Seminar (WTS) Central Region Conference. Our moderator was Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways Superintendent Jennifer 'Sis' Killen and panelists included Illinois Department of Transportation's Deputy Director of Rail John Oimoen, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highway's Cecilia Diaz, Chicago Department of Transportation's Jeffrey Sriver, and Union Pacific's Lindsey Douglas. They shared the diverse career paths that led them to CREATE as well as their varied perspectives on the CREATE Program, their roles within the Program, and lessons learned from the spirit of collaboration among the Program's public and private partners. The partners thank WTS for this opportunity and look forward to participating in future events.

National/Illinois/Chicago Organization Outreach

In 2023, the CREATE partners engaged with several national stakeholder organizations to provide a general introduction to the CREATE Program and its importance to the national supply chain. These organizations included the Surface Transportation Board, Federal Railroad Administration, ComEd, and the Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance.

The CREATE partners also engaged with state and local stakeholder organizations including the Illinois Railroad Association, Illinois Manufacturers' Association, Illinois Road and Transportation Builders, Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Southwest Conference of Mayors, Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, Chicago Federation of Labor, as well as a luncheon with Hispanic American Construction Industry Association (HACIA) members. These discussions highlighted how the CREATE Program's improvements affect commodity flows across the United States.

The CREATE partners also briefed congressional, state, and local elected officials to provide updates on the Program and latest project progress. These officials included Illinois Senate President Don Harmon, Representative Sean Casten, and Representative Mike Quigley. The CREATE partners also conducted meetings with several aldermanic offices including Alderman David Moore, Alderman William Hall, Alderman Stephanie Coleman, Alderman Ronnie Mosley, and Alderman Derrick Curtis to update each office on upcoming activities within and around their respective wards.

AREMA Tour

In July, Program partners hosted members of the American Railway Engineering and Maintenance-of-Way Association (AREMA) Committee 10 for a briefing and tour of the 75th St. CIP's Forest Hill Flyover. These committee members received information on project scope, its benefits, and toured the latest project progress. CREATE partners appreciate the opportunity to share status updates as we untangle North America's largest rail chokepoint!



LOOKING FORWARD

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)

The CREATE partners are excited about opportunities to continue modernizing the Chicago region's rail network through the \$1.2 trillion Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021. This law makes significant federal funding available for freight and passenger railroad improvements and presents a unique opportunity to advance many of the remaining CREATE projects.



STAY ENGAGED

Follow CREATE on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and sign-up for our mailing lists to ensure you know when the latest procurement notices, project updates and event information is available. As always, CREATE representatives are available to provide briefings, presentations and tours – reach us at info@createprogram.org if you are interested!

CREATE PARTNERS

