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CREATE Program Partners Continue Education Commitment in Conjunction with Chicago Elementary and High Schools, Museum of Science and Industry and Chicago Public Library Foundation to Promote STEM Learning

May 13, 2022 – The [Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency \(CREATE\) Program](#) partners have continued their commitment as part of the [75th Street Corridor Improvement Project \(75th St. CIP\)](#), to bolstering STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education within Chicago Public Schools, Leo High School, the Museum of Science and Industry and Chicago Public Library through the Library Foundation. For the 2021-2022 school year, the Program partners donated \$25,000 across eight recipients, totaling \$200,000. This marked the second time that the CREATE Program partners have provided grants as a part of their education commitment to communities within the 75th St. CIP corridor.

The CREATE Program partners education commitment continues for the 2022-2023 school year with their third announcement of another round of grants totaling \$200,000, to Leo High School, The Museum of Science & Industry, The Chicago Public Library Foundation and the Chicago Public Schools. This announcement of funding was made at A. Randolph Elementary School on May 13th highlighting success stories from the past year, the announcement of recipients for the upcoming school year, and remarks from CREATE Program stakeholders and supporters.

The CREATE Program partnership comprises the U.S. Department of Transportation, State of Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak and the nation's Class I railroads which have garnered more than \$2 billion to modernize the Chicago region's rail infrastructure along with adjacent roadways. While individual railroads have provided grants to community groups in the past, these grants are unique and grow out of agreements made by the CREATE partners to provide community benefits throughout work on the 75th St. CIP, which will remove conflicts between rail and pedestrian/vehicular traffic.

The 75th St. CIP is the most complex piece within the overall CREATE Program and is a group of four projects that were advanced as a singular project due to their logistical and environmental similarities. This rail and roadway improvement project is located on the south side of Chicago in the neighborhoods of Ashburn, Auburn Gresham, Englewood, and West Chatham along two passenger and four freight rail lines. The project area is roughly bound by Pulaski Road, 63rd Street, Interstate 94 (Dan Ryan Expressway) and 103rd Street. To learn more about the status of the 75th St. CIP, please visit the project timeline page: <https://75thcip.org/about/timeline.aspx>

“Despite the challenges presented to us during the COVID-19 pandemic, the CREATE Program partners are proud to support students and their families to continue their educational endeavors,” said Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. “We understand the challenges have been many but that means many hands must support the work.”

As the 2021 school year began, CREATE partners worked with several south side Chicago elementary and high schools to fund engineering and urban planning activities for students to

engage with the transportation and infrastructure industries. Partnering with Children First Fund: the Chicago Public Schools Foundation, CREATE is providing CPS schools with resources and learning activities related to elements of the 75th St. CIP. Partner investments in the 2022 – 23 school year will continue STEM programming, allow for the creation of STEM clubs, learning partnerships and develop or enhance school makerspaces. Program partners from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (DoTH) and the Program's railroads will continue to visit classrooms to demonstrate building structure, street design and railroad crossing design.

"We appreciate the CREATE program's vision and support to help our students see how STEM lessons are part of our everyday lives and community projects," said CPS CEO Pedro Martinez. "We know that once classroom lessons are brought to life, our students' natural curiosity will take over to further their learning in STEM and in making their community even stronger."

At Randolph Elementary, one of the CPS schools benefiting from the program, teacher Lynette Millner is developing the school's first STEM club with some of the resources from these grants. She is designing a new program that aligns to students' needs and interests, incorporating best practices from a STEM "menu" of similar projects at other schools.

"Through this continued partnership between the CREATE Program and Randolph Elementary, we are providing our CPS students access to resources that will provoke curiosity in the sciences," stated Dr. Tinaya York, Principal of A. Randolph Elementary School. "We are determined for our students to carry this curiosity throughout their educational experience and professional careers."

"Investments from our CREATE partners have assisted with upgrading STEM technology in our classrooms which positively impacts the Leo High School family as well as the Auburn Gresham community at large," said Principal Shaka Rawls of Leo High School. "We continue to build infrastructure that will teach our students about subjects, such as robotics, and host students from neighboring schools to engage them in the science and math fields."

With contributions to the Chicago Public Library Foundation provided by the CREATE Program, the Library offered robust online and hands-on programming developed around the 2021 Summer Learning Challenge theme of "Start With Art!". Community members were able to visit neighborhood branches to collect a free activity book and grab-and-go kits filled with puzzles, design challenges and STEAM activities. In addition to the CREATE partners' contribution, the Norfolk Southern Foundation donated \$30,000 to help fund the 2021 Summer Learning Challenge as well as the ongoing ScienceConnections initiative. ScienceConnections encourages students in kindergarten through 8th grade to explore their interest in STEM through hands-on and virtual activities they can do on their own or with the guidance of a librarian.

"Generous support from the CREATE Program and Norfolk Southern Foundation helped to spark an interest in informal STEM learning for thousands of Chicago kids and their families this year through our beloved Summer Learning Challenge and ScienceConnections programs," said Brenda Langstraat, President & CEO of the Chicago Public Library Foundation.

“Norfolk Southern is proud to partner with the Chicago Public Library Foundation and we are grateful for this opportunity to go beyond our tracks to provide a positive impact in the communities in which we live and work,” said LaSandra Boykin, Director of Corporate Giving for Norfolk Southern Foundation. “Education & Innovation is one of our corporate giving pillars and the Chicago Public Library Foundation continues to do an excellent job at supporting ‘above and beyond’ programs that assist our next generation with understanding the value in learning science and math.”

With support from the CREATE Program, the Museum of Science and Industry was able to amplify their Summer Brain Games initiative which provides free and fun at-home science activities that can be easily done with everyday household items. The Summer Brain Games kit encourages young people to discover their neighborhood and explore STEM in the city, a theme that is closely related to the CREATE partner’s efforts to engage local students with the 75th St. CIP. Take-home activity kits were made available at several Chicago Public Library locations near the 75th St. CIP during the 2021 summer.

“Summer Brain Games is a really important program because it delivers science activities into the hands of students during the summer,” said Rex Babiera, ITW Director of Professional Learning of the Museum of Science and Industry, Chicago. “We know how important it is to have kids interested in, excited and motivated about science when they’re not in school. It’s that interest that drives their learning, keeps them curious and teaches them that science is something that everyone can do.”

The CREATE partners are committed to supporting programs in the neighborhoods around the project area to encourage students’ interest in transportation, engineering and technical fields throughout the design and construction of the 75th St. CIP, which is anticipated to last through 2024.

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The CREATE Program is a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership to improve the rail and roadway transportation network within the Chicago region through the completion of 70 interrelated infrastructure projects. The CREATE Program is a partnership that includes the U.S. Department of Transportation, State of Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, the Association of American Railroads along with freight railroads BNSF, Belt Railway of Chicago, Canadian Pacific, Canadian National, CSX, Indiana Harbor Belt, Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific. The Program is designed to eliminate freight rail and motor vehicle bottlenecks, boost the economy of northeastern Illinois and improve the overall safety and environment of the region.

To date, 31 projects have been completed out of the 70 that are a part of the CREATE Program. These projects have already improved rail and commuter transit times by an estimated 35% despite the increase in rail and roadway traffic since the Program began.

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