



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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August 23, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is pleased to support the Illinois Department of Transportation's application for the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) funding on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. The CREATE program is an innovative public-private partnership between six of the Class 1 railroads, Amtrak, Metra, the State of Illinois, Cook County and the City of Chicago. This grant will fund a segment of the Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction Replacements (defined as "EW2"), which includes reconfiguring the Belt Railway Company (BRC) main tracks between the Dan Ryan Expressway and Belt Junction, where four freight railroads conflict with each other and Metra's SouthWest Service operations.

As the comprehensive regional planning organization of northeastern Illinois, CMAP is committed to supporting initiatives that will reduce congestion, improve safety, and advance equity throughout our region's freight and passenger rail network. ON TO 2050, the region's comprehensive plan, emphasizes the importance of making much-needed investments in our rail infrastructure as the nation's freight hub.

This segment of EW2 project will reconfigure Belt Railway Company (BRC), Norfolk Southern (NS), and Metra tracks. A third BRC main track will be constructed, thus eliminating multiple conflicting paths for freight, Metra, and Amtrak trains. This project will help alleviate congestion at the most congested rail chokepoint in North America in the Chicago Terminal, the Belt Junction, where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross each other's paths per day. This project also will improve performance on the Amtrak Cardinal service, by eliminating freight conflicts in the vicinity of 80th Street.

Once again, CMAP is supportive of IDOT's MPDG application for the Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction Replacements (EW2) project. This project will support the efficient movement of people and goods along a major

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Executive Director

Erin Aleman

freight and passenger rail corridor and help improve the quality of life in neighboring communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erin Aleman', with a long, sweeping underline.

Erin Aleman
Executive Director

KH:EA