



CREATE Program 2019 Annual Newsletter

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*Moving
Forward
Together*



\$132 million in federal funds received for 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project

The U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) awarded \$132 million to the CREATE Program partners in June 2018 through the [Infrastructure for Rebuilding America \(INFRA\) grant program](#). The award enabled the advancement of a \$474 million effort to separate several freight and passenger rail lines in the 75th Street corridor. This corridor intersects the Chicago neighborhoods of West Englewood, Englewood, Greater Grand Crossing, Chatham, Roseland, Washington Heights, Auburn Gresham, Ashburn and Chicago Lawn. Approximately 100 trains a day, including 30 Metra trains, pass through the area.

The 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (75th St. CIP) will deliver transportation benefits through untangling the most severe freight and passenger rail bottleneck in the region, construction of a road-rail grade separation project, improving viaducts that affect community mobility and improving local transportation infrastructure to further enhance safety and accessibility. Economic benefits include contracting opportunities for certified Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE), implementing job training programs and supporting S.T.E.M. education in local schools. New economic benefits of \$3.8 million extend beyond the immediate neighborhoods. Removing conflicts between freight and passenger trains and creating a road-rail grade separation at 71st Street will eliminate 18,500 annual train passenger hours of delay, increase train reliability, speed and capacity, and eliminate congestion, delays and idling for motorists. For more information, visit the [75th St. CIP website](#).

Celebrating the next phases of the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project

The CREATE Program partners celebrated receipt of \$132 million in federal funding for the 75th St. CIP on October 1 with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao. [Secretary Chao and special guests](#) shared remarks regarding the national importance of this work to increase the reliability and efficiency of the region's railroad infrastructure, create jobs in the region and improve community safety. The project garnered national support and support from eight state departments of transportation, major industry leaders and state and regional policy and planning organizations. The celebratory event was held at the [Forest Hill yard](#), future home to the Forest Hill Flyover, one of the fully funded 75th St. CIP design and construction projects.



CREATE Program projects move into new phases

The CREATE Program partners continue to plan, design and construct projects that increase the efficiency of the region's passenger and freight rail infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for Chicago-area residents. The 71st St. road-rail at-grade separation ([GS19](#)) and Forest Hill Flyover projects ([P3](#)) have transitioned from preliminary engineering to final design phase. The Argo Connections project ([B9](#)) has transitioned from final design to construction phase. These changes reflect the recent funding for the 75th St. CIP and Argo Connections projects. Learn more about the 70 projects within the CREATE Program by browsing the [projects page on our website](#).



Get On Board with CREATE

Over 100 participants and 36 firms working in construction, engineering, design and transportation joined together on January 24 for a unique networking event for Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) firms. Hosted by the CREATE Program partners, the opportunity led to connections between DBE firms and prime contractors - achieving the vision for the "Get On Board" business-to-business event.

Participants enjoyed time for business-to-business networking and hearing from guest speakers, including Illinois state senators Jacqueline Collins and Martin Sandoval and representatives from the City of Chicago, Cook County, Illinois Department of Transportation, Metra and Association of American Railroads. Well-attended workshops provided participants with an overview of work on the 75th St. CIP and Argo Connections projects and valuable information on responding to bid notifications. DBE firms were encouraged to [register for email invitations](#) to propose on professional services and contracted work opportunities.



CREATE freight and passenger rail benefits recognized as regional priorities

In 2018, two key regional planning documents highlighted the CREATE Program's significance. The [Cook County Freight Plan](#) identifies benefits and opportunities of a robust and multimodal freight system, recommendations for leadership, rail and road improvements, and coordinated community and economic development. The plan also acknowledges the CREATE Program partners' roles in improving the efficiency and safety of freight movements within Cook County and beyond.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) renewed its commitment to the importance of the 75th St. CIP as a regionally significant project in its [ON TO 2050 plan](#). The 75th St. CIP is identified as a project that will help the region achieve the goal of safe and reliable movement of people and goods within and through metropolitan Chicago.

Deep gratitude for leadership of two CREATE Program partners

Ed Hamberger retired as President of the Association of American Railroads. During his tenure, he was a leader in developing the CREATE Program's unique public-private partnership. That vision is one of many examples of his imprint on modern railroading. In 2018, Progressive Railroading named him Railroad Innovator of the Year.

Randy Blankenhorn retired as Secretary of the Illinois Department of Transportation after years of robust advocacy for the CREATE Program both at IDOT and in his former role as Executive Director of CMAP. His leadership and support for the work of improving regional and national freight and passenger rail capacity led to grant awards and increased financial investment by the State of Illinois.

We extend best wishes to both and our gratitude for their unwavering commitment to the CREATE Program and improving rail transportation.

Invite CREATE to share the story of a \$4.4 billion infrastructure program

Our team is eager to share information with community and professional groups regarding the CREATE Program. [Contact us to request a presentation](#) to learn about:

- National and regional economic benefits
- Program scope and project updates
- Opportunities created from lessons learned
- Environmental justice work
- Community benefits
- Public-private partnership successes and challenges

WTTW highlighted the [75th Street Corridor Improvement Project](#) in a six-minute news story examining the project need and exploring funding, partnerships and next steps. ABC-Chicago covered the October 1 [75th St. CIP grant award celebration](#) and interviewed residents and officials about positive impacts related to these infrastructure improvements.

More media highlights from the year are available [In the News](#) on the CREATE Program website.

Follow the CREATE Program on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#) and [Flickr](#) for program highlights, videos and photos.

CREATE Program Partners

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