



# Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

433 West Van Buren Street  
Suite 450  
Chicago, IL 60607

312-454-0400  
cmap.illinois.gov

January 16, 2026

The Honorable David Fink, Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Fink:

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is pleased to support the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) application to the National Railroad Partnership Program (NRPP) 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 the next phase of the Rock Island Connection project, known as P2, and construct a flyover bridge between Belt Junction and Metra Commuter Rail's Rock Island District (RID) line.

As the comprehensive regional planning organization of northeastern Illinois, CMAP is committed to supporting initiatives that will reduce congestion, enhance mobility, improve safety, and strengthen our freight and passenger rail transportation 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. CREATE's P2 project will enable Metra to shift its SouthWest Service (SWS) trains to the RID line, ultimately reducing congestion and conflicts between freight and passenger service in and out of Belt Junction, where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross each other's paths each day. By implementing P2, commuter trips will also now terminate at LaSalle Street Station, versus Chicago Union Station (CUS), serving to shorten the average travel time for commuters, and enabling an expansion of Amtrak's intercity passenger rail service in the Midwest, by opening capacity at CUS.

Project P2 is a key part of CREATE'S 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP) which was recently identified as [one of the highest priority projects](#) for federal discretionary funding. These priorities were developed and adopted by the region's major transportation implementers through a series of convenings facilitated by CMAP. This project also helps achieve the CREATE Program's overall goals to improve rail operations in the Chicago metropolitan area and improve the quality of life in neighborhoods near rail. Beyond these local and

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Erin Aleman

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regional benefits, these improvements will have a significant positive impact on the national supply chain.

Again, CMAP is pleased to support IDOT's application to the NRPP on behalf of the CREATE program. This project represents a transformative investment in our region's rail network, addressing long-standing congestion challenges, enhancing passenger and freight rail efficiency, and improving safety for communities throughout northeastern Illinois.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erin Aleman', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Erin Aleman  
Executive Director

EA:RG