



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

BRANDON JOHNSON
MAYOR

August 21, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Letter of Support for CREATE Program EW2a Project 2023 MPDG Grant Application

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

As a partner in the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program for more than 20 years, the City of Chicago is fully supportive of IDOT's application for the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) funding. This grant will fund the first segment of the Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction Replacement, known as CREATE Project EW2a. This project includes replacing viaduct structures over city streets and reconfiguring railroad tracks between approximately Halsted Street and Western Avenue, where several freight railroad tracks cross paths with each other as well as tracks serving Metra's SouthWest Service commuter rail operations.

This project is part of the larger 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP), a grouping of four major improvements that make up the most complex portion of the overall CREATE Program and are being advanced as a single megaproject due to their operational relationships. These projects will improve service for Metra commuter trains, Amtrak passenger trains, and six freight railroads. The first two components of the 75th Street CIP (projects P3 and GS19) began final construction in October 2022 with support from a 2018 INFRA grant. The remaining two components, projects EW2 and P2, are critical to ensure the complete benefits of the overall project.

The first segment of the EW2 project will rebuild numerous railroad structures over city streets in a key segment of the 75th Street corridor, including repair of the streets and sidewalks below the bridges. This work will directly improve the condition of local streets serving the neighborhoods through which these trains pass while also making incremental improvements to freight, passenger, and commuter train operations and setting the stage for even greater improvements in future stages of the overall EW2 and P2 projects. This project will start to

alleviate the congestion at the most congested rail chokepoint in North America, Belt Junction, where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross each other's paths daily.

Project EW2a aligns with CREATE Program's overall goals to improve rail operations in the Chicago metropolitan area while reducing the environmental impacts of rail operations on local communities. Beyond these local and regional benefits, these improvements will critically support the national supply chain. The efficiencies resulting from this project will facilitate the movement of people and consumer goods along important railway systems and communities throughout the nation. Environmental justice is also a key part of the 75th St. CIP which has developed robust education and workforce opportunities that will be continued as part of the work to be funded by this grant, as well as supplementary community mobility improvements that will enhance local street and sidewalk infrastructure in the neighborhoods through which the trains pass. These projects not only support regional and national economic growth but also generate benefits from cleaner air, enhanced neighborhood infrastructure, reduced freight and passenger railroad delays, and improved local economic development potential.

The City of Chicago is pleased to fully support this grant application and looks forward to the project's successful implementation. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "R. M. Light" or similar, written over the word "Mayor".

Mayor