



# ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY CENTER

December 12, 2025

Mr. David Fink, Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20590

The Environmental Law & Policy Center (ELPC) fully supports the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) application, on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program, for funding through the National Railroad Partnership Program. The CREATE Program is the largest public-private partnership of its kind, involving the nation's rail industry and all levels of government.

Federal funding will advance CREATE's Rock Island Connection project (P2), which is the next phase of the larger 75<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Improvement Project that provides for constructing a flyover bridge to eliminate a major chokepoint and reduce conflicts between freight and passenger trains. P2 directly aligns with the goals of the National Railroad Partnership Program by improving reliability, travel times, and safety for both passenger and freight trains in the country's most congested rail terminal. P2 is necessary to fully realize the delay reductions for freight rail users at Belt Junction once passenger trains are separated from freight traffic.

A key benefit of the project is to reduce conflicts between freight and passenger trains in the corridor, which use the same tracks at the Belt Junction. Freight operators run 90 trains through the corridor daily, Amtrak runs 3 weekly Cardinal trains, and Metra currently runs 30 trains daily through the corridor. Because passenger trains are prioritized, freight trains are curtailed at least twice daily on the corridor, during peak morning and afternoon commuting periods (totaling six hours daily) and occasionally during non-peak periods. Rerouting Metra trains using the P2 bridge will improve freight flows through Belt Junction, particularly to and from the adjacent NS Landers Intermodal Yard.

The P2 project is also important for improving passenger rail performance across the Chicago terminal and the Midwest. Chicago's Union Station is the National Network's busiest station, home to 17 intercity lines and serving more than 3 million customers annually. P2 will greatly improve the reliability of passenger rail service at Union Station by allowing Metra to redirect 30 daily trains away to the LaSalle Street Station. This change strengthens Amtrak's ability to provide reliable service with improved travel times and reduced freight conflicts for intercity rail service across the Midwest.

The P2 project advances the CREATE Program's overarching goals—increasing the efficiency, capacity, safety, and reliability of passenger and freight rail throughout Chicago and the nation. Chicago is the nation's premier freight hub, handling nearly **half of all intermodal containers** and **one-third of U.S. carload freight**. This investment is an infrastructure upgrade that is a pivotal step toward enhancing supply chain resilience and driving economic growth nationwide.

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Manny Flores, Chair | Howard A. Learner, Executive Director

Illinois | Indiana | Iowa | Michigan | Minnesota | North Dakota | Ohio | South Dakota | Wisconsin | Washington D.C.



ELPC fully supports this application and looks forward to the successful implementation of the P2 project with an award through the National Railroad Partnership Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "HOWARD LEARNER". The letters are in all caps and have a slightly cursive, hand-drawn appearance.

Howard A. Learner  
Chief Executive Officer