



**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF COOK COUNTY**

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**TONI PRECKWINKLE
PRESIDENT**

December 5, 2024

SENT VIA EMAIL

Secretary Pete Buttigieg
US Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary, Buttigieg:

I am writing in support of the Illinois Department of Transportation's application for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. This grant will fund the Rock Island Connection project, known as P2. The project will construct a flyover bridge to enable Metra to shift its Southwest Service (SWS) commuter trains to the Rock Island line, ultimately reducing congestion and conflicts between freight and passenger service in and out of Belt Junction, the most significant bottleneck in the Chicago Terminal. Most crucially, by implementing P2, commuter trips will terminate at LaSalle Street Station rather than Chicago Union Station (CUS), allowing an expansion of Amtrak's intercity passenger rail service in the Midwest by opening capacity at CUS.

This project is a key part of the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP) - a grouping of four major improvements that make up the most complex portion of the overall CREATE Program. These four improvements are being advanced as a single project due to their logistical and environmental linkages. The first two components of the CIP (projects P3 and GS19) began construction in October 2022 with the support of a 2018 INFRA grant and are on schedule for completion in 2026. In 2024, the next phase of the 75th St CIP (Project EW2A) was awarded MPDG funding for construction, which will commence in 2026. The remaining two project components of the 75th Street CIP, P2 and other segments of EW2, are critical to ensure the full benefits of the overall project.

Project P2 helps achieve the CREATE Program's overall goal to improve rail operations in the Chicago metropolitan area, which will have a strongly positive effect on passenger rail operations throughout the Midwest as well as helping ensure the resilience of the national supply chain. The efficiencies resulting from this project support the movement of people and consumer goods throughout the nation. The 75th St CIP project includes investments in K-12 education and workforce opportunities as well as community mobility improvements (CMI). These CMIs enhance the safety, accessibility, quality of life,

and visual appeal of the community while enhancing local transportation systems for people walking, bicycling, taking transit, and driving. Not only does P2 support broader intercity travel and economic growth, but neighboring communities also benefit from cleaner air, reduced railroad delays, and improved development opportunities.

Cook County strongly supports this application and looks forward to the project's successful implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Toni Preckwinkle". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Toni Preckwinkle
Cook County Board President