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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

December 11, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg, Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), I provide this letter of support in conjunction with their application for the Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail (FSP) Grant Program funding in conjunction with the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. This grant will fund the Rock Island Connection project, known as P2. This project focuses on constructing a flyover bridge and will enable Metra to reduce congestion and conflicts between freight and passenger services in and out of Belt Junction, where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross paths daily. By implementing P2, commuters will see a shortened average travel time for their trips and an expansion of Amtrak's intercity passenger rail service in the Midwest.

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 and, are on schedule for completion in 2026. In 2024, the next phase of the 75th Street CIP (project EW2A) will commence in 2026. The remaining two project components of the 75th Street CIP, P2 and other segments of EW2, are critical to ensure full benefits of the overall project.

Project P2 helps achieve the CREATE Program's overall goals to improve rail operations in the Chicago metropolitan area and improve quality of life in neighborhoods near the rail. Beyond these local and regional benefits, these improvements will have a significant positive impact on the national supply chain. The 75th Street 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 public transit, and driving. Not only does P2 support broader economic growth, but neighboring communities will also benefit from cleaner air, reduced railroad delays, and improved development opportunities.

Within all relevant rules and regulations, it is my hope that you will give this application full and fair consideration. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me or my District Director, Katherine Coyle, at (309) 671-7027.

Sincerely,

Darin LaHood
Member of Congress