



January 16, 2026

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

Dear Administrator Fink:

Grow Greater Englewood (GGE) is a social enterprise Food and Land Sovereignty organization working to ensure healthy and productive living on the South Side of Chicago. GGE is engaged in urban farming, open and green space strategies, transportation equity, heat island reductions (CRTI/Tree Canopy Initiatives), climate resilience, agro-eco planning and recently established a Community Land Trust organization.

GGE 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) and the next phase of the larger 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project, which will construct 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. See the video produced by CSX that shows the railroad traffic reductions in Greater Englewood near 75th Street:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Z60HeyNfAY>.

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 (serving 96,679 riders in 2025), and Metra currently runs 30 SWS trains daily through the corridor (serving 976,376 riders in 2024). 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 SWS using the P2 bridge will improve freight flows through Belt Junction, particularly to and from the adjacent NS Landers Intermodal Yard (which reported 382,329 annual lifts in 2023).

The P2 project is also critical to improving passenger rail performance across the Chicago terminal and the Midwest. Chicago's Union Station (CUS) 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 CUS by allowing Metra to direct 30 daily trains away from CUS 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, including the Cardinal route, which connects New York Penn Station and CUS via major destinations such as Philadelphia, Washington D.C., Charlottesville, Cincinnati, and Indianapolis.

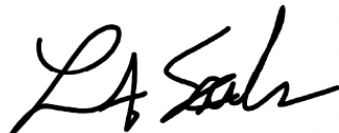
The P2 project advances the CREATE Program's overarching goals—increasing the efficiency, capacity, safety, and reliability of passenger and freight rail throughout Chicago and the nation. Chicago is the nation's premier freight hub, handling nearly half of all intermodal containers and one-third of U.S. carload freight. This investment is not merely an infrastructure upgrade – it is pivotal step toward enhancing supply chain resilience, reducing stagnant pollution, induce commerce, support existing and possibly expansion of Illinois Enterprise Zone #6 and drive economic growth nationwide.

Grow Greater Englewood fully supports this application and looks forward to the successful implementation of the P2 project with your award of the National Railroad Partnership Program.

In December 2025, Governor JB Pritzker signed the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA) Act into a law. The legislation includes an estimated \$1.2 billion in new annual operating funding for CTA, Metra, and Pace. The new board will usher cooperation between the railroad and passenger service agencies like Metra (also adding municipal support to Amtrak).

GGE looks forward to working with local organizations, institutions, Cook County, City of Chicago and IDOT to further community benefits from this critically important transportation project.

Sincerely,



L. Anton Seals Jr.
Lead Steward (Executive Director)
Grow Greater Englewood
www.growgreater.org

Cc: Senator Richard Durbin, U.S. Senate
Senator Tammy Duckworth, U.S. Senate
Jonathan Jackson, U.S. Representative for Illinois' 1st Congressional District
Danny K. Davis, U.S. Representative for Illinois' 7th Congressional District
Willie Preston, Illinois State Senator for the 16th District
Mattie Hunter, Illinois State Senator for the 3rd District
Sonya Harper, Illinois State Representative for the 6th District
Bill Lowry, Cook County Commissioner for the 3rd District
Michael Scott Jr., County Board Commissioner, 2nd District
William Hall, Alderman, 6th Ward
Stephanie Coleman, Alderwoman, 16th Ward & Chair of the Black Caucus
David Moore, Alderman, 17th Ward
Derrick Curtis, Alderman, 18th Ward
Region 5 EPA and IEPA Directors
Craig Turner, Interim Commissioner, CDOT
Angela Tovar, Commissioner, City of Chicago's Department of Environment
Cecile DeMello, Executive Director, Teamwork Englewood
Felicia Slaton-Young, Executive Director, Greater Englewood Chamber of Commerce
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Northwestern University Environmental Clinic
DePaul University Geology Department
Morton Arboretum