



August 21, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The Illinois Railroad Association wholeheartedly supports the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) application from the Illinois Department of Transportation on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. If successful, this grant will fund a segment of the Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction Replacements (defined as "EW2").

This segment of EW2 project will help alleviate North America's most congested rail chokepoint: the Belt Junction located in the Chicago Terminal. It is here where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross each other's paths per day. This project will redesign the conflicting paths between freight, passenger, and commuter rail; enhance performance on the Amtrak Cardinal service; and eliminate freight conflicts in the vicinity of 80th Street.

This project is part of the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP), a grouping of four smaller projects that make up the most complex portion of the overall CREATE Program, and have been advanced as a single project, due to their logistical and environmental linkages. The four projects take place along two passenger routes and six freight rail lines.

The first two components of the CIP (projects P3 and GS19) began construction in October 2022 with the support of a 2018 INFRA grant. The remaining two components, projects EW2 and P2, are critical to ensure complete benefits of this work.

Project EW2 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 the public. Beyond these benefits regionally, these improvements will have a major positive impact on the national supply chain. Environmental justice is a critical part of the 75th St. CIP with both education and workforce opportunities as well as community mobility improvements that will enhance the safety, accessibility, quality of life, visual appeal of the community and enhance the transit-riding experience. Not only do these projects support economic growth, but neighboring communities also benefit from cleaner air, reduced railroad delays, improved economic development potential and more fluid freight and passenger rail systems.

We ask that you give this application full and fair consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Butler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tim" and last name "Butler" clearly distinguishable.

Tim Butler  
President, Illinois Railroad Association