



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

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May 1, 2024

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is pleased to support the Illinois Department of Transportation's applications for the Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) and Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Programs funding on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. The CREATE Program is an innovative public-private partnership between six of the Class 1 railroads, Amtrak, Metra, the State of Illinois, Cook County and the City of Chicago. This grant will fund the first segment of the Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction Replacements (defined as "EW2a"), which includes reconfiguring the Belt Railway Company (BRC) main tracks between the Dan Ryan Expressway and Belt Junction, where four freight railroads conflict with each other and Metra's SouthWest Service operations.

As the comprehensive regional planning organization of northeastern Illinois, CMAP is committed to supporting initiatives that will reduce congestion, improve safety, and advance equity throughout our region's freight and passenger rail network. ON TO 2050, the region's comprehensive plan, emphasizes the importance of making much-needed investments in our rail infrastructure as the nation's freight hub. 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. Most recently, regional stakeholders identified the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project as **one of the highest priority projects** for IJJA discretionary funding. These priorities were developed and adopted by the region's major transportation implementers through a series of convenings facilitated by CMAP.

This segment of EW2 project will reconfigure Belt Railway Company (BRC), Norfolk Southern (NS), and Metra tracks rebuild 14 century-old railroad structures, including 86 bridges, over local streets in three South Side Chicago neighborhoods. A third BRC main track will be constructed, thus eliminating multiple conflicting paths for freight, Metra, and Amtrak trains. This project will help alleviate congestion at the most congested rail chokepoint in North America in the Chicago Terminal, the Belt Junction, where 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross each other's paths per day. This project also will improve performance on the

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Amtrak Cardinal service, by eliminating freight conflicts in the vicinity of 80th Street.

Once again, CMAP is supportive of IDOT's MPDG and CRISI applications on behalf of the CREATE Program for the Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction Replacements EW2a project segment. This project will support the efficient movement of people and goods along a major freight and passenger rail corridor and help improve the quality of life in neighboring communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Erin Aleman', with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Erin Aleman
Executive Director

EA:RG