



**Department of  
Transportation**  
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Mike DeWine, Governor  
Jim Tressel, Lt. Governor  
Pamela Boratyn, Director

January 16, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy  
Secretary, US Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

The Ohio Department of Transportation is pleased to support 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.

Federal funding will advance CREATE's Rock Island Connection project (P2), 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.

Chicago is one of the most congested areas on the national rail network. It is a traditional meeting point for the western and eastern rail carriers. Rail congestion in Chicago causes ripple effects throughout the rail network that can result in poor service for Ohio customers and even blocked crossings in the northern portion of Ohio.

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 [fiscal year] 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).

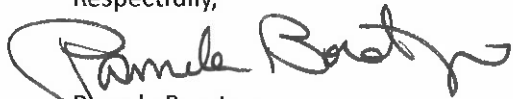
The P2 project is also critical to improving passenger rail performance across the Chicago terminal and the Midwest. Chicago's Union Station (CUS) is the National Network's busiest station, home to 17 intercity lines and serving more than 3 million customers annually. P2 will

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 Chicago Union Station 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 and driving economic growth nationwide.

I respectfully request consideration of this beneficial project.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pamela Boratyn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "B".

Pamela Boratyn  
Director