

U.S. Senators, Congresswoman Join State and Local Officials to Celebrate Completion of the CREATE Argo Connections (B9) Project

Rail project increases freight speeds and reduces conflicts with passenger trains

June 17, 2022 – U.S. Senator Richard Durbin, U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth, U.S. Representative Marie Newman, Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman, CSX General Manager Edward Steinbeck, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways Director of Strategic Planning Jesse Elam and additional CREATE Program partners attended a ribbon cutting ceremony today to celebrate the completion of the Argo Connections (B9) Project. The Argo Connections (B9) Project is the 32nd project completed out of the 70 that are part of the CREATE Program.

The Argo Connections (B9) Project constructed a new double track connection and crossovers – switches that allow trains to pass one another rather than waiting behind one another – between the Belt Railway Company of Chicago (BRC) and Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) Railroad/CSX line at Archer and 63rd Street. Additional crossovers were also added to the control point at 71st Street. This project connects the CREATE Beltway and East-West corridors and upgrades mainline crossovers to accommodate higher speeds from 10 mph to 25 mph, reducing congestion and minimizing freight and passenger conflict and delays.

“The completion of the Argo Connections Project marks the latest step in the CREATE program initiative to increase efficiency in our railway system,” U.S. Senator Dick Durbin said. “I have long supported federal investment in the CREATE program to deliver faster travel times for all the freight trains that come through the Chicago area en route to destinations across the country. CREATE will also improve safety for our passenger rail system and help reduce delays at grade-level crossings.”

“For too long, congestion and delays have defined transportation and commerce in the Chicagoland area,” U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth said. “Illinoisans deserve a safe, efficient and reliable rail system, and today we’re closer to that reality. The completion of CREATE Argo Connections (B9) Project will reduce delays, increase capacity and lead to faster and more reliable travel times—creating jobs, making our roads safer and easing supply chain delays in the process. I’ll keep working with local, state and federal officials to help ensure we continue to bring the federal support needed to make these kind of projects possible.”

“The completion of the 32nd project in the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program is a testament to the progress we can make when we invest in a better tomorrow,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “Our Rebuild Illinois capital plan provides more than \$490 million for CREATE, joining with local, federal and private funds to benefit the Chicago region. When we invest in our neighbors and our neighborhoods, we advance our collective interests across the state.”

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded \$132 million to the CREATE Program partners through the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program for the Argo Connections (B9) project and the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project. The federal investment combined with state, local, and private funding supported the construction of the Argo Connections (B9) project.

“Since my first day in office, our team has collaborated closely with the CREATE Program, a critical partnership that works tirelessly every day to improve freight and passenger movement across the Chicago and Midwest regions,” said U.S. Representative Marie Newman, “The funding secured for the Argo Connections (B9) project by the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program demonstrates what the CREATE Program is capable of through its close

coordination and partnership. I look forward to building on our progress to reduce road and rail congestion, create faster, more reliable transit services and build a safer transportation system for everyone.”

"It's wonderful to celebrate another CREATE program project crossing the finish line," said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "Unsnarling the rail lines to ensure that residents and goods can travel through the County in a safe and efficient manner is the goal of the CREATE program and that's exactly what this project ensures. I am grateful to all CREATE program partners for their efforts in ensuring the completion of this project."

Increased freight speeds and improved fluidity on the Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) line will allow trains to clear Canal Interlocking more quickly, reducing the potential for freight conflict with Amtrak and Metra trains and improving travel time, speed, and reliability.

“The CREATE Argo Connections (B9) Project will reduce both freight and passenger train delays,” said Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Omer Osman, “Improved rail movement will result in enhanced quality of life for local communities, increased economic activity along the project corridors and a reduction in emissions from idling trains and cars.”

“The Argo Connections project is a great representative example of the CREATE Program – making an investment into the region’s railroad infrastructure so that we can move our passengers and carry our freight in a way that is more efficient, faster, safer, and more predictable,” said Metra CEO/Executive Director Jim Derwinski.

This project is located near the largest industrial facility in the region, Ingredion, Inc. (formerly Argo Corn Products), which handles up to 200 cars per day from three carriers (IHB, BRC, and Canadian National).

“The CREATE Program is modernizing Chicago’s rail system to better handle our nation’s freight and passenger needs, both today and in the future,” said Edward Steinbeck, CSX general manager. “This project advances our shared goal to eliminate the most congested rail chokepoints in Chicago, further improving our nation’s supply chain infrastructure and increasing train speed in North America’s most important railroad hub”.

Visit createprogram.org to learn more.

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Media Note: Photos from the ribbon-cutting ceremony will be available 6/21/22. If you are interested in receiving these images, please email Katie Dillon at kdillon@rmchin.com.