



Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance

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August 25, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The Specialty Soya and Grains Alliance is the national association of the companies that ship grains and oilseeds via containers, and the supporting finance, logistics, data, and packaging, partners. Our shippers are small businesses connecting farms with customers abroad. Those shippers are supported by 10 state organizations in the Midwest. For just soybeans our intermodal exports add \$1.4 billion to U.S. exports each year, 25 tons at a time in a container of clean food ingredients. Similar export numbers are shipped of distilled dry grains (DDG), corn, sorghum, barley and others. SSGA fully supports the Illinois Department of Transportation's Multimodal Project Discretionary Grant Opportunity (MPDG) funding on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program.

This grant will fund a segment of the Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction Replacements (defined as "EW2"), which includes reconfiguring the Belt Railway Company (BRC) main tracks between the Dan Ryan Expressway and Belt Junction. Fixing that link will help speed up and save money for over 60 percent of the grains and oilseeds shipped in the region north/south and east/west of that point. We applaud the CREATE program for working together with rail and shippers to solve our problems and ask for your support. The improvement will help us connect soybean and corn DDG shipments from across the nation on the way to their principal markets in Asia. *Without the improvement the region will continue to lose export opportunities and face equipment shortages with greater expense and loss of transit time.*

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. This project will start to alleviate the 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 will also improve performance on the Amtrak Cardinal service, by eliminating freight conflicts near 80th Street.

The efficiency resulting from this project will support the movement of people and consumer goods along important railway systems and communities. 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.

SSGA fully supports this application and hopes for the project's successful implementation.

Sincerely,

Executive Director, Ewenberg@soyagrainsalliance.org