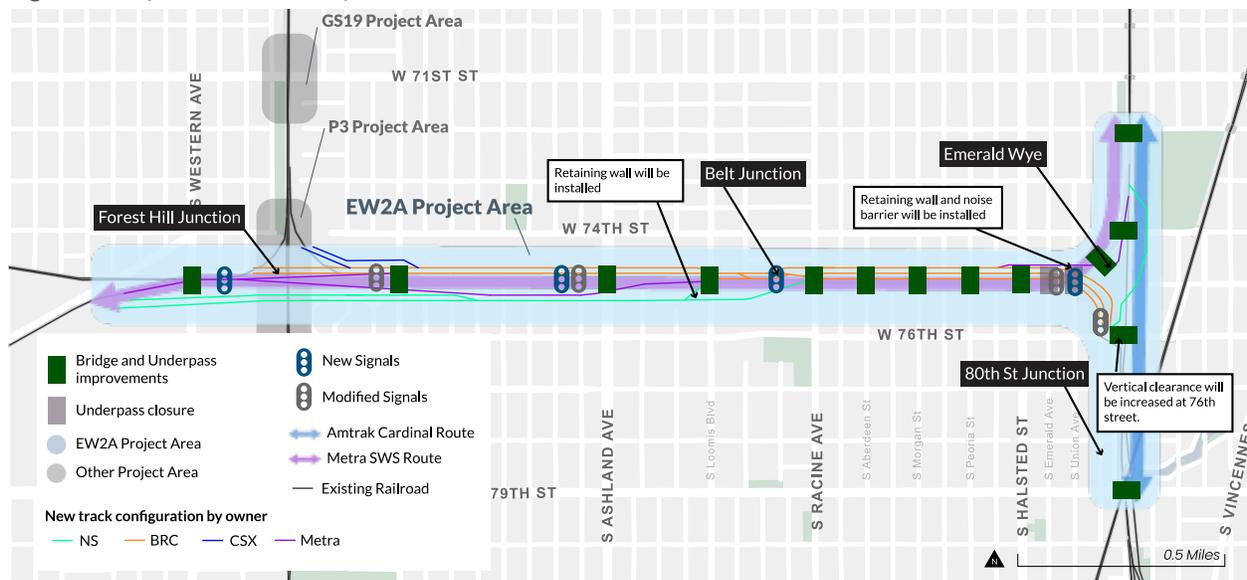


PROJECT DESCRIPTION

CREATE Project EW2A ("EW2A" or "the Project," depicted in *Figure 1*) implements the next key phase of the [75th Street Corridor Improvement Project \(75th St CIP\)](#), by delivering a suite of improvements that benefit travel time, safety, and state of good repair along a 3-mile elevated rail corridor on Chicago's South Side. Serving the Belt Railroad of Chicago (BRC), CN, CSX, Norfolk Southern (NS), and Union Pacific (UP) railroads, the corridor handles 90 freight trains and 30 Metra commuter trains daily through Belt Junction, and 2 Amtrak Cardinal trains daily through the Emerald Wye.¹ The Project will reconfigure track segments and signals at Belt Junction; add a third track to the NS line; replace and restore 14 aging grade-separated structures; and implement mobility improvements on surface streets throughout the corridor. An [informational video](#) that visualizes train movements and EW2A's improvements is provided here.

Figure 1. Project Overview Map ([Exhibit 1A](#))



Project Context

As part of the greater [75th St CIP](#), EW2A builds upon the Forest Hill Flyover (P3) and 71st Street Grade Separation (GS19) projects that are currently under construction. EW2A serves as foundational to the future EW2 segment phases at Belt Junction and 80th St Junction, focused on additional track realignment and structure replacement work, and the Metra Rock Island Connection project (P2), which will build a new flyover structure to connect Metra's SouthWest Service (SWS) to the Rock Island District line (RID), and ultimately to LaSalle St commuter rail station. Once complete, the shifting of the SWS line to LaSalle St Station enables the expansion of Amtrak and Metra service at Chicago Union Station (CUS). Full implementation of the entire 75th Street CIP will cut rail traffic delay and emissions, restore aging infrastructure, and increase safety at the most complex and congested rail junction in the Chicago Terminal, benefitting the region's freight economy, passenger rail, infrastructure resilience, and the national supply chain.

¹ [CREATE Program – 75th St Corridor Improvement Project Brochure](#)

Figure 2. 75th St CIP Isometric Map ([Exhibit 1B](#)).

Proposed Improvements

B9 – Argo Connections

- B9 a** Improved connections at Argo and Canal Junction
- B9 b** Lengthen mainline siding track and improve 87th Street Choke Point
- B9 c** Argo Yard improvements to increase yard capacity

P3 – Forest Hill Flyover

- P3** CSX flyover eliminates congestion at Forest Hill Junction

GS19 – 71st Street Grade Separation

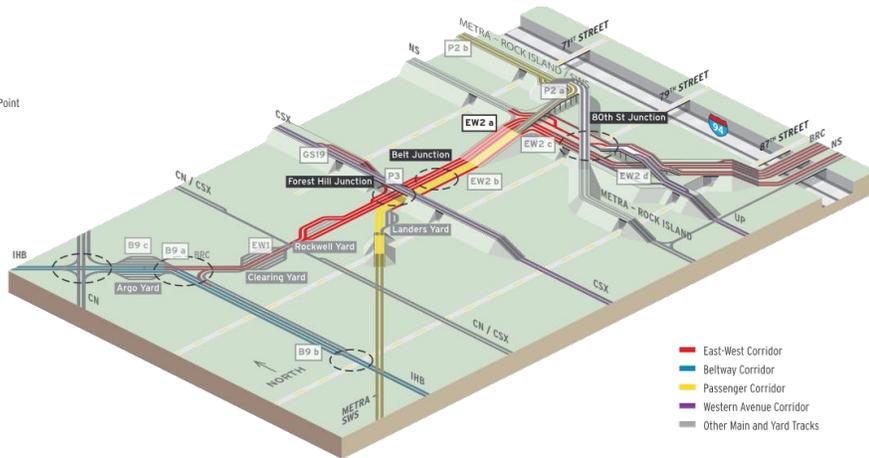
- GS19** CSX grade separation over 71st Street

EW2 – Belt Junction and 80th Street Junction

- EW2 a** Reconfiguration of Forest Hill Junction
- EW2 b** Removal of five-to-two track bottleneck at Belt Junction
- EW2 c** Realignment of tracks and signals (Belt Junction to Dan Ryan)
- EW2 d** Reconstruction of 80th Street Junction

P2 – Metra Rock Island Connection

- P2 a** Flyover connecting Metra SWS to Rock Island
- P2 b** Metra - SWS redirected to LaSalle Street Station



The 75th St CIP is a key corridor in the Chicago Terminal (Terminal), a regional system with an estimated 3,865 track-miles, more combined miles than found in 40 other US states.² Much of this network is over a century old and not configured for current volumes, patterns, and types of traffic. That said, the system’s density still provides unparalleled connectivity between railroads, as well as other modes. All six Class I freight railroads converge in the Terminal, handling 47% of the nation’s intermodal rail containers, 28% of all rail cars, and \$641 billion of goods transported on rail annually.³ The 75th St CIP alone carries nearly two million freight cars annually, and upon full implementation, the corridor will be able to handle over four million annually, by improving overall Terminal capacity.⁴ *Figure 3* depicts the annual freight flows that rely upon the Terminal; improving its capacity and operational flexibility is key for keeping national supply chains moving, and assuring the network’s resilience to climate change.

Statement of Work

EW2A delivers improvements to tracks, signals, structures, and mobility infrastructure. Illustrated in [Exhibit 2A](#), [Detailed Project Scope](#) and [Exhibit 11](#), [EW2A Segmentation Schematics](#), EW2A also includes removals, demolition, earthwork, environmental mitigation, temporary/miscellaneous facilities, utility work, right-of-way acquisition, and professional services, shown in Budget section and [Exhibit 2C](#). [Project Estimate](#).

Figure 3. Chicago Region – Top Commodities by Rail ([Exhibit 1M](#))



Source: Annual Carloads and Value, 2017 STB Confidential Waybill Sample

² [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning \(CMAP\): Regional Freight Strategic Direction \(Nov. 2017\), p. 28](#)

³ Annual Carloads and Value, 2017 STB Confidential Waybill Sample

⁴ [City of Chicago – Office of the Mayor: “Mayor Emanuel and CREATE partners announce \\$132 million grant to improve rail congestion across the region,” \(June 2018\).](#)

Track Work

The Project will deliver east-west track improvements along a 3-mile corridor, parallel to 75th Street, between S Western Ave, W 74th St, and W 78th St, including Belt Junction and Forest Hill Junction. This involves the realignment of 8.5 miles of existing track and construction of 3.4 miles of new track, including a new NS mainline track from S Racine Street to Landers Intermodal Yard, designed to reduce rail-on-rail conflicts at Belt Junction. The Project will improve throughput and prevent delays (by creating non-conflicting train paths), enabling parallel movements on the corridor and accommodating future growth in train volumes in the Terminal, which are expected to increase by over 1.3 million train miles annually from 2022-2047 ([Exhibit 3B - RTC Model Outputs – Train Miles](#)).

Signal Work

Signals on the rail infrastructure will be repositioned, retrofitted, or added in the vicinity of S Damen Avenue, Belt Junction, and 74th Street. In total, new signals will be added at four locations along the corridor and existing and modified signals will be shifted to nine new locations. These improvements will better align the signal network with the reconfigured track segments and will serve to update Positive Train Control (PTC) and Centralized Traffic Control (CTC) technology on the corridor, improving the flow of the train movements through the interlockings.

Structure Work

The project includes restoration or replacement of 14 grade-separated structures (containing 86 bridges and viaducts) over city streets. As most of these structures are beyond their originally expected functional life (reflected in [Exhibit 1H. EW2A Bridge Diagram](#)) and over 100 years old, their restoration is critical to the ongoing viability of the corridor. Illustrated in [Exhibit 2A. Detailed Project Scope](#), two structures will be closed and filled, with cul-de-sacs added to the residential streets. The remaining 12 structures will be rehabilitated or replaced. All new bridges will be designed with a loading capacity compatible with the AREMA Cooper E-80 standard. All viaduct upgrades will increase the average load rating and extend the useful life of these structures by 50-100 years. Individual bays, decks, beams, and columns will be replaced as needed, with some structures widened to accommodate new track. Abutments will be repaired or replaced at all structures. Retaining walls will be installed at two locations, as well as one noise barrier at the S Union Ave wall. W 76th St will be lowered to improve roadway vertical clearance.

Community Mobility Improvements

As detailed in [Exhibit 4. Environmental Commitments](#), various street improvements at 14 separate viaducts along the corridor will be delivered to enhance mobility equity, resiliency, and aesthetics within EW2A's communities. These include new ADA ramps, LED lighting, sidewalk/pedway enhancements, pavement replacement, sewer upgrades, bridge deck waterproofing, bridge façade restoration, street tree replacement, and the noise barrier (cited above).

Project History & Current Design Status

In 2003, the CREATE Program partnership was formed between six of the seven North American Class I railroads, and agencies including Amtrak, Metra, the State of Illinois, and the City of Chicago. Cook County joined CREATE in 2018. The partnership grew out of a federal Surface Transportation Board task force that was established in response to growing urgency around the Chicago region's rail capacity needs. This led to a program-wide [Feasibility Study](#) in 2007 (modified in 2011), that defined the scope, objectives, and benefits of CREATE's 70 projects,

including the four projects of the 75th St CIP. Development and approval of the [75th St CIP's Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\)](#) and [Record of Decision \(ROD\)](#) occurred in 2014, and in 2018, funding was awarded through USDOT's INFRA program for full design of the 75th St CIP, and for construction of Projects B9, P3 and GS19. Design for P3 and GS19 began in 2019 and was completed in 2022, with construction beginning in October 2022 and planned to conclude by the end of 2025. Construction of B9 is complete. Design work for EW2 and P2 began in January 2021 and is planned to conclude by Q1 2026. For the phases listed above, over \$454 million in funding has been awarded and over \$140 million has been expended. That said, it is estimated that the entire 75th St CIP will cost over \$2.5 billion to design and construct. Award of FY25/26 MPDG funding will allow for full construction of EW2A, the 75th St CIP's next critical phase.

Transportation Challenges

Aging Infrastructure and Threats to Safety

Shown in [Exhibit 1H](#), all structures along the corridor are over 100 years old, and to remain functional, require substantial ongoing maintenance. Constructed in response to the City's first general ordinance requiring the elimination of at-grade rail crossings in 1893,⁵ these structures were essential for maintaining safety, mobility, and connectivity in Chicago as the rail network rapidly expanded. These bridges were designed in the early 20th century to accommodate Cooper E60 loadings, at a time when average railcar weights were less than 100 tons and the average train hauled less than 50 railcars.⁶ Today the average train is over 70 cars long and 143-ton railcars predominate.⁷ If rehabilitation or replacement is not undertaken at these structures in the near term, the chance that one will have to be taken out of service increases, as the Project's [BCA](#) (p.5) assumes a 10% probability of this occurring by 2032. Such an occurrence would yield negative impacts, including: threats to roadway safety at the viaducts; suspension of 4 freight mainlines, the Metra SWS line, and an industry track;⁸ increased travel times and delays throughout the Terminal; increased chokepoints in the national supply chain; and a diversion of railcar and intermodal tonnage away from Chicago, which would have a deleterious impact on the regional economy. Through its community mobility scope, EW2A also improves roadway safety at the viaducts. In the Project's [Phase I EIS](#), the City of Chicago identified numerous critical upgrades to the lighting, pavement, pedestrian accessibility, and drainage systems, to improve state of good repair, and to reduce accidents and crime. Through these improvements, detailed in [Exhibit 4. Environmental Commitments](#), EW2A enhances connectivity between neighborhoods for all roadway users.

Eliminating Rail Conflicts & Delays

Existing track alignments produce three rail-rail crossings for the seven rail operators that share the corridor, creating bottlenecks that will be eliminated by the Project. Train movements through these junctions must currently cross paths, allowing only one train to pass at any given time. By agreement between the passenger and freight railroads in the Terminal, the Chicago Protocol⁹ specifies that passenger trains always run first if there is a conflict with a freight train, exacerbating freight delay at these chokepoints. Due to the high volume of trains and the critical position of this corridor within the Terminal, this chokepoint negatively impacts both regional and national freight

⁵ [The 606 - History](#)

⁶ Unsworth, 2017; [Association of American Railroads Facts Sheets](#)

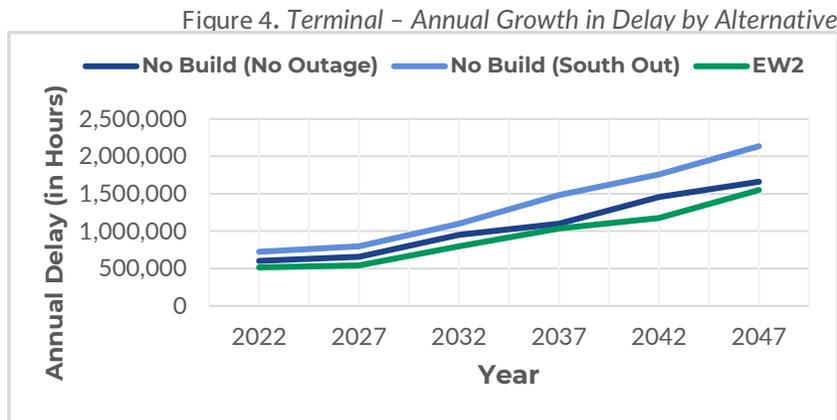
⁷ North American Freight Car Fleet Number of Cars by Age & GRL - 2023 North American Freight Railcar Review

⁸ [Exhibit 3A - Association of American Railroads. "RTC Modeling of CREATE EW2 and P2 Projects](#) (p.7)

⁹ Chicago Train Operations Protocol Guidelines (May 21, 2023)

rail movements. At Belt Junction (which handles nearly all freight service in the corridor), 30 Metra and 90 freight trains cross paths daily, creating a unique and challenging convergence point for western and eastern Class I railroads and passenger service. This also increases gate-down time at at-grade crossings beyond the corridor. EW2A

addresses these problems by adjusting track segments and adding new track, to create non-conflicting, parallel train paths at junction interlockings. The [BCA](#) forecasts that these improvements will prevent 69,969 hours of added freight train delay in the Terminal from 2033-2052 (p.12), enabling it to better handle the forecasted 1.3 million annual train miles forecasted to be added by 2047 ([Exhibit 3B. RTC Outputs – Train Miles](#)). At 37 modelled at-grade crossings in Terminal, the Project also prevents 52,737 annual vehicle hours of gate down time ([BCA](#), p.19). By creating a new mainline route, EW2A also provides critical redundancy within the network, in the event of service disruptions on other corridors. This capacity increase is necessary for realizing the travel time and throughput benefits of P2 and allowing Metra to direct 30 SWS trains to LaSalle St station, freeing up around 30 slots at CUS for Amtrak and Metra service expansions.

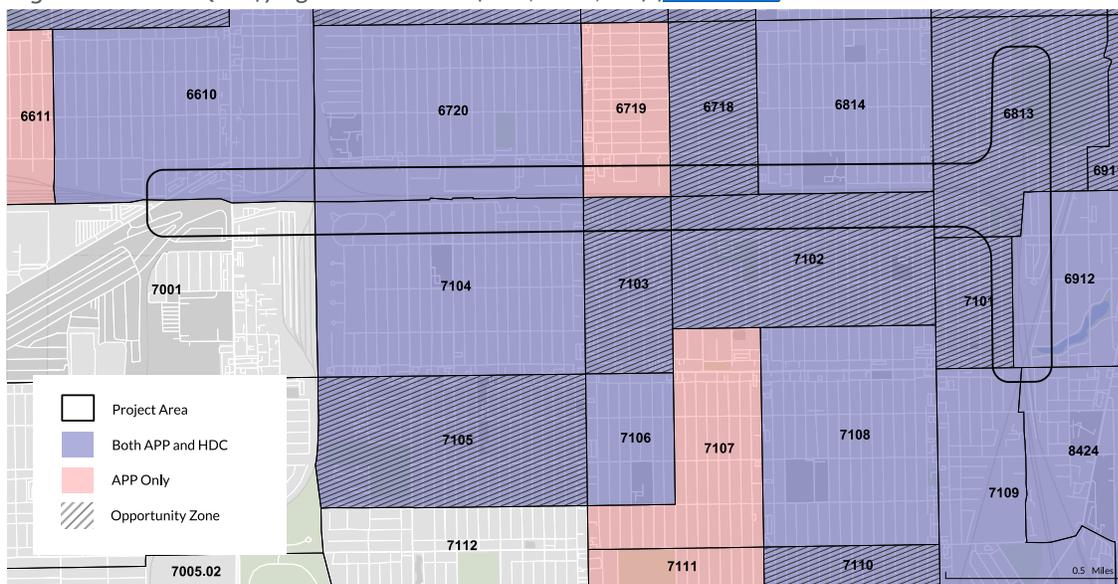


Source: [Exhibit 3C. RTC Model Outputs- Delay Hours](#) (Source: CTCO)

Project Location

EW2A invests over \$485 million within the Chicago IL – IN 2020 Census Designated Urban Area, focused on six Chicago communities: Auburn Gresham, Ashburn, Chatham, Chicago Lawn, Englewood, and Greater Grand Crossing. These communities are majority African American, with median household income levels below the county and regional average. Shown in [Figure 5](#), 93% of EW2A’s census tracts are designated as either Areas of Persistent Poverty (APP), Historically Disadvantaged Communities (HDC), Opportunity Zones (OZ), or have more than one designation.

Figure 5. EW2 – Qualifying Census Tracts (APP, HDC, OZ) ([Exhibit 1G](#))



Source: US Census