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*Bringing Together
State Leaders from
Across the Region
to Advocate
for Passenger Rail
Improvements*

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission is a nine-state interstate compact commission that promotes, coordinates and supports regional improvements to passenger rail service. Our member states include Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota and Wisconsin.

November 29, 2016

The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
West Building – 1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) supports the Illinois Department of Transportation's (IDOT) application for a Fostering Advancements in Shipping and Transportation for the Long-term Achievement of National Efficiencies (FASTLANE) Discretionary Grant for the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. CREATE is the most important freight program in the nation, and this grant will help complete construction on a critical phase of the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP), the largest and most complex CREATE project.

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Metropolitan Chicago is the hub of our nation's freight transportation system; a quarter of all U.S. freight rail traffic originates, terminates, or passes through the Chicago area, with that volume forecasted to increase nearly 150 percent by 2040. The nation must address these increased volumes of freight or risk slowing down our economic growth. The 75th Street CIP consists of four interrelated CREATE projects that will greatly improve the ability of our rail network to handle this growth and therefore have a nationally significant impact on our economy by improving the efficient movement of freight throughout the Midwest and the country.

The CREATE program's largest benefits are related to the movement of freight, but the 75th Street CIP has additional multi-modal benefits including improved fluidity for commuter rail and intercity passenger rail. Of particular benefit to the Midwest, as part of an agreement under U.S. DOT's prior investment in another CREATE project – the Englewood Flyover – Amtrak will get the contractual rights to an easement that would generate the capacity of a double-track passenger rail main along the very congested Norfolk Southern corridor from Chicago Union Station to the Indiana-Illinois border. However, the rights to this easement agreement are only conveyed from NS to Amtrak once the 75th Street CIP and another interrelated project (P4 – Grand Crossing) are completed. This additional capacity – over and above what the 75th street CIP generates – would improve freight movement in the Midwest, and is critical for enhanced passenger rail service to Indiana, Michigan and points east, all goals of the nine-state Midwest Regional Rail Initiative.

MIPRC Support for IDOT CREATE 7th St CIP FASTLANE, 11/29/16 (cont.)

The CREATE program's purpose is to increase the overall capacity of Chicago rail network operations to successfully handle anticipated national levels of demand for freight and passenger rail resulting from economic growth. Freight rail traffic will continue to be clogged in Chicago and hurt our country's international competitiveness if we do nothing. We must act decisively as a region and nation to ensure that the freight rail growth enhances rather than impairs our economy and quality of life.

CREATE is a project of national economic significance that will reduce congestion on Amtrak routes serving the entire Midwest. MIPRC fully supports IDOT's FASTLANE application for the CREATE 75th Street CIP, and looks forward to the project's successful implementation.

Sincerely,



Tim Hoeffner
MIPRC Chair



Joan Bray
MIPRC Vice Chair



Carolyn McGinn
MIPRC Financial Officer



Laura Kliewer
MIPRC Director