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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.

October 26, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission (MIPRC) is fully supportive of the Illinois Department of Transportation’s application for an Infrastructure For Rebuilding America (INFRA) discretionary grant for the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. This grant will enable final design of the entire 75<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Improvement Project (CIP) as well as construction on the first critical phase of the largest and most complex of all CREATE Program projects. In addition, it will allow for the construction of a critical rail efficiency project to connect the CREATE Beltway and East-West Corridors.

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The Chicago terminal **handles one fourth of the nation’s overall rail cargo. The national movement of goods including corn, coal, automobiles, consumer goods and more is reliant on this terminal’s efficiency.** Although physically located in Northeast Illinois, the inter-related infrastructure improvements in the 75<sup>th</sup> Street CIP and Project B9 will have a **nationally significant impact on rail operations to improve economic growth and operational benefits that will extend nationwide.** The terminal is a complex rail hub where six Class I railroads converge and share track with ten Metra commuter rail lines and more than a dozen Amtrak passenger rail routes. The 75<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor is at the heart of this terminal. More than 80 trains per day pass through the corridor, carrying nearly 2 million freight cars and more than 2.7 million passengers per year. The improvements of the CREATE Program are designed to significantly improve rail efficiency and accommodate increased freight rail and passenger rail demand in the region, while improving community mobility, safety, and air quality.

The 75<sup>th</sup> Street CIP will untangle tracks belonging to multiple Class I freight railroads, a Metra commuter rail route, and an Amtrak intercity passenger rail route by removing three longstanding conflict points. The primary goal of the project is the separation of the rail lines from each other and from the roadways they intersect. Secondly, the project will connect Metra’s SouthWest Service Line to the nearby Metra Rock Island Line, allowing SouthWest Service trains to shift their downtown Chicago terminal from Union Station to LaSalle Street Station. This move will free up capacity at Union Station to accommodate future growth in intercity and commuter rail service.

Finally, the Argo Connections Project (B9), once complete, will create direct access to the new main tracks around Clearing Yard (Project EW1) on the terminal's East-West Corridor. Increased freight speeds and improved fluidity on the Indiana Harbor Belt (IHB) Railroad will enable 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 for passengers and cargo alike. Argo is the last freight corridor project needed to fully construct the Beltway Corridor.

CREATE will help ensure that Northeast Illinois, and more importantly the United States, remains economically competitive and continues to serve as the nation's transportation and logistics hub. This will enable businesses to move their products to market in the U.S. and overseas efficiently and cost-effectively while supporting thousands of jobs.

The Midwest Interstate Passenger Rail Commission supports this application and looks forward to the project's successful implementation.

Sincerely,



Tim Hoeffner  
MIPRC Vice Chair



Rep. Sharon Negele  
MIPRC Financial Officer



Laura Kliewer  
MIPRC Director