

CREATE PARTNERS ANNOUNCE \$19.1 MILLION INFRA GRANT FOR ARCHER AVENUE GRADE SEPARATION

July 12, 2021 – The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program partners received a \$19.1 million federal grant for construction of the Archer Avenue Grade Separation at the Belt Railway of Chicago (BRC) rail tracks.

The Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant, awarded by the United States Department of Transportation, ensures this project is fully funded through construction.

The project will reconstruct portions of Archer Avenue and lower it approximately 15 feet under a new rail bridge to serve the existing BRC tracks, add side paths for people walking and bicycling under the rail bridge and update utilities and sewer lines in the project area along Archer Ave.

This project, CREATE Program project GS9, will benefit the communities of Archer Heights and Garfield Ridge by reducing delays at the current at-grade crossing. On an average day, 18,600 vehicles and 259 CTA buses (#62) pass through the crossing. Grade separating this crossing will eliminate delay to more than 2,700 vehicles daily, alleviating nearly 59,600 annual motorist hours of delay. It will also eliminate the potential for collisions between vehicles and trains.

The Illinois Department of Transportation has identified a total of \$400 million to invest in additional CREATE projects through Gov. JB Pritzker's historic, bipartisan Rebuild Illinois capital program, the first in nearly a decade.

"By coming together and working in partnership with government and industry, the State of Illinois is proud to invest in CREATE projects that are making our neighborhoods safer, correcting planning errors of the past and improving the flow of goods, services and people throughout Illinois," **said Gov. JB Pritzker.** "Rebuild Illinois is not only the largest capital program in state history, but the only one that touches all modes of transportation, freight and passenger rail included. This grant will advance this important project while setting the stage for even more CREATE improvements to come."

GS9 is an integral link for connecting to other railroad corridors serving the Chicago region, including an industrial district and intermodal connector directly south in Bedford Park. The project is also located in an economically disconnected area with a high portion of low-income households and high portion of either minority population or Limited English Proficiency population.

“For decades, rail delays have disrupted the daily life of Chicago's Southwest Side residents, impacting commutes, emergency vehicle response times and more,” said **Rep. Marie Newman** (IL-3). “Since my first day in Congress, I have been fighting to address this through real investments in innovative infrastructure that will not only solve these delays but create good-paying jobs at the same time. That's why I am incredibly proud to announce that we have secured a \$19.1 million grant to construct a rail bridge on Archer Avenue. This will alleviate a major source of traffic on the Southwest Side, improving commute times within the transportation and economic hub of Illinois' Third District. I am looking forward to continuing to work with Secretary Buttigieg and the City of Chicago through the CREATE Program to address this issue and to secure further infrastructure funding for my constituents.”

The Archer Avenue Grade Separation is estimated to cost \$61.1 million while creating \$112 million in benefits through reducing traffic delays, crashes and air pollution.

“The Association of American Railroads has long supported the INFRA grant program to provide funding to public-private partnerships to ensure projects like the Archer Avenue Grade Separation get across the finish line,” said **Association of American Railroads President Ian Jefferies**. “This newest project within the CREATE Program will drive substantive progress in improving safety, increasing mobility for road and rail users and reducing greenhouse gas emissions – ultimately benefiting the community, the environment and the economy.”

The project will include design elements such as side paths for pedestrians and bicyclists, drainage and utility improvements, roadway and underpass lighting, landscaping improvements and aesthetic enhancements.

“The Archer Avenue Grade Separation is a great example of a project that will benefit not only the community, but also the local and national economy, the environment, and our ability to provide exceptional and sustainable service to our customers,” said **Mike Grace, President of The Belt Railway Company of**

Chicago. "We look forward to seeing the results of the work and the improvements in reducing traffic congestion, both on our local roadways and on our railway."

This location is designated a "911 Critical Crossing," as it is a crucial location for facilitating the movement of emergency services vehicles. Additionally, this location will improve traffic movement around Chicago's Midway International Airport, which is less than a mile from the project area.

"This INFRA grant comes as great news for our residents in Archer Heights and Garfield Ridge and serves as a prime example of just how positive the benefits of the CREATE Program are," said **Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot.** "This project will provide a major improvement for transit riders, pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as eliminate harmful emissions from idling vehicles and increase the reliability of emergency services in the area. I welcome this support, which will further our ongoing efforts to invest in the lives of our residents through infrastructure."

The CREATE Program includes 25 grade separations, seven of which have been completed. With this INFRA grant award, three grade separations are now fully funded through construction, with an additional four underway and 11 seeking funding to begin preliminary design and environmental review.

"Freight is one of the foundations of our region and remains incredibly important to the people and businesses that live and operate here today," said **Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle.** "The grant awarded to the Archer Avenue project by the United States Department of Transportation showcases the value of the CREATE partnership. This grant allows us to rebuild infrastructure to make commuting safer, easier and faster for everyone."

To learn more about this project, visit

<https://www.createprogram.org/projects/archer-avenue-belt-railway-of-chicago-grade-separation/>.



Proposed Improvements

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The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the U.S. Department of Transportation, State of Illinois, Cook County, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak and the nation's largest freight railroads. A project of national significance, CREATE will invest billions in critically needed improvements to increase the efficiency of the region's passenger and freight rail infrastructure and enhance the quality of life for Chicago-area residents.

For more information, visit www.createprogram.org
 or email info@createprogram.org.