

SECRETARY BUTTIGIEG FOCUSES ON CREATE IMPROVEMENTS DURING CHICAGO VISIT

July 16, 2021 – The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program partners thank U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Secretary Pete Buttigieg for visiting the Chicago region to learn about how the CREATE Program is “Keeping the Go in Chicago” and throughout the North American supply chain.

Secretary Buttigieg joined United States Representative Marie Newman, Governor J.B. Pritzker, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, and Representatives Sean Casten, Bill Foster and Brad Schneider at CSX’s Bedford Park Intermodal Facility today. CSX provided an appropriate setting to witness the scale and complexity of rail operations within the overall Chicago railroad terminal. Combined, the region’s rail network handles 29 percent of all freight rail traffic and 47 percent of all intermodal container traffic in the United States, in addition to nearly 800 daily commuter and passenger trains. The CREATE partners are implementing 70 coordinated public-private infrastructure projects to improve railroad operations, support economic growth and benefit local communities. Thirty-one of these projects are now complete, while 20 more are currently in planning, design or construction.

“The CREATE Program is not just an opportunity to improve and invest in the physical infrastructure of our local communities, but also an opportunity to inspire the next generation of transportation professionals,” said Secretary Osman. “I am truly proud of this Program and the equity as well as environmental justice it provides to historically neglected communities.”

Secretary Buttigieg’s visit included a tour of CSX and Belt Railway of Chicago railroad yards that are among the largest and busiest freight rail facilities in the Chicago region and throughout the United States.

“It was an honor to welcome Secretary Buttigieg today to Illinois' 3rd Congressional District to discuss and see how President Biden's American Jobs Plan will benefit the Chicagoland area, one of the finest transportation hubs in the nation,” said Congresswoman Marie Newman. “We had a great discussion on how the CREATE program is leading the charge for bold investments in Chicago’s infrastructure, creating not only more efficient railways, but also real economic development and new good-paying, union jobs in our communities. As we modernize our transportation infrastructure for a green future there is no region more ready to lead that national effort than Chicago. I am beyond thankful that Secretary Buttigieg and his team answered our delegation’s invitation so they could see that first-hand themselves.”

The CREATE partners support USDOT's emphasis on community benefits being an essential component of transportation infrastructure. CREATE's largest project, the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project, incorporates community mobility benefits such as street, sidewalk and bus stop reconstruction. This federally supported project includes extensive local hiring and workforce development programs, contracting commitments and business-to-business networking events focused on including both community representatives and Disadvantaged Business Enterprise firms. In addition, the partners are supporting education programs in nearby schools, as well as awarding grants to science and engineering programs serving the community.

"We greatly appreciate that Secretary Buttigieg took the time to come to Chicago to see firsthand the opportunities and challenges we face as we reinvest in our freight and passenger rail network," said CDOT Commissioner Gia Biagi. "As a former Midwestern Mayor, he understands that infrastructure investments that improve mobility for residents, reduce our carbon footprint and support commerce are a key to creating job opportunities and thriving, sustainable cities. We share the goals of centering the values and desires of the neighborhoods in our infrastructure investments and strongly support his and President Biden's efforts to Build Back America Better."

The CREATE partners appreciate Secretary Buttigieg's experience in developing partnerships where government and the private sector come together to improve the lives of community residents.

"As former Mayor of South Bend, Indiana, Secretary Buttigieg knows firsthand how vital keeping trains moving through Chicago is to communities and local economies across the Midwest and beyond," said Association of American Railroads (AAR) President and CEO Ian Jefferies. "Public and private partners are at the table with skin in the game to advance the infrastructure solutions necessary to help railroads deliver and communities thrive long into the future."

Throughout the history of the CREATE Program, the federal government has been a crucial partner, acknowledging that the entire country's rail network can often depend on the Chicago region.

"The USDOT continues to demonstrate its confidence in the CREATE Program through grants that advance critically needed improvements to increase the efficiency of the region's passenger and freight rail infrastructure," said Cook County Department of Transportation and Highway's Superintendent Jennifer "Sis" Killen. "Supporting our region's role as North America's freight capital is crucial to protect and create jobs in our communities and maintain economic competitiveness. We appreciate this vote of confidence and remain laser-focused on completing these projects ahead of schedule and on budget."

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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
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