



## **CREATE PROGRAM RECEIVES \$70 MILLION FEDERAL DOT GRANT**

\$170 million project will bring rail and viaduct improvements and jobs to Chicago's West Side  
Community Outreach for \$80 million in local contracts and employment already underway

**September 21, 2022** (CHICAGO, IL) – The Chicago Region Environment and Transportation Efficiency Program partners today announced that \$70 million in federal funds will soon be on the way to Chicago, allowing for a \$170 million project to modernize a two-mile stretch of rail lines that provide a critical connection for freight moving across the Chicago region. The funding is via the INFRA grant program, which advances multimodal freight and highway projects of national significance.

A project of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE), known as the Westside Gateway, Ogden Junction, or to the engineering community, WA1, the project entails repairing, replacing, or eliminating 16 railroad bridges, many more than 100 years old, on the Union Pacific (UP) Rockwell line that runs along Rockwell Avenue, from Fulton Street on the north to 16<sup>th</sup> Street on the south. The viaducts below the bridges, many of which are also more than a century old, will also be repaired, repainted and, in some cases, raised in height.

The Illinois Department of Transportation will be administering the \$70 million grant for CREATE. “With CREATE, all levels of government are working in consistent partnership with private industry for our mutual benefit—making it unlike any other program in the nation,” said Governor J.B. Pritzker. “Since its inception, CREATE has brought more than \$2 billion to Chicago to modernize the city’s transportation infrastructure. As we work together to rebuild Illinois, CREATE is an innovative model to try in other areas—where every partner contributes to the common good.”

“This funding is essential to ensuring goods from farms and factories are transported with ease throughout the region,” said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. “The goal of the CREATE program is to unsnarl rail lines, make them safer and ultimately cut down the amount of time it takes to transport these goods. We must continue making significant investments in our infrastructure and this funding will allow the CREATE program to do just that.”

“This federal funding will help improve bridges and viaducts that go over local streets on our city's West Side, which will lead to supply chain improvements and enhanced community mobility,” said Chicago Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. “The City of Chicago is grateful for this federal support and looks forward to continuing to work with our CREATE partners on improving our rail infrastructure.”

Speaking for CREATE, Ian Jefferies President and CEO of the Association of American Railroads, highlighted the near-term and long-term benefits of the project. “These critical funds will advance the partners and community’s shared goals including improving freight and commuter train efficiency, enhancing air quality and dramatically upgrading the viaducts. Beyond the benefits upon completion, \$80 million in targeted investments and contracts will directly support jobs and businesses in local communities.”

CREATE's Ogden Junction project, which spans the Western Avenue Rail Corridor from Kedzie Avenue to 16<sup>th</sup> street will rehabilitate, replace, remove or upgrade nearly two miles of railroad track, signaling, bridges and viaduct structures, as well as build 10,000 feet of new track. As a result, thousands of hours of Metra delays are expected to be avoided and freight train operators will experience fewer conflicts and faster speeds due to more visible electronic signals. In addition to these benefits, according to Stark, "It is estimated that millions of dollars in employment and contract opportunities will be created for the communities adjacent to the Rockwell Line that runs from Fulton Street on the north to 16<sup>th</sup> Street on the south.

Plans for the project also include installing a new bi-directional computerized Traffic Control System on the two-mile segment on the UP rail line along the Western Avenue Corridor and upgrading seven hand-thrown switches to power switches. New control points at Taylor Street, Ogden Avenue and 16<sup>th</sup> Street, along with main line realignment, will enable simultaneous movements between the UP, CSX, and Norfolk Southern railways main lines which, in combination with the structural improvements to the bridges, will enable more efficient, safer operating speeds.

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