



CREATE Grade Separation Opens in Bellwood, Improving Safety, Travel Times and Quality of Life

The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program partners joined local officials and other stakeholders to open the new 25th Avenue (CREATE Project, GS6) overpass. The \$41 million grade separation project eliminates a conflict point between trains and regular vehicle traffic, reducing congestion, improving safety, ensuring better response times for emergency vehicles and making the area more attractive for economic development.

"This new overpass pays immediate dividends for communities nearby, but its impact will be felt for years throughout the region," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blakenhorn. "This project is what CREATE is all about: All parties coming together to find a solution that benefits everyone."

The overpass accommodates two lanes of traffic in each direction over the railroad tracks. Each day, up to 59 Metra trains and 52 freight trains pass through this location. On average, 19,000 vehicles travel this stretch of 25th Avenue daily, with 3,500 of them getting stopped by trains before the overpass was built, resulting in 28,400 annual hours of motorist delay. The project also included resurfacing Main Street between 25th and 19th avenues.

"This project, many years in the making, will benefit all residents by serving as a conduit for economic development, quicker emergency vehicle response times and a safer traffic flow," said Bellwood Mayor Frank Pasquale. "This is much more than a railroad overpass. This is a bridge to a better quality of life for our communities."

"Union Pacific is thrilled to commemorate the opening of the 25th Avenue grade separation -- an enhancement that benefits motorists, Metra commuters and freight railroads. We commend the involved parties for their collaboration and commitment, and look forward to continued success on

future CREATE projects," said Liisa Stark, Union Pacific Assistant Vice-President.

The railroad overpass project was made possible by a \$22.2 million contribution from IDOT, \$2.4 million from villages of Bellwood and Melrose Park, and \$16.4 million from federal, railroad and other state sources. Construction started in September 2014.

"Now more than ever, it is important to invest in forward-thinking infrastructure projects that increase the safety, efficiency, and reliability of our transportation systems," said Rep. Quigley, who serves on the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development. "I join in celebrating the completion of the 25th Avenue Grade Separation, a project that will help reduce congestion, spur local economic growth and better prepare Chicago's infrastructure to handle the demands of a growing and vibrant city."

"Over the years, CREATE has been a significant beneficiary of federal funding," stated Congressman Dan Lipinski (IL-3). "As senior Illinois Member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, I helped write the five year comprehensive transportation bill known as the *FAST Act* that was signed into law this Congress. I made sure that this critical legislation included a new \$4.5 billion grant program that can help fund the continuation of CREATE. CREATE is helping to modernize the Chicago area's rail network and has improved the quality of life in the region. I look forward to working with all the relevant stakeholders to forge ahead on completing more CREATE projects, especially ones that directly benefit the public like this grade separation."

The CREATE Program is a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of freight, commuter and intercity rail, while improving the entire transportation network throughout the region. The \$4.4 billion program comprises 70 rail and highway improvements, 27 of which are complete. In addition to IDOT, partners include the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Chicago Department of Transportation as well as the freight and passenger railroads.

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