



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

LORI E. LIGHTFOOT
MAYOR

March 19, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, District of Columbia 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

The City of Chicago fully supports the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) application for a 2021 Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant submitted on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. The Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) has been a CREATE partner since the Program began in 2003 and is pleased that this grant will fund construction of a highly anticipated grade separation of Archer Avenue at the Belt Railway of Chicago (BRC) in our city. Known as CREATE Project GS9, this improvement will lower Archer Avenue below the railroad tracks. The project will increase traffic safety and improve operational performance for people walking, bicycling, riding transit, and driving alike, while also enhancing freight movement and helping to address our City's social equity challenges.

On the average day, this railroad crossing is traversed by 32 freight trains, 18,600 cars and trucks, and 259 Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) buses. Located less than a mile from Chicago Midway International Airport, Archer Avenue is an integral part of the arterial street network providing access to the airport and its surrounding economic activity. Archer Avenue is part of the National Highway System (NHS) and the project corridor is bounded by two other NHS roads: Cicero Avenue (IL 50) and Pulaski Road. People waiting for trains to pass at this crossing experience an estimated 59,600 hours of delay each year. The location is also considered a local "911 critical" location for emergency services, requiring railroads to report delays exceeding 10 minutes.

Grade separating this crossing will eliminate the inherent safety risks when trains cross public streets while also eliminating the associated traffic delays. These risks and delays predominately affect people who live and work in the surrounding community, which has a large low-income and minority population. The project will also improve air quality due to reduced vehicle idling (especially diesel truck stopping and starting), reduce emergency response times, and provide safer, more comfortable accommodations for people walking and

bicycling. CTA's Archer Avenue bus route serves more than 11,000 passenger trips per day, and the project will eliminate bus delays caused by the 32 daily freight trains at this crossing that affect riders up and down the route—often miles away from the crossing.

The GS9 project aligns with the CREATE Program's overall goals to improve rail and road traffic operations in the Chicago region while reducing environmental impacts. The efficiencies from this project will support the movement of people and goods along road and rail corridors extending to communities throughout the nation. Not only will this project support economic growth, but it will also improve air quality, reduce traffic delays, help to address social equity challenges, and improve economic development potential in the affected communities.

The City of Chicago fully supports this IDOT 2021 INFRA grant application and looks forward to the project's successful implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Lori E. Lightfoot". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mayor