



## ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & POLICY CENTER

Protecting the Midwest's Environment and Natural Heritage

March 8, 2021

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

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

The Environmental Law & Policy Center (ELPC) supports the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) application for Infrastructure for Rebuilding America grant funding on behalf of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program. This grant will fund the Archer Avenue and Belt Railway of Chicago (BRC) Grade Separation Project (defined as “GS9”), which includes lowering Archer Avenue under existing BRC tracks to grade separate. The project will increase operational efficiency and safety for rail, vehicles, and pedestrians.

Metropolitan Chicago is the hub of our nation’s freight transportation system; a quarter of all U.S. freight rail traffic originates, terminates, or passes through the Chicago area. By untangling Chicago’s notorious freight rail congestion, the CREATE Program can allow our nation to shift additional freight from truck to train. This would bring significant air pollution, climate change, and energy consumption benefits.

GS9 experiences 32 freight trains, 18,600 vehicles and 259 buses daily and is less than one mile away from Chicago Midway International Airport. Archer Avenue is part of the Chicago Region National Highway System and the project corridor is bounded by two other National Highway System mainline roads: IL 50 (Cicero Avenue) and Pulaski Road. The heavily used at-grade crossing results in 59,600 hours of delay each year and is also a 911 critical location for emergency services to access communities with a high frequency of train crossings and delays. GS9 is an integral location for connecting to other railroad corridors serving the Chicago metropolitan area, including an industrial district directly south in Bedford Park.

Eliminating the at-grade crossing will reduce roadway congestion, eliminate rail-road conflicts, and potentially reduce delays for trains operating in the GS9 corridor. The grade separation project will contribute to an area with a low-income and minority population by improving safety, air quality, emergency response times and transit services, and enhancing pedestrian and bicyclist facilities.

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The GS9 project aligns with CREATE Program's overall goals to improve rail and highway operations in the Chicago metropolitan area while reducing the environmental impacts of rail operations on the general public. The efficiencies resulting from this project support the movement of people and consumer goods along important roadway and railway systems and to communities throughout the nation. Not only does this project support economic growth, but neighboring communities also benefit from cleaner air, reduced vehicle and railroad delays at the Archer Avenue crossing, improved economic development potential and more fluid rail and roadway systems.

ELPC supports this application and looks forward to the project's successful implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kevin L Brubaker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'K' and 'B'.

Kevin Brubaker  
Deputy Director