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CHICAGO REGION
ENVIRONMENTAL AND
TRANSPORTATION
EFFICIENCY PROGRAMCREATE PROGRAM
c/o CTCO
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CREATE Partners Work to Improve Rail in Chicagoland Area *Railroad Project in Summit is Complete*

SUMMIT-The Chicago Regional Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) public and private partners announced the completion of a \$4.5 million railroad modernization project. The project improved the 40 year-old signal system and helped mitigate conflicting use of tracks among freight trains, Metra, and Amtrak along the Indiana Harbor Belt Corridor from Bedford Park to Summit. Construction began in April of 2008. This project is followed by a \$14.2 million modernization project in McCook on the Indiana Harbor Belt which will improve freight train efficiency and increase speeds up to 40 miles per hour and has an estimated completion time in November 2009.

"This is another example of how government can join forces with freight and passenger railroads to quickly and effectively improve rail efficiency," said Joseph Clary, Director, Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation at the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). "This project and a host of others are going to eliminate rail and traffic congestion, help clean up the air that we breathe, promote intermodal jobs, and safeguard northeastern Illinois' position as the nation's railroad hub."

"CREATE continues to move forward today with the completion of this project in Summit," said U.S. Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-3rd District). "As Chicagoland's only member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, I was pleased to secure \$100 million for CREATE in 2006 and look forward to building on the progress we have already made. The program is crucial for the region, but just as importantly, it is vital to the nation."

CREATE is a historic public-private partnership involving the railroads, the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois and the Federal government, and is designed to upgrade northeastern Illinois' freight and passenger train infrastructure for the 21st Century. Metra, Amtrak and their riders will benefit significantly from the project because it will reduce cross traffic interference, which often causes delays.

The \$4.5 million project was 80 percent funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation and 20 percent funded by the freight railroad industry. Work was accomplished by CSX Transportation signal crews, with administrative oversight from IDOT.

“This CREATE project will not only reduce regional freight delays, but also increase reliability of the Metra Heritage Corridor trains into and out of Chicago. These types of projects are critical to ensuring Chicago and the region remain vibrant and can continue to grow,” said CDOT Commissioner Thomas Byrne.

"We want to thank Congressman Lipinski and our public partners for their strong support. We brought in a crew of 22 to complete the work. Many of them will work on other CREATE projects in the future," said Jeff White, Division Chief of CSX Chicago Operations.

CREATE is a project of national and regional economic significance that will invest billions in critically needed capital improvements to increase the efficiency of the region's rail infrastructure. CREATE will reduce train delays and congestion throughout the Chicago area by focusing rail traffic on five rail corridors. The work includes:

- 25 new roadway overpasses or underpasses at locations where auto and pedestrian traffic currently crosses railroad tracks at grade level
- 6 new rail overpasses or underpasses to separate passenger and freight train tracks
- Viaduct improvements
- Grade crossing safety enhancements
- Extensive upgrades of tracks, switches and signal systems

For area residents, CREATE means reduced traffic congestion, shorter commuting times, better air quality and increased public safety. For workers and businesses, it means more jobs and economic opportunity.

The CREATE program is comprised of 78 rail and highway projects throughout northeastern Illinois. As of March 2009, 43 projects have been initiated. Because of the manner in which train tracks currently intersect with each other and with roads, and because regional freight railroads generously defer to Amtrak and Metra in track utilization, it can now take up to 48 hours for freight trains to pass through the Chicago region. Delays in rail-based freight, including grade crossings, threaten the economic vitality of the region, make it harder for farmers to make a profit, lead to increased traffic congestion on roads and highways, generate unnecessary levels of air pollution, raise safety concerns, and adversely affect the reliability and speed of rail passenger service.

With funding from the State of Illinois, the City of Chicago, the U.S. Department of Transportation, Metra, Amtrak, and the Association of American Railroads, CREATE will alleviate these problems.