



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

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CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL AND USDOT SECRETARY CHAO JOIN SENATORS DURBIN AND
DUCKWORTH, REPS LIPINSKI AND RUSH AND OTHERS CREATE PARTNERS TO BREAK
GROUND ON \$474 MILLION PROJECT TO IMPROVE FREIGHT AND PASSENGER RAIL**

Mayor Rahm Emanuel was joined today by U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, US Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth, US Representatives Dan Lipinski and Bobby Rush and other government and rail industry partners at ceremonial groundbreaking for a \$474 million freight and passenger rail improvement project in the Auburn Gresham, West Chatham and Englewood neighborhoods. Part of the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program, funding for the 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project (75th Street CIP) comes from the USDOT, State of Illinois, private railroads, Cook County, Amtrak, Metra and the City of Chicago.

"Today represents a major step forward for our plans to strengthen Chicago's historic role as the transportation hub for the nation," Mayor Emanuel said. "I thank Secretary Chao for recognizing the national significance of this project with her presence here today. I also congratulate all the CREATE partners who have been working together to make the 75th Street CIP project a reality. Nothing can stop us when we work together to make these kinds of infrastructure investments that spur economic activity, clean up our environment and improve quality of life in our neighborhoods."

"The Illinois Department of Transportation received one of the largest INFRA grants this year, totaling \$132 million through an exemplary public-private partnership created to improve freight connectivity, decrease congestion, and enhance safety along this nationally significant rail network," said Secretary Elaine L. Chao.

The 75th Street CIP is expected to deliver \$3.8 billion in new economic benefits by eliminating the most congested rail chokepoint in the region, Belt Junction, where 30 commuter and 98 freight trains per day cross each other's paths. Currently, only one or two trains can pass through each of these crossings at any given time. By building a rail flyover and physically separating these crossings, the project will reduce rail delays and eliminate the choke points that today back up trains for miles beyond the project area and into many other City neighborhoods.

The \$4.4 billion CREATE Program is a first-of-its-kind multimodal public-private partnership to improve the rail and roadway transportation network within the Chicago region through the

completion of 70 interrelated infrastructure projects. To date, 29 CREATE projects have been completed, with five more projects under construction and 13 in various stages of design.

In June, the USDOT announced that the CREATE program had received a \$132 million grant through the Department's Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) program for the 75th Street CIP. The grant application was submitted jointly by the CREATE partners, including the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Cook County, the Association of American Railroads (AAR), Metra, Amtrak and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. The AAR represents ten of the freight, passenger, and commuter railroads serving the Chicago region. These railroads include freight carriers BNSF Railway, CN Railway, Canadian Pacific, CSX, Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific, Belt Railway of Chicago, and Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad, as well as Amtrak and Metra.

The \$132 million federal grant will leverage other funding contributed by CREATE partners, including \$116 million from private freight railroads, \$111 million from the State of Illinois, \$78 million from Cook County, \$28 million from Metra and Amtrak, and \$9 million from the City of Chicago for a total investment of \$474 million. This investment will complete the first half of the overall 75th Street Corridor improvement project.

"This project – funded through the federal INFRA grant program – is great news for freight and commuter rail and communities throughout the region," U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) said. "Completion of this critical transportation link will improve safety, reduce rail and vehicle congestion, and create good paying jobs. I've been proud to support this federal funding program, which aids the City's efforts to improve safety and alleviate congestion in a region that desperately needs it."

"For too long, congestion and delays have defined transportation and commerce throughout the Chicagoland area. But today, we're taking a step toward ensuring that our rail system is as efficient as Illinoisans deserve. This project will relieve the chokehold along the 75th Street Corridor and at similar bottlenecks throughout the region—creating jobs and making our roads safer in the process. I want to thank the Department of Transportation along with the elected officials and industry partners who worked hard to make this groundbreaking possible," said U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth (D-IL).

"Cook County is North America's freight capital. By advancing this nationally significant project and creating additional capacity for rail, we are enabling businesses to move their products to market in the U.S. and, ultimately, overseas efficiently, with further downstream job creation," Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said.

"Today we mark the final phase of preparation for this important transportation infrastructure project," Rauner said. "It is the culmination of years of teamwork and planning by industry and government that will result in more efficient and more productive flows of goods, services and people in our region and in the nation as a whole. This will enhance Illinois reputation as the country's transportation center."

"The CREATE program is grounded in a simple idea – solutions to big challenges only happen when everyone is at the table," said Edward R. Hamberger, President and CEO of the Association of

American Railroads. “We are all committed to improving service for both Chicago rail commuters and freight customers nationwide, and this project dramatically moves the ball forward by untangling one of the most congested points in the U.S. rail network. America’s railroads are here for the long-haul as we continue to advance rail in Chicago.”

When the 75th Street CIP is complete it will eliminate 18,500 annual passenger hours of delay by removing conflicts between freight and commuter trains, increase capacity at Union Station, decrease train idling, improve air quality in the surrounding neighborhoods and replace or rehabilitate 36 viaducts for increased mobility.

The Chicago Rail Terminal is a complex rail hub where six Class I railroads converge and share track with ten Metra commuter rail lines and more than a dozen Amtrak passenger rail routes. This hub handles 1,300 freight and passenger trains per day and one-fourth of the nation’s overall rail cargo. Both individually and collectively, the projects in the CREATE Program will significantly improve freight rail, passenger rail, and highway operations in the Chicago metropolitan area, while also providing community mobility, safety, air quality, and economic benefits.

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