



U.S. Congressman Dan Lipinski, IDOT Secretary Omer Osman, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, AAR President & CEO Ian Jefferies and other CREATE Program Partners Celebrate Groundbreaking for Argo Connections (B9) Project

April 26, 2019 - U.S. Congressman Daniel Lipinski (3rd District of Illinois) and the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program partners, including Illinois Department of Transportation Secretary Omer Osman, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle, President and CEO of the Association of American Railroads (AAR) Ian Jefferies and CSX General Manager - Midwest William Blanchetti participated in a groundbreaking ceremony Friday at the [Argo Connections \(B9\) project](#).

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Transportation awarded \$132 million to the CREATE partners through the Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant program. The federal investment combined with state, local and private money will fund the \$32 million construction for the Argo Connections project.

CREATE Program partners include the U.S. Department of Transportation, Illinois Department of Transportation, Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways, Chicago Department of Transportation and AAR.

"Since I was able to secure the initial \$100 million grant to begin the work on CREATE in 2005, we have made significant progress towards completing this critical public-private partnership. All levels of government have contributed to CREATE, with close to \$700 million in federal funding that I have helped secure leading the way. The groundbreaking for this project marks another milestone for CREATE and I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues as Chairman of the Rail Subcommittee this Congress to secure further funding for CREATE."

"Under Gov. Pritzker, Illinois is committed to building a world-class system of transportation that creates jobs, improves safety and enhances the quality of life for our residents," said Acting Illinois Transportation Secretary Omer Osman. "Through the teamwork of all the CREATE partners, this project accomplishes those goals and positions Illinois as a transportation and economic leader for generations to come."

"I am grateful for the opportunities the CREATE partnership provides for the future of Cook County and the region's transportation infrastructure," said Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle. "This investment by Cook County and our partners helps to ensure that Cook County remains the freight capital of North America, provides new economic opportunities for our business community and enhances the quality of life for millions of Cook County residents."

"The CREATE B9 project we commemorate today, which furthers the goals of the overall CREATE Program to reduce train travel time in the Chicago region, increase capacity and improve reliability for both freight and passenger rail customers, is a testament to the continued public-private partnership involving freight railroads, passenger carriers and local, state and federal government," said Ian Jefferies,



president and CEO of AAR. "We are all deeply grateful for the leadership of Secretary Chao and the U.S. Department of Transportation, as well as Congressional leaders like Congressman Dan Lipinski, the Illinois Congressional delegation, IDOT, Cook County and the City of Chicago, for recognizing the national significance of this project. Success here in Summit and Bridgeview will benefit critical Illinois businesses like Ingredion, which rely on rail service and spread success from Greater Chicago all the way to places like St. Louis and San Antonio."

"CSX is pleased to join other railroads in this critical project in the Chicago region. We will work hard to make sure the project is constructed in a safe and timely manner," said Jim Foote, CSX President and CEO.

This project will make improvements for the 116 freight trains, six Metra trains (Heritage Corridor) and 10 Amtrak trains (Lincoln and Texas Eagle Services) that traverse this corridor daily. The new double-track connection will allow speeds of 25 mph, providing for increased flexibility for dispatchers and reduced time switching train cars destined for local industry. Ingredion, Inc. (formerly Argo Corn Products) is located nearby and handles up to 200 train cars per day. Once complete, this project will allow access to the new main train tracks around Clearing Yard (Project EW1) on the new East-West Corridor.

The Argo Connections project (B9) is scheduled to take two years. Construction will begin in May 2019 and completion is anticipated for mid-2021. It is one of 70 projects in the CREATE Program. The CREATE Program is a first-of-its-kind multimodal public-private partnership to improve the rail and roadway transportation network within the Chicago region. To date, 30 CREATE projects have been completed, with five more projects under construction and 17 in various stages of design.

Visit createprogram.org to learn more.

Media Contact:

Jennie Vana, Metro Strategies, 847-707-9210, jvana@metrostrategiesinc.com

Media Note:

Photos from the groundbreaking ceremony will be available Friday afternoon. If you are interested in receiving these images, please email jvana@metrostrategiesinc.com.