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CHICAGO REGION
ENVIRONMENTAL AND
TRANSPORTATION
EFFICIENCY PROGRAM

CREATE PROGRAM
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\$26 Million CREATE Project to Reduce Rail Congestion and Improve Air Quality in Two Illinois Communities

CREATE Partners Break Ground to Get Highly Anticipated Project Underway

BLUE ISLAND – The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) Partners broke ground today on a \$26 million railroad modernization project that will help reduce railroad crossing delays in a highly congested south suburban corridor and allow freight trains to move through more quickly and efficiently. The groundbreaking was attended by Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Director of Public & Intermodal Transportation Joseph Clary, CSX Chicago Division Manager Jeff White, State Senator Emil Jones, III (D-14th), State Representative Monique Davis (D-27th), Reverend Stanley Watkins, representing Congressman Rush and other rail industry and government officials.

CREATE project B12, which will add a third main line of rail track, update signals and conduct critical bridge work in Blue Island and Alsip, is expected to be complete in December 2010. The \$26 million project getting underway is funded with federal funds from the 2005 federal transportation bill, along with railroad contributions.

“This is another example of how government can join forces with freight and passenger railroads to improve rail efficiency,” said Joseph Clary, Director of IDOT’s Division of Public & Intermodal Transportation. “This project will minimize rail traffic congestion in the Blue Island and Alsip areas which are heavily traveled and improve the overall quality of life in these areas.”

This project follows the September 12, 2009 completion of the Melrose connection (CREATE project B3), the largest CREATE project to be completed to date. The Melrose Connection project is the first CREATE project that includes all of the major construction components; grading, new track, new signals, and a new bridge. This new infrastructure adds a second connection between the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad (IHB) and the Union Pacific's Proviso Yard. Prior to the completion of this project, trains departing Proviso yard would block the IHB main lines, preventing other trains from moving through the area. The new connection allows trains to operate while trains enter and depart Proviso Yard greatly increasing capacity. (Photos available)

The CREATE (Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency) program is comprised of 78 rail and highway projects throughout northeastern Illinois. As of September 2009, 43 projects have been initiated. The CREATE program projects include: 25 new roadway overpasses or underpasses at locations where auto and pedestrian traffic currently cross railroad tracks at grade level; 6 new rail overpasses or underpasses to separate passenger and freight train tracks; viaduct improvements; grade crossing safety enhancements; and upgrades of tracks, switches and signal systems.

Because of the manner in which train tracks currently intersect with each other and with roads, it can now take up to 30 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 our farmers to make a profit, lead to increased traffic congestion on our 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 eliminate these problems.