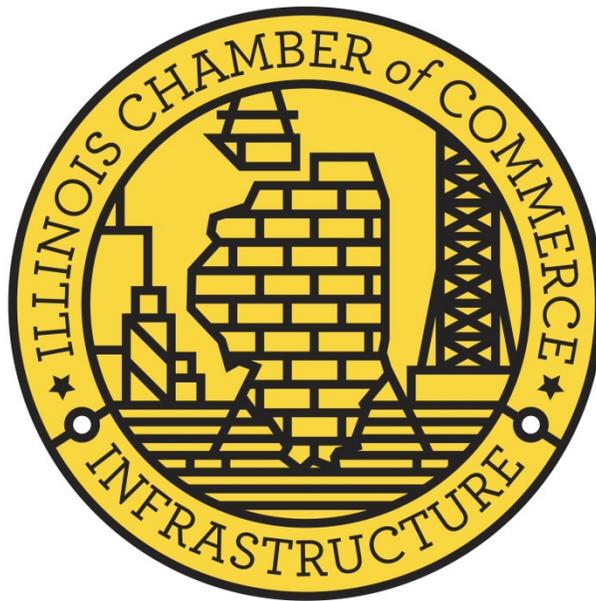


# CREATE at Ten Years:

## The Past, Present, and Future of the Chicago Region's Railroads



May 6, 2013

**Benjamin J. Brockschmidt**  
Executive Director  
Infrastructure Council of the Illinois Chamber of Commerce

[bbrockschmidt@ilchamber.org](mailto:bbrockschmidt@ilchamber.org) or (312) 983-7112

## Intro

Illinois' railroad industry began in 1842 as a 59 mile route connecting Meredosia and Springfield. Today, Illinois has the second largest rail system in the United States with 41 railroads and over 7,000 miles of track.<sup>1</sup> Farmers, manufacturers, and other industries move freight across the county by rail, while commuters and tourists use railroads to travel between home, work, and far-off destinations.

The Chicago region is the heart of America's freight network. Its central location in North America is a natural convergence of the inland waterway system, Lake Michigan, railroads, the U.S. Interstate Highway System, and international airports. As the largest rail hub in North America, the Chicago metropolitan area contains almost 3,000 miles of existing rail network encompassing an area of 16,000 acres.<sup>2</sup> Each day more than 500 freight trains move through the region while sharing track with more than 800 intercity and commuter trains.<sup>3</sup> These routes play out on a map of the Chicago region as a dense and complex network of railroads crisscrossing the region.

Due to the space and access to Chicago businesses allowed by the region's suburbs, towns began expanding along the area's rail network. As the suburbs grew, previously empty space between rail lines filled in with homes and businesses. Today, the Chicago region is densely populated with transportation networks that were not always designed for today's needs or future growth.<sup>4</sup> This urbanization resulted in the railroads, pedestrians, and motorists living and working in close proximity to one another.<sup>5</sup> The outcome of all of the above factors is regional rail and highway congestion considered among the worst in the U.S.<sup>6</sup>

To help combat this congestion, the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program (CREATE) was created. CREATE is a partnership of the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), privately owned and operated freight railroads, U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT), Metra, and Amtrak.<sup>7</sup> CREATE is the first partnership of its kind in the nation to address rail congestion through this type of public-private partnership. What brought all these stakeholders together—and is the goal of CREATE—is a desire to ease congestion and minimize conflicts between passenger and freight rail in the region.<sup>8</sup>

In 2003 then Mayor Richard M. Daley and the participating stakeholders announced the start of CREATE, but the program unofficially began in the late 1990's. Freight rail congestion was already a problem due to stakeholders operating with little collaboration. There was no central development

---

<sup>1</sup> American Association of Railroads. *Freight Rail in Illinois*. Snapshot, Washington, DC: American Association of Railroads, 2010.

<sup>2</sup> CREATE Program. *Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program*. Final Feasibility Plan, Chicago: CREATE Program, 2005, 37.

<sup>3</sup> Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). *Illinois State Rail Plan*. Springfield: Illinois Department of Transportation, 2012, 1-2

<sup>4</sup> CREATE Program, 2005, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Herr, Phillip R, and James R White. *A Comparison of the Costs of Road, Rail, and Waterways Freight Shipments That Are Not Passed on to Consumers*. Report to the Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, Washington: Government Accountability Office, 2011, 1.

<sup>6</sup> CMAP. *Go to 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*. Chicago: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2010, 308.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

or comprehensive planning to improve efficiency and relieve chokepoints. External factors, such as weather further, contributed to freight and passenger rail delays. A more strategic approach was needed to improve freight rail system in the Chicago region.

From the beginning the goals of CREATE were to relieve regional freight rail congestion and road congestion. It is a \$3.3 billion infrastructure improvement effort that has received funding from six of the seven privately owned and operated Class I freight railroads as well as through local, state, and federal sources.<sup>9</sup> CREATE identified 70 projects, including upgrades to signaling, integration of dispatching systems, new overpasses, new underpasses, and various other projects. As CREATE projects are completed the speed, efficiency, and safe movement of rail cars through the Chicago region will improve while maintaining Chicago's position as the nation's rail hub.<sup>10</sup>

This report contains background information on CREATE. This includes updates on several completed projects and the positive returns from those investments, an overview of a few of the economic benefits from investing in CREATE, and finally goals, objectives, and thoughts on moving CREATE forward and completing the program.

### **Funding Update**

Since it began 10 years ago, \$1.2 billion dollars has been invested in CREATE. As a result of this investment, 17 projects are completed, 11 are under construction, 21 are in design or environmental review, and 21 have yet to begin.<sup>11</sup> Funding for these projects has come from a variety of public and private sources over the last 10 years and this diversity in funding has allowed for projects to continue even during less favorable economic conditions.

One example of federal funding for CREATE is the awarding of two Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation. Although CREATE applied for four TIGER grants, it was one of only three projects in the country to receive TIGER funds twice to the tune of \$110.4 million, a testament to the quality of the program.

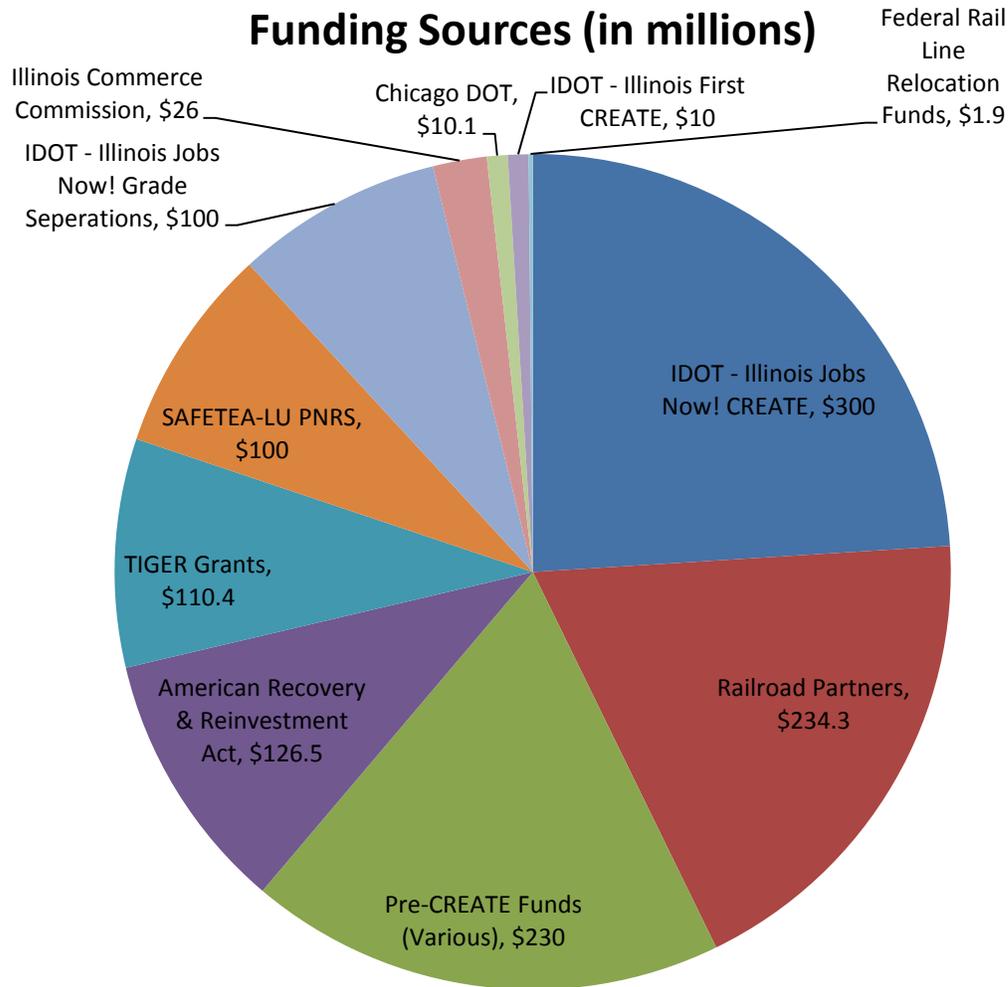
A mix of private and state funding in 2012 enabled all railway infrastructure components of CREATE's Belt, Western Avenue, and East-West Corridors to be completed (with the exception of the mega-project to reconfigure Belt Junction). Contributions for this project included \$155 million from the railroad industry and \$211 million from the State of Illinois. CREATE stakeholders are moving the remainder of these projects into construction as soon as they can, and it is anticipated that construction of the corridor freight rail projects will be complete by 2015.

---

<sup>9</sup> IDOT, *Illinois State Rail Plan*, 3-30.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 2-6; 2-7.

<sup>11</sup> CREATE. *Status of CREATE Projects*. November 29, 2012. [http://createprogram.org/linked\\_files/status\\_map.pdf](http://createprogram.org/linked_files/status_map.pdf) (accessed January 15, 2013).



The \$1.2 billion already invested in CREATE is just a portion of the total costs to complete all of the projects. As of July 2012, CREATE has received or had committed just under \$1.3 billion total in funding. While sizable, this is not as much as the currently unfunded \$2 billion necessary to complete CREATE. The longer it takes to secure funding and the longer it takes to complete CREATE, the higher the costs to complete it will grow.<sup>12</sup>

### **Congestion Reduction & Economic Benefits**

As the largest program of its kind in the country, CREATE is also being examined as the case study on addressing rail congestion in urban areas.<sup>13</sup> In 2003 a Rail Traffic Control (RTC) simulation was run to identify key rail operations chokepoints and help define necessary projects for CREATE. The RTC simulation also provided freight and passenger rail data operations prior to CREATE. In 2011

<sup>12</sup> CMAP, *Go to 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*, 314,

<sup>13</sup> IDOT, *Illinois State Rail Plan*, 9-4.

another RTC simulation ran to measure improvements resulting from completed CREATE projects.<sup>14</sup> The 2011 model evaluated the Chicago rail network using updated projections for passenger rail (Metra and Amtrak) and new projections for freight trains.

The measurement used in the RTC model is the industry standard of delay, or the time trains are stopped waiting for a clear route to proceed ahead, and is measured in minutes per 100 train miles. The results of the 2011 RTC were very good; 16 projects were completed as of the summer of 2011; freight delays decreased nineteen minutes (28% reduction); and passenger delays decreased from just under a minute to just over half a minute (33% reduction).<sup>15</sup> Without CREATE, the numbers would likely be very different. While the RTC model provides a simulation of rail operations, it does not incorporate motor vehicle operations or the impacts of grade crossing separations.

One example of the freight rail congestion reduction benefits of CREATE is the Indiana Harbor Belt's (IHB) Blue Island Yard (B15). This project upgraded multiple hand thrown switches and installed a new signal system and crossovers. As a result the maximum train speed through this area increased from an average of 10 mph to a maximum of 30 mph. While it used to take trains one hour before the project to traverse this area, they can now pass through in as little as six minutes.



CREATE IHB Signalization in Blue Island Yard

Since CREATE began, Chicago freight railroad operations have seen roughly a 25% reduction in manifest freight cross town transit time. The Chicago Terminal is ringed by Automatic Equipment Identification (AEI) readers. Each rail car in North America has an AEI tag on it. By using data from the AEI readers, the railroads are able to receive the real date and time a car entered and departed the terminal.\* In 2003, manifest trains were operating through the terminal in about 43 hours. In 2012 the data showed manifest trains were operating through the terminal in 32 hours, a reduction of 11 hours per train.

---

<sup>14</sup>

*CREATE program posted progress, missed out on TIGER III grant in 2011.* January 4, 2012.

<http://www.progressiverailroading.com/mow/news/CREATE-program-posted-progress-missed-out-on-TIGER-III-grant-in-2011--29367> (accessed 02 23, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Keeney, Willard. "CREATE Simulation Modeling." Prepared for Chicago Planning Group, Chicago, 2011.

\*The greater Chicago area bounded by the EJ&E rail line

It is important to point out that the congestion relief benefits of CREATE extend beyond freight rail. At CREATE's start, it was estimated that over \$10 billion could be saved from a reduction in congestion as a result of less time waiting at train crossings and more efficient and predictable logistics and product delivery.<sup>16</sup> In 2002 the Illinois Commerce Commission estimated that there were more than 140 public at-grade crossings in northeastern Illinois that delayed motorists over 20 hours a weekday.<sup>17</sup> Motorists are less inclined to use roads that cross railroads and threaten to delay their travel time while delays decrease shipment reliability and increase costs for businesses. The completion of grade separation improves the reliability of freight delivery and helps attract business to Illinois.

In 2007 a grade separation was completed in Franklin Park that eliminated delays from freight trains for more than 5,000 vehicles a day. The completion of the Belmont Road grade separation project (GS7) in Downers Grove in late 2012 has resulted in minimizing motorist delays. By eliminating the at-grade crossing of the four lane road into an underpass delays were eliminated for almost 20,000 motorists a day. Previously these motorists were delayed from eight Amtrak, 79 Metra, and 50 freight trains that passed through this grade crossing on a daily basis.

The completion of the 130th Street and Torrence Avenue (GS15a) project in the City of Chicago will also minimize delays for motorists when completed by 2015.<sup>18</sup> This project will eliminate two at grade crossings by lowering 130<sup>th</sup> Street and Torrence Avenue to fit underneath two new railroad bridges.<sup>19</sup> As a result 32,000 vehicles—including commercial truck traffic on a state designated truck route—will no longer be delayed by at-grade-crossings. A Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant will also benefit from the completion of this project. Today, the wait for Ford employees entering the plant can be as long as 20 minutes while they wait for a train to pass. Completed cars rolling off the assembly line are also delayed from reaching the shipping yard which is on the opposite side of the tracks. Once this project is completed employees and completed vehicles will benefit from direct access to and from the plant and no longer have to wait for trains to pass.

The contribution of the railroad industry to Illinois' economy cannot be understated. According to data from the American Association of Railroads (AAR), there are almost 12,000 freight rail employees in Illinois with each one of those freight rail employees supporting four and a half jobs in other industries.<sup>20</sup> This is supported by more than 137 rail supply companies with 166 facilities in the Chicago region. These suppliers have over \$8 billion in annual sales and directly employ over 19,000 working men and women.<sup>21</sup> The freight rail and rail supply companies in Illinois contribute to higher average rail workforce wages and benefits than the national average totaling at over \$100,000 a year. Illinois is second in rail wages nationwide with wages in 2010 reported to be \$886.6 million.<sup>22</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> CREATE Program, *Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program*, A-5.

<sup>17</sup> IDOT, *Illinois State Rail Plan*, 9-6.

<sup>18</sup> Weart, Walter. *CREATE update: Grade crossing upgrades, separations and closures*. January 14, 2013. [http://www.progressiverailroading.com/c\\_s/artic](http://www.progressiverailroading.com/c_s/artic) (accessed January 15, 2013).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> American Association of Railroads. *Freight Rail in Illinois*.

<sup>21</sup> IDOT, *Illinois State Rail Plan*, 7-16.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 7-24.

The economic benefits go beyond the rail and rail supply industry. The energy, chemical, agricultural, manufacturing, construction materials, and steel industries all rely on freight rail to move their raw materials and finished products.<sup>23</sup> Illinois is second in the nation for grain production and agricultural processing with the majority of these processors located in the Chicago region because of the access to freight rail. The chemical industry, which relies on bulk shipments of materials, directly employs more than 50,000 people and supports almost 300,000 indirect jobs generating almost \$30 billion in products. These industries rely on freight rail because railroads allow businesses to efficiently import raw materials and export finished goods across the country.<sup>24</sup>

CREATE also increases the environmental benefits of shipping freight by rail. In a 2012 one-pager the AAR discusses some of those benefits, including fuel efficiency, reduction in greenhouse gases, and reductions in highway congestion. One freight train is equal to removing the equivalent of 1,110 cars or 280 trucks from the road, resulting in less road congestion.<sup>25</sup> Several of the Class I railroad companies in the country have started using (or are looking at using) liquid natural gas (LNG) to power their locomotives. This would improve upon today's already efficient and environmentally friendly 469 miles per gallon for one ton of freight.<sup>26</sup>

While freight rail is a large part of Illinois' freight capabilities, trains cannot go everywhere. That's why Illinois has over 40 intermodal facilities where cargo transfers from trucks to trains and back again. There are more of these intermodal facilities in Illinois than anywhere else in the country and are usually located in or near rail yards.<sup>27</sup> Trucking companies benefit from these facilities as freight is shipped from surrounding states by truck to Chicago where railroads compete for their business.<sup>28</sup> As a result logistics and manufacturing companies locate near these intermodal facilities. Intermodal facilities encourage competition due to the access to the trains and trucks that move freight across the nation which help keep shipping costs low.

Additionally, CREATE has safety benefits for motorists and pedestrians. Despite awareness campaigns, auto users and pedestrians continue to risk their safety by ignoring signal warnings and proceeding onto rail road crossings at unsafe times. At-grade crossings contribute to highway-rail crashes where vehicles end up the path of a train resulting in several fatal accidents every year.<sup>29</sup> CREATE includes 25 grade-separation projects to reduce or eliminate the future possibility of vehicle-rail or vehicle-pedestrian conflict at each location. Along with the highway-rail grade separations in Downers Grove, Franklin Park, and Chicago mentioned earlier, four more grade separations are currently under construction with an additional seven in the engineering phase. While this is only a small portion of the total number of grade crossings in Illinois, they are important for safety.

---

<sup>23</sup> IDOT, *Illinois State Rail Plan*, 5-3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-24.

<sup>26</sup> American Association of Railroads, *Freight Rail in Illinois*.

<sup>27</sup> Federal Highway Administration. *Intermodal Connectors*. September 24, 2012.

[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/national\\_highway\\_system/intermodal\\_connectors/illinois.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/national_highway_system/intermodal_connectors/illinois.cfm) (accessed March 2013).

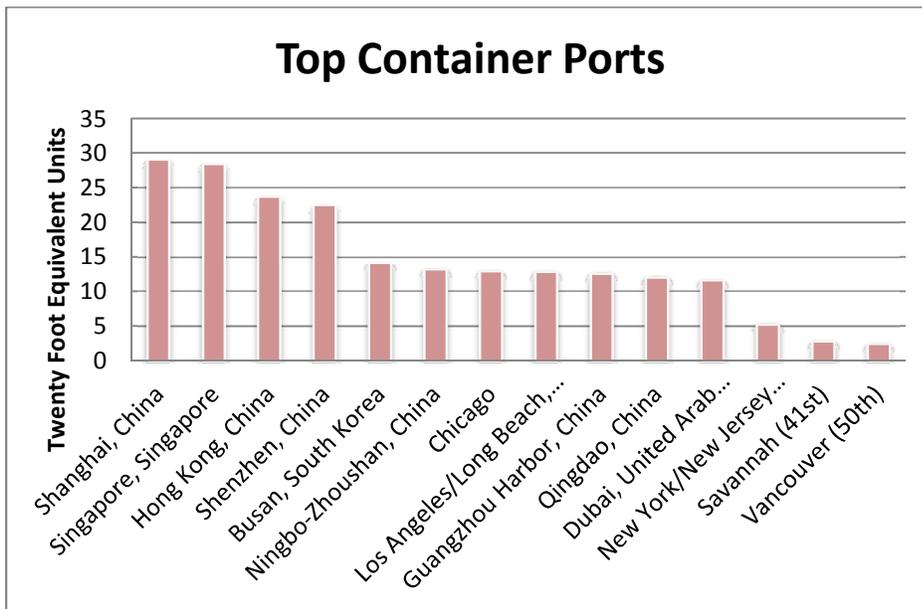
<sup>28</sup> IDOT, *Illinois State Rail Plan*, 6-19—6-20.

<sup>29</sup> CMAP, *Go to 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*, 308

Our national freight rail system is the vein of an interconnected economy where the movement of freight rail in one state impacts freight rail in multiple states. Chicago is the heart of America’s freight rail system and connects to every major seaport in North America and all regions of the U.S.<sup>30</sup> In 2007, more than 24,000 trailers and containers and almost 17,000 carload units moved in, out, or passed through the Chicago region each day.<sup>31</sup>

CREATE is important for the global competitiveness of not just the Chicago region but the entire state of Illinois. In 2010, six of the ten top container ports in the world were in China while Singapore and South Korea each had one. Los Angeles/Long Beach at number eight was the only non-Asian blue water port. Including Chicago makes five out of the fifty largest ports in the world from North America. The number of container lifts performed in the Chicago region would make it the seventh largest port in the world despite being an inland port.

Chicago is the only inland port on the list because of the convergence of the airports, highways, waterways and railroads in the region. These freight systems connect Chicago to regional cities including Milwaukee, Detroit, Indianapolis, and Minneapolis—and port cities such as New Orleans. This regional geographic reach and the connection to East and West Coast ports provide every method to move freight anywhere in the world. After Los Angeles/Long Beach there is not another ranked North American port until New York/New Jersey at 20, Savannah at 41, and Vancouver at 50.



Source: Chicago – Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Freight Snapshot; World Shipping Council for other data; used with permission of CREATE

In 2012 the Illinois Department of Transportation estimated that almost 11% of the jobs in Illinois are linked to exports.<sup>32</sup> According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Illinois is the nation’s fourth largest exporter behind Texas, California, and New York. Exported products from Illinois include oils,

<sup>30</sup> CREATE Program. *Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program*, 10.

<sup>31</sup> CMAP, *Go to 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*, 308.

<sup>32</sup> IDOT, *Illinois State Rail Plan*, 7-25.

equipment, parts, and agriculture shipped all over the world.<sup>33</sup> Nearly 7% of all U.S. agricultural exports are from Illinois and over 44% of the grain produced in Illinois is exported.<sup>34</sup>

### **Moving Forward**

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) in their “Go to 2040 Plan” predicts that rail moving in, around, and out of the Chicago region will increase by over 60% by 2040 while freight truck traffic will increase over 70%.<sup>35</sup> This anticipated growth in freight highlights the importance of CREATE and similar projects to the future of the region.

Another of CREATE’s goals was to improve the reliability of passenger rail in the region. Chicago is a passenger rail hub and the number of tourists and business travelers traveling by rail is increasing. Union Station, Midway Airport, O’Hare International Airport and numerous regional and national bus services use Chicago as a central part of their system. Travelers now have several options to travel across the country, including by high-speed rail (HSR).

Over the last few years the Chicago region has been an integral part of several HSR projects. One HSR line connects Chicago to St. Louis; another Chicago to Detroit. Completion of these projects will see trains reach top speeds of 110 miles per hour and significantly reduce travel time between cities 30 or more minutes. These projects have created jobs and revitalized towns along their routes such as in Normal, IL. Normal is located near the center of Illinois and is home to Illinois State University, Country Financial, State Farm insurance and the Central Illinois Regional Airport (CIRA). In 2009 a federal TIGER grant was awarded for the construction of a new multi-modal station that serves the HSR line between Chicago and St. Louis. Completed in 2012, this station serves as city hall and local transit hub, and provides long distance bus service. Shortly after construction began on this station, the downtown (now known as Uptown Normal) experienced economic growth through new construction and the opening of new businesses within walking distance of the station.

The success of this project and revitalization would not have been possible without the development of the HSR rail line constructed between Chicago and St. Louis. The Amtrak line that serves Normal has seen steady increases in passengers over the last few years. While this area is not within the geographic area of CREATE, trains passing through Normal rely on the speed and efficiency of the urban segment of the track it uses. These trains cannot operate at their full potential when urban portions of their rail lines are congested. CREATE is fundamental to improving intercity passenger rail by ensuring as little congestion as possible in the Chicago area.

HSR is only one part of the passenger rail network that connects in Chicago. Chicago Union Station is Amtrak’s main station in the region and access to this station requires using tracks that are primarily freight rail lines. While rail protocol usually gives Amtrak the right of way, it is still possible for freight trains to delay passenger trains. The result is thousands of hours of delays, delays

---

<sup>33</sup> IDOT, *Illinois State Rail Plan*, 6-20.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-3.

<sup>35</sup> CMAP, *Go to 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*, 308

that will be greatly reduced by the completion of CREATE. Nineteen CREATE projects will directly benefit Amtrak intercity service. Amtrak ridership in and out of Chicago has been rising for several years, increasing 27% to 1.2 million riders on the Chicago to St. Louis line alone.

Metra, which maintains and operates commuter rail in the region, will also benefit from CREATE projects. In December of 2012, the Chaddick Institute for Metropolitan Development at DePaul University released a study commissioned by the Illinois Chamber of Commerce discussing the benefits and costs of public transit in the Chicago region. The Chicago region is the second largest transit system in the U.S. when measured on the basis of passenger-miles of travel and the rail contribution is 735 miles of track, much of it shared with freight trains.

The report reiterated the importance of transit for Chicago where roughly two-thirds of employees arrive by bus or train. These employees are not using the highways in the region resulting in lower congestion and lower costs to maintain those roads. The DePaul report also noted that reliability of the transit system directly impacts the number of people who use it. Increasing the reliability of Metra trains that share rail with freight rail will ensure the number of people using transit remains high.

The amount of commuter and passenger rail moving through the Chicago region is projected to grow. Twenty years from almost 450 passenger trains will pass through the Chicago region, an increase from a predicted 385 passenger trains in 2003.<sup>36</sup> CREATE allows for effective management and mitigation of congestion from increases in train traffic. The 2011 study by CREATE examined future scenarios and the impact on rail congestion in the region. These scenarios ranged from the completion of all CREATE projects to no additional completed CREATE projects. The reduction in congestion for scenarios where work on CREATE projects continued (partially or completely) was significantly lower than scenarios that did not complete CREATE projects. Now is the time to invest and ensure future capacity can handle future demand.

### **Future Action**

In the summer of 2012 the federal surface transportation authorization, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21), was signed into law. Unlike previous surface authorizations MAP-21 did not include a rail title and therefore lacked rail provisions. However, MAP-21 does require the U.S. and state departments of transportation to produce state freight plans. Within the guidelines of MAP-21, every state needs to define the role of all modes of freight within their borders and how these modes interact with other infrastructure.

There is more that can be done at the federal level. In the current (113<sup>th</sup>) Congress there are federal rail authorizations expiring this year that provides an opportunity to address the role of the federal government for programs such as CREATE that have national and regional significance. Federal earmarks no longer exist as an option to fund projects while Projects of National and Regional Significance (PNRS), a federal program, is under constant threat of reduction or elimination by fiscal hawks in Congress who ensure it remains unfunded. While government—state or federal—needs to

---

<sup>36</sup> (Keeney 2011)Keeney, "CREATE Simulation Modeling."

be responsible in how it spends money, it is just as important to have long term funding commitments for projects such as CREATE with wide-reaching national benefits.

Examples of the national implications if CREATE funding does not continue include:<sup>37</sup>

- Instability for the five million jobs nationwide, \$782 billion in output and \$217 billion in annual wages connected to the Chicago rail network.
- Increased inefficiencies throughout the nationwide freight network by failing to address these infrastructure issues.
- Threatening national defense through the Strategic Rail Corridor Network (rail lines crucial to national defense) including seven rail lines in the Chicago region by increases in congestion.

In early 2013 IDOT released two freight documents; one on rail and one on all other modes. Each report contains recent information on freight in Illinois as well as future projections. One of the goals of state freight plans is to develop long term solutions to congestion, something CREATE has done for the last 10 years and continues to do.

Along with slowing the growth of passenger rail there are other consequences if freight rail congestion in the Chicago region is not properly addressed:<sup>38</sup>

- Loss of \$2 billion in production and 17,000 jobs in the next two decades.
- Movement of freight from rail to truck increasing congestion, air pollution, and demands on local roads and highways in the region
- Increase in delays to METRA passengers which could result in more passengers changing from rail to automobiles as their means of commute (seen in previous chart)

While researching its freight rail plan, IDOT surveyed railroads operating in Illinois. Some of the findings include the importance of looking at the system from a national perspective, focusing on realistic goals, and being aware that demands on the system change based on market conditions.<sup>39</sup> Assuming future economic growth is consistent with projections, rail companies expect the length of trains to increase. Today the majority of freight trains have 125 cars. In the future the freight rail industry expects trains to grow to as many as 175 cars.<sup>40</sup> Unless our freight rail infrastructure improves, longer trains at slow speeds will only add to rail and road congestion as people wait for these longer trains to pass.

Railroads are privately held commercial enterprises that receive limited public funding to maintain or improve rail infrastructure. Unlike our roads, bridges and waterways, railroads do not depend on state or federal investments to maintain existing infrastructure and add new infrastructure. All seven of the Class I railroads operate in Illinois, railroads that combine for over 90% of railroad revenue in the

---

<sup>37</sup> CREATE Program. *Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program*, 37.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> IDOT, *Illinois State Rail Plan*, 2-8.

<sup>40</sup> CMAP, *Go to 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*, 308

U.S. These Class I railroads like make considerable investments in their own tracks, trains, yards, and other facilities that employ thousands of people to the benefit of the regions they serve.<sup>41</sup>

CREATE’s railroad partners have invested—and continue to invest—heavily in the Chicago region because of the national impact the region has on freight rail. These investments provide local jobs and attract companies that rely on or support freight rail to establish facilities in Illinois. Between 1998 and 2010 the CREATE partner freight railroads, Amtrak and Metra invested a total of \$3.3 billion in capital and maintenance upgrades within the Chicago rail network. This averages out to \$254 million per year not including contributions to CREATE.

The chart below identifies the near-term priorities for CREATE as well as a current cost estimate. Delays in current projects or future projects can alter these numbers resulting in higher costs. It is important to keep CREATE projects moving in order to keep costs low and maximize investment.

<u>Near-term priorities for CREATE &amp; cost estimates</u> (in millions of dollars)	
75 <sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Improvement Project	\$936.4
GS2	\$87.3
GS9	\$77.6
Viaducts	\$10
Total	\$1,111.3

The 75th Street Corridor Improvement Project is actually a series of several projects (EW2, P2, P3 and GS19) which once completed will divert Metra South West Service trains to the Rock Island District south of Englewood. Today two passenger and four freight railroads pass through the Chicago neighborhoods of Ashburn, Englewood, Auburn Gresham, and West Chatham. These railroads cross each other and several local roads in the immediate area. These crossings result in back-ups and delays for both trains and motorists. Completion of all of these projects will allow trains, motorists, and pedestrians to more easily move through the area.

**Conclusion**

It has been 10 years since the start of CREATE and significant progress has been made. The private railroads continue to invest in CREATE. However, the future of federal and state funding is questionable. The ‘Illinois Jobs Now!’ capital bill passed in 2009 invested \$300 million in CREATE and an additional \$100 million in grade separation funds. The bill also funded many state facilities and non-transportation infrastructure projects.

As “Illinois Jobs Now!” comes to a close, the General Assembly and the Governor’s Office have an opportunity to show their commitment to CREATE. It is not feasible for Illinois to contribute the \$1.1 billion necessary for the near-term priorities for CREATE but a multi-year dedicated investment transportation infrastructure including continued investment in freight and passenger rail infrastructure, is possible. CREATE’s freight railroad partners continue to invest in the Chicago

---

<sup>41</sup> Herr, *A Comparison of the Costs of Road, Rail, and Waterways*, 7.

railroad system, investments including general upgrades and CREATE projects. At a time when federal funding is scarce the state should contribute at least \$500 million to ensure CREATE continues forward.

Illinois' central location in relation to North American seaports, major population centers, transportation infrastructure and pipelines is why Chicago is the hub of the U.S. freight system. Unless steps are taken to improve on the existing system and reduce congestion the economic advantage Illinois has is threatened. CREATE needs continuous investment and a multi-year commitment to complete the projects started 10 years ago—projects that bring jobs to the region, add to our national and global competitiveness, and show the success of the largest public private transportation infrastructure partnership.

## **Bibliography**

- American Association of Railroads. *Freight Rail in Illinois*. Snapshot, Washington, DC: American Association of Railroads, 2010.
- CMAP. *Go to 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan*. Chicago: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2010.
- CREATE Program. *Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program*. Final Feasibility Plan, Chicago: CREATE Program, 2005.
- CREATE program posted progress, missed out on TIGER III grant in 2011*. January 4, 2012.  
<http://www.progressiverailroading.com/mow/news/CREATE-program-posted-progress-missed-out-on-TIGER-III-grant-in-2011--29367> (accessed 02 23, 2013).
- CREATE. *Status of CREATE Projects*. November 29, 2012.  
[http://createprogram.org/linked\\_files/status\\_map.pdf](http://createprogram.org/linked_files/status_map.pdf) (accessed January 15, 2013).
- Federal Highway Administration. *Intermodal Connectors*. September 24, 2012.  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/national\\_highway\\_system/intermodal\\_connectors/illinois.cfm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/national_highway_system/intermodal_connectors/illinois.cfm) (accessed March 2013).
- Herr, Phillip R, and James R White. *A Comparison of the Costs of Road, Rail, and Waterways Freight Shipments That Are Not Passed on to Consumers*. Report to the Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures, Committee on Ways and Means, House of Representatives, Washington: Government Accountability Office, 2011.
- Illinois Department of Transportation. *Draft Illinois State Rail Plan*. Draft, Springfield: Illinois Department of Transportation, 2012.
- Keeney, Willard. "CREATE Simulation Modeling." Prepared for Chicago Planning Group, Chicago, 2011.
- Weart, Walter. *CREATE update: Grade crossing upgrades, separations and closures*. January 14, 2013.  
[http://www.progressiverailroading.com/c\\_s/artic](http://www.progressiverailroading.com/c_s/artic) (accessed January 15, 2013).