

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *Continued*

gency rooms.

All seven of Illinois' congressional Republicans voted for the AHCA and will likely vote on any related Senate bill. Rauner has influence among Illinois' congressional delegation and needs to speak up for all Illinoisans. On health care, the governor can either step up to the plate or head for the dugout.

WESLEY EPPLIN

*Director of health equity, Health & Medicine
Policy Research Group*

Create is a vital plan for freight

We appreciate Crain's calling attention to the vital importance of freight to our regional economy. About 25 percent of all freight trains and 50 percent of all intermodal trains in the nation pass through metropolitan

Chicago, home to the continent's main interchange of western and eastern railroads.

The economic multipliers are staggering. Approximately 1.1 billion square feet of industrial development here support freight and manufacturing activity. Industries that rely on the frequent shipment of goods—manufacturing, construction, retail trade and wholesale trade—collectively represent more than one-quarter of all our region's jobs and add over \$158 billion per year to the regional economy.

Crain's stories "Why Hunter Harrison doesn't want freight here" (April 29) and "Investors float \$2.8 billion plan to get around Chicago's rail bottleneck" (May 3) did, however, overlook a critical point: the vital importance of completing Create.

Starting in 2003, the Create public-private partnership has advanced a very well-de-

financed program of 70 projects to reduce freight congestion in the greater Chicago region. To date, 28 Create projects are complete, with six more under construction, 17 in their design stages and 19 awaiting further funding.

The national and regional importance of Create is too important for us to prematurely shift the spotlight to projects like the Great Lakes Basin Transportation proposal. With Create completed, the risk of diversions would be diminished and existing rail infrastructure optimized.

Moving freight more efficiently through our region is the goal, and it is paramount to the continued success of the region's and nation's economy.

JOSEPH C. SZABO

*Executive director, Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning*