



## **CREATE: IMPROVING RAIL NETWORKS THROUGH A REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP**

The Chicago area handles one-fourth of the nation's freight rail traffic, making the rail network critical to commerce in

the Midwest and across the country. Nearly 500 freight trains and 760 passenger trains pass through the region every day, and demand for freight service continues to grow. With this growth comes an increase in congestion along Chicago's freight corridors, many of which are more than a century old, and can slow trains passing through the city for an average of 30 hours.

In 2003, the federal Surface Transportation Board convened CREATE (the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency Program), a task force made up of local and regional stakeholders and all six of the freight railroads that are active in Chicago. This task force recognized that growing rail congestion threatened the economic competitiveness of the region and businesses across the country. Since then, CREATE has invested billions of public and private dollars to upgrade regional rail infrastructure. The program has completed nearly 30 projects, which together have created increased rail network capacity designed to accommodate the expected doubling of freight rail traffic by 2045. The projects have also decreased travel times for motorists, transit users and passenger rail riders.

In total, the program will invest \$4.4 billion in infrastructure improvements over a 30-year period, which are estimated to generate \$31.5 billion in economic benefits.

Despite the investments already made, much work remains to be done. There are nearly 20 projects that have no identified funding source, including grade separation and tower projects as well as passenger rail corridor upgrades. Another dozen projects are in the environmental review phase but are still years away from completion.

