



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF CHICAGO

June 18th, 2026

David Fink
Administrator
Federal Railroad Administration
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: Support for Amtrak's FY25–26 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI)
Program Grant Applications

Dear Administrator Fink:

On behalf of the Department of Planning and Development we are writing to express our commitment to supporting **Amtrak's FY25–26 Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements (CRISI) Program grant applications** for two nationally significant projects in Chicago: The **South Branch Bridge Project** and the **Chicago Union Station Concourse Improvement Project**.

Although these projects are physically located in Chicago, their significance extends far beyond city limits. Chicago is the most important rail hub in the United States—the gateway for nearly all intercity rail travel connecting the Midwest to the rest of the country, and where all Class I freight railroads converge. Investments in Chicago's core rail infrastructure directly strengthen national mobility for people and goods, improve reliability for interstate trips, and enhance regional connectivity for millions of passengers traveling across America's heartland.

The **South Branch Bridge** is a critical asset along Chicago's central rail corridor, supporting approximately 90 daily Amtrak, Metra, and freight movements. At more than 110 years old, the bridge experiences recurring mechanical, structural, and electrical issues that lead to operational delays and disruptions. Because the bridge must open more frequently than any other movable bridge in Chicago—due to its low elevation above the river—its components endure significant wear and fatigue.

Amtrak's proposed state of good repair (SOGR) activities will extend the bridge's life by an additional decade, enabling safe and reliable operations while future replacement options are evaluated and advanced. These improvements will stabilize day-to-day service, reduce the frequency of operational outages, and ensure that this nationally significant rail artery remains dependable for the Midwest's intercity passenger rail services.

The **Chicago Union Station Concourse** serves as a primary interchange between long-distance and state-supported routes and is a critical component of the Midwest and national passenger rail networks. Millions of passengers pass through the concourse each year, making its condition and functionality essential to safe, efficient, and reliable rail operations. This will modernize this critical passenger facility to improve passenger circulation, wayfinding, operational efficiency, and safety while addressing longstanding state-of-good-repair needs. The project will bring the facility into compliance with **NFPA 130 Fire-Life-Safety standards**, expand vertical access through new and upgraded elevators, and address **ADA accessibility** throughout the concourse. Together, these improvements will enhance the passenger experience while supporting the continued growth and reliability of intercity and regional passenger rail service.

The City of Chicago is willing to contribute up to \$55 million of Non-Federal funds comprised of Tax Increment Financing to the Chicago Union Station Concourse, which will be subject to City Council approval.

Modern, resilient, and efficient rail infrastructure serving the Midwest network is essential to maintaining safe and reliable passenger rail service nationwide. For these reasons, the Department of Planning and Development **strongly supports Amtrak's CRISI grant applications for the South Branch Bridge Project and the Chicago Union Station Concourse Improvement Project**, and we respectfully urge the Federal Railroad Administration to advance these vital initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ciere Boatright
Commissioner
Department of Planning & Development
City of Chicago

Cc: Jeff Cohen, Deputy Commissioner, DPD