

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 21, 2022

The Honorable Amit Bose  
Administrator, Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Administrator Bose:

The historic, bipartisan *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA) (P.L. 117-58) recently signed into law by President Biden provides much needed and long overdue investments in our nation's infrastructure, including in rail research. We write to highlight a provision that we authored establishing a University Rail Research and Development Center of Excellence, which would advance research and development to improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of passenger and freight rail transportation. As the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) carries out the implementation of this provision of the IIJA, we strongly urge you to consider the State of Illinois as a home for this Center of Excellence.

As the nation's rail hub, Illinois is well-positioned to support this Center of Excellence. Illinois has the largest concentration of rail suppliers in the nation. Chicago not only serves as the hub of Amtrak's Midwest passenger rail network but is home to Metra, one of the largest commuter railroads in the nation. Moreover, the University of Illinois System's expertise in rail engineering and urban transportation is unparalleled. The University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has the largest rail infrastructure research laboratory in the nation, and the University of Illinois Chicago's Urban Transportation Center specializes in planning, policy, operations, finance, and management. The University of Illinois System has strong partnerships with major private and public sector railroads, state and regional agencies, railway suppliers, and state and local governments. As a result, railroads and suppliers already develop and deploy innovative new products in Illinois while providing high-quality employment opportunities for rail transportation professionals.

Congress repeatedly has urged the FRA to invest greater resources in partnerships with extramural academic research partnerships. The Fiscal Year 2022 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 117-103) provided the FRA with \$5 million for partnerships with qualified universities to improve the safety, capacity, and efficiency of the nation's rail infrastructure. We urge you to use this funding to establish the IIJA's new University Rail Research and Development Center of Excellence, which will allow FRA to work with universities to improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of passenger and freight rail transportation.

We believe our state brings much to the table that would benefit the new University Rail Research and Development Center of Excellence, and we urge you to give full and fair consideration to the benefits of collaborating with the University of Illinois System. We look forward to working with FRA to establish and support this new Center of Excellence.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



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Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



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Marie Newman  
Member of Congress



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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress