

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-1304

December 14, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

I am writing with regard to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (DOT) recent announcement that Amtrak and its partners will receive a total of \$93 million for the Chicago Hub Improvement Project (CHIP) to modernize Chicago Union Station (CUS). This includes funding for platform and ventilation upgrades as well as reactivation of the Station's old mail platform into tracks for passenger use. Thank you for your assistance in securing this initial funding for CHIP.

While this grant is a significant and long-overdue first step in funding CHIP by modernizing the physical station, I would like to express my disappointment that DOT chose not to fund the other components of the project that would improve travel times and increase connectivity. Funding the entire portfolio of CHIP projects is crucial to revolutionizing Midwest rail, the heart of which is CUS. CHIP is Amtrak's top National Network priority, as Chicago is the nation's passenger, commuter, and freight rail hub, with more trackage radiating in more directions than any other city in North America.

There is no better time to invest in Chicago Union Station than now, amid the historic levels of rail funding available through the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (P.L. 117-58). When DOT invests in Chicago, it invests in the success and future of Midwest rail, which impacts Amtrak's entire long-distance network. Chicago is at the center of Amtrak's Midwestern expansion plan, a 15-year strategy to connect dozens of cities in roughly 160 communities with Amtrak service. In light of this, many rail projects across the Midwest would benefit from CHIP's full implementation.

I am hopeful that the remaining, critically important aspects of CHIP will be funded in the next round of rail grants made available. As you know, CHIP's regional partners already have committed \$218 million to the project, and are ready, unified, and eager to get the project across the finish line.

I look forward to working with you to expand this federal investment in CUS, which serves 3.3 million Amtrak riders annually, along 16 Amtrak intercity rail lines, and more than 30 million riders across all rail services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dick Durbin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath it.

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator