

*The Grand Crossing Rail Project will reduce rail congestion on Chicago's South Side, particularly in the Englewood and Greater Grand Crossing neighborhoods. The project is one component of a region-wide program of railroad-related infrastructure improvements called CREATE.*



## What is CREATE?

The Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), State of Illinois, City of Chicago, Metra, Amtrak, and the nation's freight railroads. A program of national significance, CREATE was developed to increase the efficiency of the region's rail infrastructure.

## What is the Grand Crossing Rail Project?

Every day, six Amtrak trains on the Illini, Saluki, and City of New Orleans lines pass through Chicago's south side, coming from Champaign, Carbondale, Memphis, and New Orleans. The route they currently travel is congested and does not provide direct access into Union Station, causing delays for rail passengers.

The Project Team is working to find solutions to these issues. The Grand Crossing Rail Project will examine alternate, less congested routes that would enable Amtrak trains to travel directly into Union Station. This will reduce delays for rail passengers and freight trains on Chicago's South Side.

## What are the project's potential benefits?

- ✓ Alleviate rail congestion on Chicago's South Side
- ✓ Enhance public safety
- ✓ Promote national and regional economic development
- ✓ Improve regional air quality
- ✓ Reduce noise from idling or slow-moving trains
- ✓ Improve Amtrak service while maintaining adequate freight capacity

## December 2011 Public Meetings

Public meetings are being held for the Grand Crossing Rail Project on December 12, 2011 and December 13, 2011. Both meetings will present the same content. The purpose of the meetings is to:

- Provide an overview of the project
- Review the project's draft purpose and need for improvements
- Obtain public input on the draft purpose and need

Representatives from the Project Team will be available to answer questions. The Project Team consists of representatives from the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, the Chicago Department of Transportation, the affected railroads, and project consultants.

## Problem Statement

The Grand Crossing Rail Project Team developed the Problem Statement based on the needs identified in the CREATE Feasibility Plan ([www.createprogram.org](http://www.createprogram.org)) and input from the Community Advisory Groups. The figure on the right illustrates the existing route traveled by Amtrak's City of New Orleans, Illini, and Saluki trains, as well as the project study area, which the CREATE Feasibility Plan identified as the only feasible option for re-routing these trains to an existing rail corridor.

The problems include:

**Primary:** Indirect/inefficient City of New Orleans-Illini-Saluki route

- All trains on this route must back into Union Station
  - Lengthens schedule by 19 minutes
  - Ties up other lines
- Amtrak trains are subject to delay at the heavily congested 16th Street Interlocking
  - Affects Amtrak on-time performance
  - Contributes to congestion

**Secondary:**

- CN may discontinue freight operations along the existing route potentially affecting Amtrak service
- Limited number of options into Union Station from the south
- Shifting City of New Orleans-Illini-Saluki passenger trains to the study area corridor will reduce freight capacity along the new route and increase congestion at Norfolk Southern's Park Manor Yard and 47th Street Intermodal Yard



## Draft Purpose and Need

Based on the Problem Statement and with input from the Grand Crossing Rail Project Community Advisory Groups, the Project Team has developed a draft Purpose and Need Statement for the project.

### Project Purpose

Provide a new direct route for Amtrak trains from New Orleans or Carbondale into Chicago Union Station, and provide sufficient mainline capacity to accommodate Amtrak and freight trains.

### Project Needs

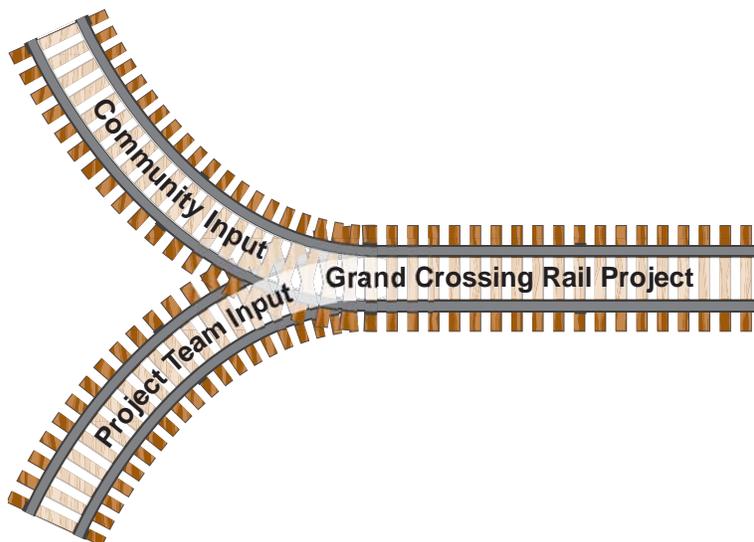
- Improved Amtrak route efficiency
- Reduced congestion and delays for freight and passenger rail service
- Adequate capacity for passenger and freight rail traffic in the overall regional rail network



## Community Advisory Groups Hold First Meetings

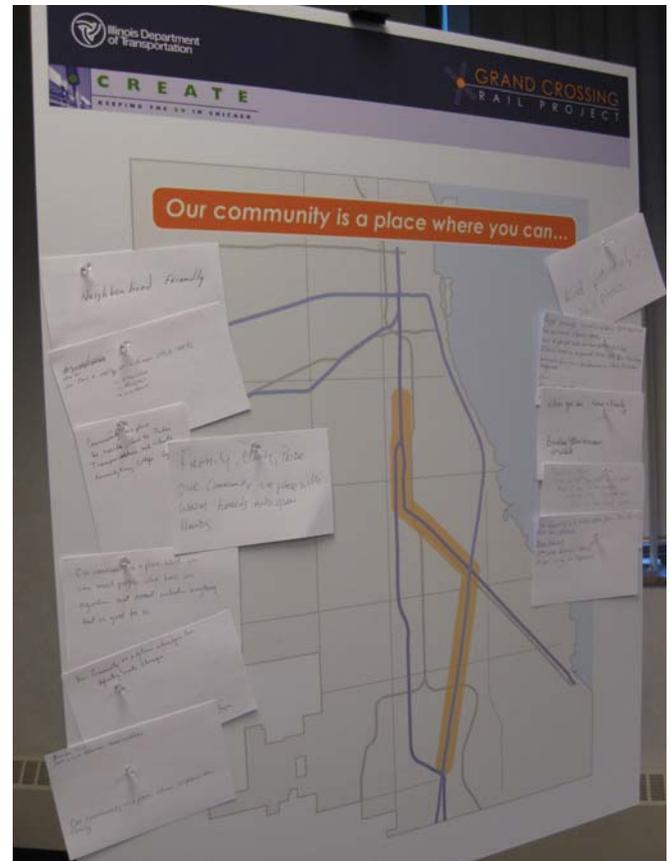
The Grand Crossing Rail Project Team invited area residents and representatives from businesses, police and fire districts, non-profits, churches and schools to form two Community Advisory Groups. On November 15th and 18th, 2011, the first Community Advisory Group meetings were hosted at St. Bernard Hospital and the Grand Crossing Library, respectively. During these meetings, the Project Team provided an overview of the Grand Crossing Project and asked attendees to share their thoughts about the project.

A community survey was conducted to encourage group members to describe their neighborhoods' strengths, opportunities, and needs for improvement. This included having meeting attendees work with Project Team members to mark transportation issues on large, aerial maps of the community. This exercise helped the Project Team understand the project study area from the community's perspective. The valuable input shared by these local neighborhood leaders and residents validated the transportation infrastructure problems previously identified by the Project Team (i.e., the Problem Statement), and helped us better understand how the neighborhoods view these issues. As solutions are developed to the transportation issues, community input will help assure the project is developed in coordination with its surrounding neighborhoods.



Transportation problems in the Problem Statement relate directly to infrastructure. In addition, the Community Advisory Groups identified several other project-related concerns. The Project Team is committed to working with the community on these concerns throughout the project:

- **Employment and economic development:** The Community Advisory Groups emphatically stated that people in their neighborhoods need good jobs.
- **Appearance of railroad property:** Members raised concerns about poor maintenance of railroad right-of-way, citing overgrown vegetation and lack of maintenance, stressing the need for beautification.
- **Viaduct conditions:** Members were also concerned about poor viaduct lighting and maintenance, in terms of both aesthetics and safety.
- **Noise and Vibration:** Many participants indicated that they can hear or feel passing trains from their homes or offices.
- **Air Quality:** Members also mentioned air quality as a concern, citing diesel fumes from locomotives at freight rail yards located in the community.



## The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Process



The Grand Crossing Rail Project is investigating ways to provide a new, more direct route to Chicago's Union Station for Amtrak's City of New Orleans, Illini, and Saluki trains, and reduce congestion and delays for both passenger and freight trains in the corridor. The Project Team is thoroughly studying the project to better understand the effects that different project solutions will have on the physical, social, and economic environment.

Our team is developing an EIS for the Grand Crossing Rail Project. Federal law requires that an EIS be prepared for federally-funded projects that could potentially affect the quality of the human and natural environment. When it is complete, the EIS will identify the solution that will best address the transportation issues and then detail how this solution was selected. The EIS will explain the potential impacts and benefits resulting from the project and identify ways to avoid or lessen the negative impacts. The EIS will also describe how the public was engaged in the decision-making process and how the local community's concerns and values were factored into the proposed solution.

## Parts of the EIS



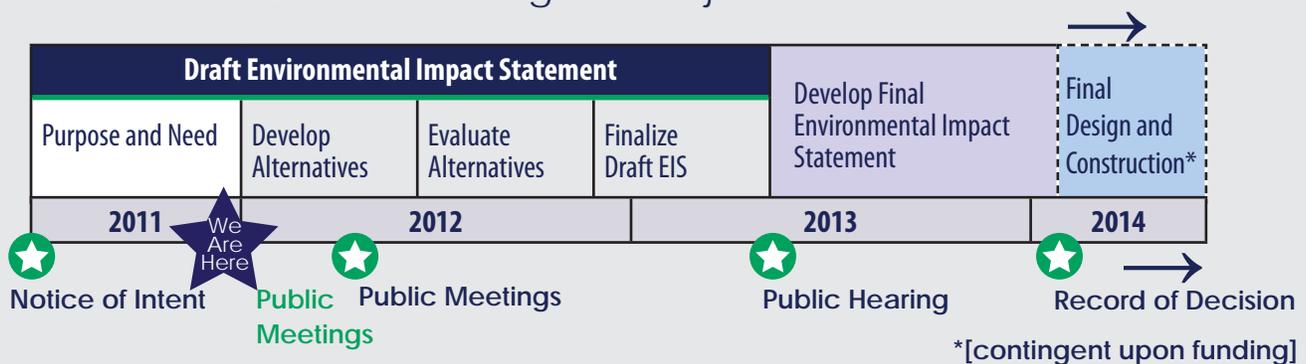
**Purpose and Need:** This section of the EIS will explain why the Grand Crossing Rail Project is needed and the specific transportation needs that the project is trying to address. It will also include information about transportation facilities in the project study area. The public will play an important role in identifying these needs, and the Project Team will listen to and integrate public input into this section.

**Alternatives:** This section will explore possible solutions to the transportation problems posed in the Purpose and Need Statement. It will explain how reasonable alternatives were selected for study and the reasons why some were eliminated from consideration. It may also identify the alternative that best solves these transportation problems (i.e., the Preferred Alternative) and explain the basis for that decision. This section will include input from the public and local community members, who will have opportunities to comment on the proposed and preferred alternatives.

**Affected Environment:** This section will describe the existing human and natural environmental settings in the project study area. This will include a description of the resources that may be affected by the project including residences, businesses, community facilities, recreational areas, historic resources, streams and wetlands, and plant and animal species. This information will be compiled through research, environmental studies, and community input.

**Environmental Consequences:** This section will describe the potential impacts and benefits that each of the

## Grand Crossing Rail Project EIS Schedule



alternatives carried forward in the EIS would have on the environment and the actions recommended to avoid, minimize, or mitigate these impacts. Information in this section will be used to compare the alternatives carried forward for more detailed study.

**Comments and Coordination:** This section will summarize the public involvement process for the project including public meetings, community advisory groups, presentations to block clubs and business associations, and other outreach activities. It will detail comments received from the public and responses to those comments. It will also explain the resource and regulatory agency coordination process, any comments received, and how agency comments were addressed.

## Community Involvement and Context Sensitive Solutions

The Grand Crossing Rail Project Team is committed to working with the community to find transportation solutions that exist in coordination with the surrounding neighborhoods.

The Project Team is using IDOT's Context Sensitive Solutions process to develop the Grand Crossing Rail Project EIS. This process engages all project stakeholders, including neighborhood residents, elected officials, community and business leaders, interest groups, government agencies, and anybody who interacts with the railroads and roadways in the project study area. The intent is to identify and have a clear understanding of the community's transportation concerns.

Vital input will help shape a solution for the Grand Crossing Rail Project that best balances the transportation needs of this project with the concerns and values of your community.

## Stakeholder Involvement Plan

The project team developed a Stakeholder Involvement Plan for the Grand Crossing Rail Project as a guide for communication and outreach throughout the project. It is a dynamic document that will be updated periodically to reflect the evolving communications needs of stakeholders and the project team. The Stakeholder Involvement Plan can be found on the project website at [http://grandcrossingrail.com/project\\_resources.html](http://grandcrossingrail.com/project_resources.html).

## EIS Process

The EIS process will take place during the next two years and will involve the following steps:

- STEP 1** → The process formally began with a Notice of Intent in March 2011.
- STEP 2** → The draft Purpose and Need Statement is prepared. Public input on the Purpose and Need is being gathered at Public Meetings in December 2011.
- STEP 3** → Reasonable alternatives are developed. The public provides input on the proposed reasonable alternatives at a second Public Meeting.
- STEP 4** → Alternatives are evaluated.
- STEP 5** → The findings of the technical studies; impacts and benefits; measures to mitigate any potential negative effects of the project; and public input are documented in the Draft EIS. A Public Hearing is held to formally present the findings of the Draft EIS and receive comments.
- STEP 6** → Based on comments and review of the Draft EIS, a Preferred Alternative for the project is included in the Final EIS.
- STEP 7** → The Record of Decision completes the EIS process.



## Community Involvement Activities

Here are some of the community involvement activities that will occur in the months and years ahead:

**Community Research:** To better understand the neighborhoods in the study area, we are assessing the physical condition of the train tracks and roads in the area and identifying community resources like schools, police and fire stations, hospitals, parks, businesses, and churches. We have also gathered demographic information to supplement our understanding of the surrounding community.

**Meetings with elected officials and community leaders:** Throughout the project, we will continue to meet with aldermen, state legislators, and community leaders to share information and incorporate their concerns. These leaders also will help us identify community issues related to the project.

**Community Advisory Groups:** Two Community Advisory Groups have been formed: one for neighborhoods in the northern part of the Grand Crossing Rail Project study area and one for those in the southern part. These groups of community leaders and residents will meet periodically to discuss the community's thoughts and ideas about the project.

**Public Meetings:** Prior to key project decisions, public meetings will be held. During these meetings, the public will have an opportunity to learn about the Grand Crossing Rail Project, speak with project representatives, and provide input on the project.

**Public Hearing:** A public hearing will be held when the Draft EIS is published. This meeting will be similar to previous public meetings, but will have a more formal process for recording comments and discussion.

**Public Comment:** Throughout the project, all comments are encouraged and welcomed. At public meetings, there will be comment sheets available for attendees to fill out there or to mail back to the Project Team. The public can also send comments to the email listed below or fill out the online comment form at <http://grandcrossingrail.com/contact.html>. When the Draft EIS is published, a formal 45-day public comment period will be held, which will include the public hearing.

**Newsletters, Fact Sheets, and Brochures:** Printed materials will be provided to the public that will explain the Grand Crossing Rail Project and describe how to get involved.

## How You Can Help

Throughout the project, we need you to help us identify issues and better understand the concerns and values of your community. Please write or email the Project Team at the address below.

Thank you for your interest in the Grand Crossing Rail Project. We look forward to seeing you at future public meetings, and we welcome your comments and questions at any time.



## CONTACT US

If you have questions or need additional information regarding the Grand Crossing Rail Project, please contact:

Grand Crossing Rail Project | Parsons | 10 South Riverside Plaza, 4th Floor | Chicago, Illinois 60606  
Attn: Tony Pakeltis | e-mail: [info@grandcrossingrail.com](mailto:info@grandcrossingrail.com) | [www.grandcrossingrail.com](http://www.grandcrossingrail.com)