

Proposed Federal-State Partnership Program

Chicago Hub Improvement Program



COOK COUNTY
GOVERNMENT



Imagine you're a first-year student at the University of Illinois, heading home to Chicago for spring break. You get more and more excited about the time you'll spend with family in Chicago. You look out the window, see the Loop straight ahead, and know you're almost there. But then the train makes a turn, and the skyline starts to recede in the distance. A conductor explains that the train must go through a series of complex maneuvers to get into Union Station. After 10-15 minutes of changing tracks, reversing directions, and finally heading back towards the Loop, you arrive. You ask yourself why, in the 21st century, the train just can't pull into the station?

You become more perplexed after pulling in. Your family's texted to meet them in the Great Hall, but after getting off the train, you have no idea how to get there. You can't see it, and while there are many signs, there are pillars, storefronts, and escalators blocking your view of just about everything. Frustrated, you get help from a sympathetic Amtrak agent and finally meet your family in the Great Hall. Your first words to them, "Getting here shouldn't be this hard!"

Amtrak, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Cook County, Metra, and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) agree. Together with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), they have created a program that will permanently fix these and other problems, and set the stage for even more green, carbon-friendly, and efficient train travel in the future.

This is the Chicago Hub Improvement Program (CHIP).

Program overview

CHIP is Amtrak's top National Network priority. It will provide faster, safer, and more reliable service to support the Midwest's growing ridership. CHIP will transform regional and long distance passenger rail service, connect job centers, reduce our carbon footprint and more. Amtrak and its partners' \$1.1 billion Federal/State Partnership grant application is supported by a broad coalition of regional government and industry leaders including labor, business, and environmental groups. This phase represents an \$873 million FRA investment supported through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Amtrak and its partners have committed an additional \$218 million investment, and are working closely with local, state, and federal stakeholders to bring attention to this important program.

The program is divided into three categories of improvements:

- Chicago Union Station (CUS)
- Chicago Area Infrastructure
- Chicago to Michigan Infrastructure

Opportunity for Growth

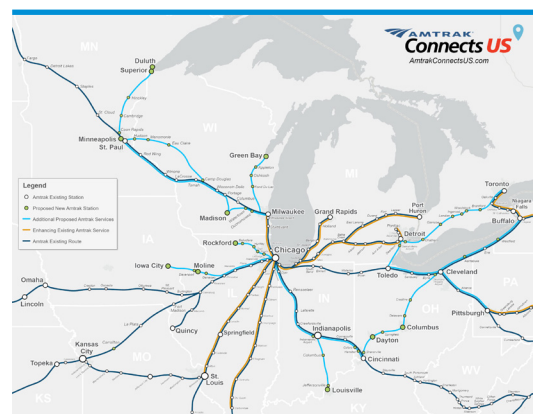
More than 90% of Amtrak's State Supported service outside of the East and West coasts, and more than 50% of Long Distance customers, ride trains that begin or end at CUS, the nation's third-busiest passenger rail terminal. This is due, in part, to the ridership growth of Amtrak's Midwest service.

In the past fifteen years, frequencies in the state of Illinois have doubled, two higher speed rail lines have been built, and 33 new locomotives, as well as 88 new coaches and dinettes, have been acquired. However, this growth was not accompanied by investments in capacity and reliability. State departments of



Union Station by the Numbers (2019)

- **3rd** busiest passenger railroad terminal in the United States
- **3.3+ million** Amtrak riders annually
- **30+ million** Metra riders annually
- **16** Amtrak intercity rail lines
- **6** Metra commuter rail lines
- **409** train movements each day



Amtrak ConnectsUS

A bold, 15-year strategy for expansion will connect dozens of city pairs in close to 160 communities with Amtrak service, thus increasing ridership, environmental sustainability, and economic investment with Chicago as the hub of the Midwest expansion plan. All of this will be accomplished in an energy-efficient manner that reduces our nation's carbon footprint through cleaner and more convenient passenger rail.



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

transportation and the public are demanding additional service on existing routes, while Amtrak also works on expanded service to Minneapolis-St. Paul, the Quad Cities, Madison, and Indianapolis, to name but a few.

The City of Chicago is the nation’s passenger, commuter, and freight rail hub. Chicago has more trackage radiating in more directions than any other city in North America. But Chicago’s success as the paramount railroad hub has created growing congestion and delays, as well as a need for additional investments to increase capacity and make traffic flow more efficient.

This IJA grant creates a unique opportunity for Amtrak and its partners to submit a thoughtful plan of investment that will expand capacity, eliminate bottlenecks in the network, and improve air quality, accessibility, reliability, and customer experience for more than 30 million passengers annually.

Chicago Union Station (CUS) Enhancements

Projects at CUS will improve operational efficiencies and elevate the passenger experience. During peak periods CUS operates at, or above, capacity making it potentially unsafe for passengers and unable to accommodate increased ridership. Improvements will remove barriers, improve access, increase efficiencies, and enhance the customer experience. CHIP envisions adding and improving platforms, upgrading the concourse, and reactivating tracks for passenger use that were first built for the Old Post Office, increasing capacity for Amtrak and Metra service.

Two critical health & safety issues will also be fixed. Today, stagnant smoke and diesel exhaust impose risks to railroad passengers and employees. The new ventilation system will mechanically redirect exhaust, clearing the train sheds of both diesel exhaust and smoke in the event of a fire in the trainsheds. Just as worrisome are the 40 incidents over the last four years of debris falling from non-Amtrak structures built over the tracks, as well as from the historic trainshed itself, onto tracks and platforms. CHIP will address these in part by removing failing and obsolete structural elements.

Chicago Union Station (CUS) Enhancements

- Mail Platform Reactivation^C
- Concourse Improvements^{FD, C}
- Train Shed Ventilation Improvements^{PE, NEPA, FD}
- Platform Capacity Expansions^{PE, NEPA, FD}

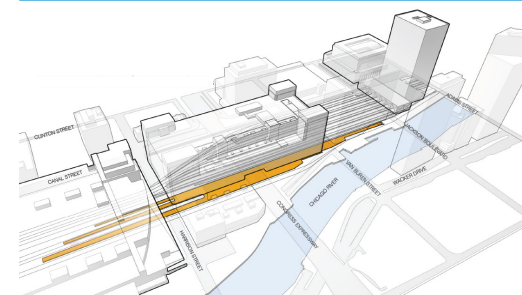
Chicago Infrastructure Projects

- Direct connection between CUS and the St. Charles Air Line ^(SCAL) ^{PE, FD, NEPA, C}
- Restoration of double-track on one mile of trackage east of the St. Charles Air Line bridge ^{PE, FD, NEPA, C}

Chicago to Michigan Infrastructure Improvements

- Restoration of double-track in the congested area between Niles and Glenwood Rd. in southwest Michigan ^{PE, NEPA, FD, C}

(PE) PRELIMINARY ENGINEERING, NEPA, (FD) FINAL DESIGN/FINAL ENGINEERING, (C) CONSTRUCTION



CUS Mail Platform (shown in orange)



Chicago Area Infrastructure Improvements

CHIP creates a direct connection between CUS and the St. Charles Air Line bridge over the south branch of the Chicago River near 18th St. This connection, combined with additional track to be laid east of the bridge, will immediately eliminate the 10-15 minute Illini/Saluki (and City of New Orleans trains), whose back-up maneuvers so perplexed our U of I freshman. The new connection will also make possible additional service to downstate Illinois and St. Louis, Michigan and Indiana, as well as the realization of the long-held vision of creating a one-seat ride from O'Hare Airport to McCormick Place, through CUS.

Michigan Infrastructure Improvements

A major bottleneck in southwest Michigan is the 16 miles of single-track operation between Niles and Glenwood Rd., just northeast of Dowagiac, MI. This portion of trackage, owned by Amtrak, is a frequent source of delay for both Wolverine and Blue Water services because one train must wait outside this area for a train traveling in the opposite direction to pass. Restoration of the former second track will eliminate this problem permanently. This project is one of several envisioned by Amtrak and Michigan DOT to cut 30 minutes of travel time between Chicago and metropolitan Detroit.

Regionally Significant Project (RSP)

CMAP's ON TO 2050 plan identifies constrained regionally significant projects (RSP), which advance the plan's three principles: promoting inclusive growth, strengthening resilience, and prioritizing investment.

Strong stakeholder support for CHIP is evidenced by the CUS Master Plan improvements being included in numerous state and regional plans including the 2012 Illinois State Rail Plan, the 2017 Illinois State Rail Plan Update, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) GO TO 2040 Comprehensive Plan, and then again in the CMAP ON TO 2050 Comprehensive Plan.

The Niles-Glenwood project component supports the vision outlined in Michigan Mobility 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Benefits

Amtrak's mission is to provide efficient and effective intercity passenger rail mobility consisting of high-quality service that is trip-time competitive with other modes. CHIP's benefits include:

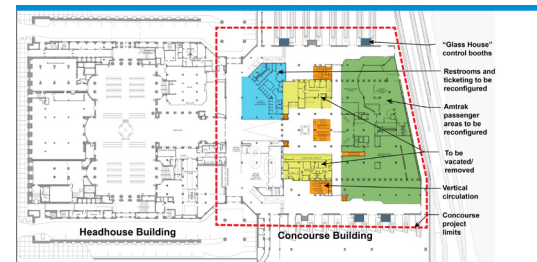
- Enabling Midwest service expansion
- Creating a faster and more reliable means of access to CUS
- Modernizing the nearly century-old CUS to provide code-compliant, accessible, and modern platforms and concourse in preparation for the anticipated growth of both intercity and commuter ridership
- Spurring equitable economic growth across the Midwest
- Providing safety benefits resulting from the diversion of passengers away from automobile, resulting in estimated reductions in highway fatalities
- Yielding environmental benefits from diverting passengers from cars, furthering the President's vision of reducing emissions by 50% by 2030, and net zero by 2050 (Amtrak trains emit up to 83% fewer greenhouse gases per passenger compared to driving, and up to 72% fewer than flying)
- Promoting equity, social justice, and environmental justice by increasing access to the largest job center in the Midwest especially for those living in as environmentally disadvantaged communities.

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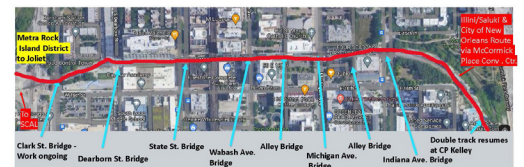
It's time for a new and transformational vision that will improve and expand passenger rail. The \$418 million program will significantly enhance the passenger rail experience in and out of Chicago and provide a range of improvements to passenger rail service in Illinois and throughout our region. I'm glad to join the Mayor and regional leaders in pushing to get this essential project across the finish line."

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— U.S. Senate Majority Whip
Dick Durbin (D-IL)



CUS Concourse Improvements



- CN rehabilitated 7 bridges in 2020-21 that had been neighborhood eyesores
- Because of low freight traffic, CN built single track bridges and removed second track for about 1 mile between SCAL Bridge and Control Point (CP) Kelley, just north of McCormick Place
- Abutments and right-of-way space remain for restoration of the 2nd track and the needed bridges

Restore CN Lakefront Line double track



Connection between CUS and SCAL