

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 4, 2015

The Honorable Secretary Anthony Foxx
United States Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

We are writing again in full support of Metra's grant application through the FY2015 Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER VII) discretionary grant program for funding to replace and expand the MD-W Fox River Bridge. The bridge is a vital part of Metra's MD-W commuter rail line and the region's freight rail network. As you know, the Chicago region is the hub of the nation's rail network and bottlenecks in our region negatively impact the entire country. The MD-W Fox River Bridge Improvement Project will benefit both commuters and commerce by providing dependable, expeditious service.

The MD-W Fox River Bridge serves 49 Metra trains and up to eight freight trains daily. Additionally, the bridge is a detour route for freight traffic when problems occur on the rail system west of the Chicago region. Originally constructed in 1881, the bridge is the only single-track segment on the rail line into Chicago. To operate safely, trains must reduce their speed while moving across the aging structure, which exacerbates congestion and delays. These hold-ups create a domino effect, impacting freight traffic outside the Chicago region. With the declining structure, antiquated technology and continual delays, the bridge can no longer be economically maintained.

Operations at the bridge affect all riders on the MD-W commuter rail line—6.8 million passengers per year. Each year, speed restrictions, train conflicts, and signal problems at the MD-W Fox River Bridge add 36,000 passenger-hours to travel times of Metra riders. If the bridge structure and signal equipment are allowed to degrade, delays will continue to increase in frequency and duration. The Project is forecast to save Metra riders approximately 1.2 million person-hours, valued at \$4.8 million, over the expected lifespan (30-40 years) of the new signal equipment and track that will be installed at the bridge. Canadian Pacific Railway will also benefit from the increased speeds, reliability, and capacity this project will provide, and is contributing significant funding towards the local match.

This project will replace the bridge's single-track structure with a double-track structure built to modern design standards. The new double-track bridge will eliminate the local speed restriction and bottleneck configuration that causes delays and constrains capacity. In addition to the bridge replacement, all signal equipment at the bridge as well as cable and communications devices will be replaced. The modern equipment will be more automated, require less frequent maintenance, experience fewer breakdowns, ensure functionality in inclement weather, and comply with Positive Train Control requirements.

We strongly support Metra's TIGER VII grant application and request that the U.S. Department of Transportation provides funding for this important rail maintenance and capacity improvement project. If you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely,


Tammy Duckworth
Member of Congress



Danny Davis
Member of Congress


Bill Foster
Member of Congress



Luis Gutierrez
Member of Congress


Robin Kelly
Member of Congress


Dan Lipinski
Member of Congress


Mike Quigley
Member of Congress


Bobby Rush
Member of Congress


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress