

IDOT PRESS RELEASE

BELLWOOD - The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) was joined today by the Union Pacific Railroad, local officials and other stakeholders in the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) program to open the new 25th Avenue overpass. The \$41 million grade-separation project eliminates a conflict point between trains and regular vehicle traffic, reducing congestion, improving safety, ensuring better response times for emergency vehicles and making the area more attractive for economic development.

"This new overpass pays immediate dividends for communities nearby, but its impact will be felt for years throughout the region," said Illinois Transportation Secretary Randy Blankenhorn. "This project is what CREATE is all about: All parties coming together to find a solution that benefits everyone."

The overpass accommodates two lanes of traffic in each direction over the railroad tracks. Each day, up to 59 Metra trains and 52 freight trains pass through this location. On average, 19,000 vehicles travel this stretch of 25th Avenue daily, with 3,500 of them getting stopped by trains before the overpass was built, resulting in 28,400 annual hours of motorist delay. The project also included resurfacing Main Street from between 25th and 19th avenues.

"This project, many years in the making, will benefit all residents by serving as a conduit for economic development, quicker emergency vehicle response times and a safer traffic flow," said Melrose Park Mayor Ron Serpico. "This is much more than a railroad overpass. This is a bridge to a better quality of life for our communities."

The railroad overpass project was made possible by a \$22.2 million contribution from IDOT, \$2.4 million from villages of Bellwood and Melrose Park, and \$16.4 million from federal, railroad and other state sources. Construction started in September 2014.

The CREATE program is a first-of-its-kind public-private partnership to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of freight, commuter and intercity rail, while improving the entire transportation network throughout the region. The \$4.4 billion program comprises 70 rail and highway improvements, 27 of which are complete. In addition to IDOT, partners include the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Chicago Department of Transportation as well as the freight and passenger railroads.