

Proposed MEGA Project

Chicago Hub Improvement Program



COOK COUNTY
GOVERNMENT



Project overview

Amtrak, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) are partnering to invest in the Chicago Hub Improvement Program (CHIP), which aims to transform high-speed regional and intercity passenger rail service, connect job centers, reduce our carbon footprint and more. The \$418 million program is supported by a broad coalition of regional government and industry leaders including labor, business, and environmental groups.

The project is divided into three major components:

- Chicago Union Station Improvements
- Chicago Area Infrastructure Improvements
- Chicago-Detroit Infrastructure Improvements

Once-in-a-generation investment opportunity

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provides a tremendous opportunity to secure National Infrastructure Project Assistance (also known as “Megaprojects” or “MEGA”) funds for this project. Amtrak, IDOT, MDOT, Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT), Metra, and Cook County, in partnership with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), have jointly submitted a grant application for this MEGA Project. Partners are working closely with local, state, and federal stakeholders to bring attention to this important project and its benefits, as well as facilitate conversations and foster support.

Opportunity for Growth

Today, over 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 Chicago Union Station. This is due, in part, to the success of Amtrak in the Midwest, and the resulting growth in ridership.

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 around CUS, which is significantly constraining further growth. The problem will be compounded by the upcoming service expansions to Minneapolis/St. Paul, the Quad Cities, and Rockford, IL, as well as additional frequencies on several existing routes. The MEGA program has created a unique opportunity to allow Amtrak and its partners to submit a thoughtful plan of investment to expand capacity and break bottlenecks in the network.

Project need

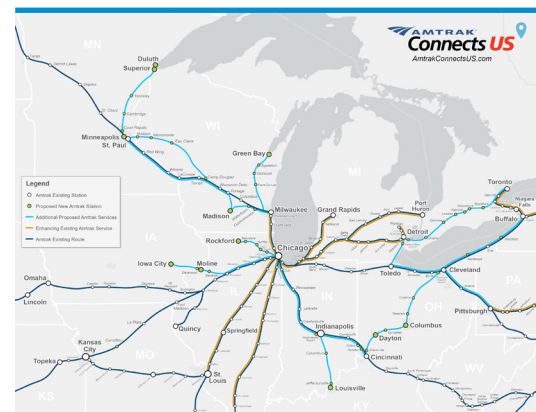
Since the creation of Amtrak operations in 1971, the City of Chicago has continued its evolution to become the most important rail hub in the United States, not only for Amtrak, but also for freight and commuter railroads. The City of Chicago has more trackage radiating in more directions than any other city in North America. 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.

Combined investments will address current transportation challenges and create a strong foundation for improving reliability, expanding service, and meeting the current and future needs of the customers of both Amtrak and its partners.



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

Chicago Union Station (CUS) Enhancements

Projects at Chicago Union Station will significantly improve the passenger experience within the station. During peak periods CUS and its components operate at or above capacity, making it potentially unsafe for current ridership levels and unable to accommodate increased ridership. The improvements at CUS will remove barriers, improve access, increase efficiencies, and enhance the customer experience by adding and modifying platforms, upgrading the concourse, improving ventilation and air quality in the train sheds, and removing obsolete structures to improve safety. Amtrak will activate tracks for passenger use that were first built for the post office, further realizing the vision under the CREATE Program goal to increase capacity for Amtrak and Metra service at CUS.

Chicago Area Infrastructure Improvements

Creating a direct connection between CUS and the St. Charles Air Line bridge over the south branch of the Chicago River near 18th St, combined with adjustments to track configurations east of the bridge will reduce travel time and improve the reliability of existing service as well as, afford Amtrak greater control over operations. Perhaps even more importantly, the CHIP family of projects will make possible additional service to downstate Illinois and St. Louis, as well as to Michigan and Indiana. These endeavors will also enable the long-held vision of connecting O'Hare Airport, through CUS, to McCormick Place.

Chicago-Detroit Infrastructure Improvements

This project will continue to enhance the rail system's ability to encourage economic development, promote environmental sustainability, and improve service in a region that has been historically underserved by intercity rail. This investment will build on previous years' investments to bring this crucial corridor up to its full potential, as well as reduce travel time, by building even more infrastructure improvements all along the important corridor between Chicago and points in Michigan.

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}

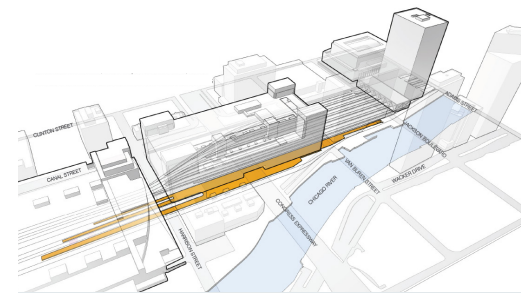
Chicago Area Infrastructure Improvement

- Direct connection between CUS and the St. Charles Air Line (SCAL)^{PE, FD, NEPA, C}
- Purchase yard property
- New platform at Joliet^{PE, FD, NEPA, C}
- Upgrade SCAL and Rock Island District trackage connection at 16th St.^{PE, NEPA, FD, C}

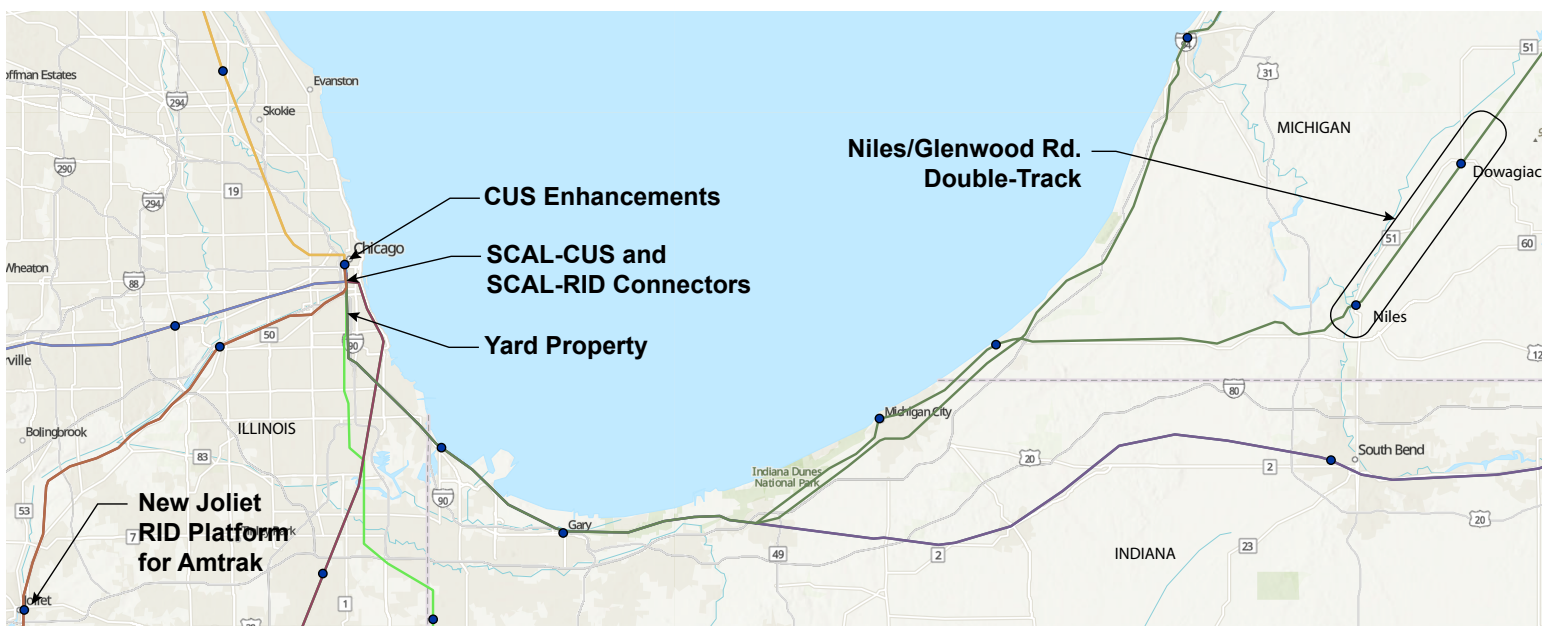
Chicago-Detroit Infrastructure Improvements

- Double-track the congested Niles-Glenwood Road segment of Chicago-Detroit route^{PE, NEPA, FD}

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



CUS Mail Platform (shown in orange)



Regionally Significant Project (RSP)

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

Strong stakeholder support for this project 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. In ON TO 2050, CUS improvements are included in the financially constrained list of regionally significant transit projects.

The Michigan East Project component supports the vision outlined in Michigan Mobility 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan.

Combined 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 intercity travel options. The Program will provide benefits including:

- Enabling service expansion in the Midwest, thus fulfilling Amtrak's mission under the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act (PRIIA) of 2008
- Creating a faster and more reliable means of access to CUS from points east and south, thus reducing travel time
- Providing customer benefits resulting from new and increased services
- Bringing CUS into a state of good repair and improving passenger experience
- Modernizing the nearly century-old CUS to provide code-compliant, accessible platforms and concourse in preparation for the anticipated growth of both intercity and commuter ridership
- Providing safety benefits resulting from the diversion of passengers away from automobile and bus travel to rail travel, resulting in estimated reductions in highway fatalities
- Yielding environmental benefits resulting from the diversion of passengers from automobile travel, resulting in reductions in carbon dioxide
- Growing rail affordably in the region
- Promoting equity, social justice and environmental justice

MEGA Investment

The projects in the Chicago Hub Improvement Program* represent a \$251 million FRA investment supported through the IJA with an additional \$167 million investment from Amtrak and project partners. The federal requirements for the MEGA funds include projects that meet these criteria:

- Likely to generate national or regional economic, mobility, or safety benefits
- In significant need of federal funding
- Cost effectiveness
- One or more stable and dependable funding or financing sources (related, non-federal funds) available to construct, maintain, and operate the project, and to cover cost increases

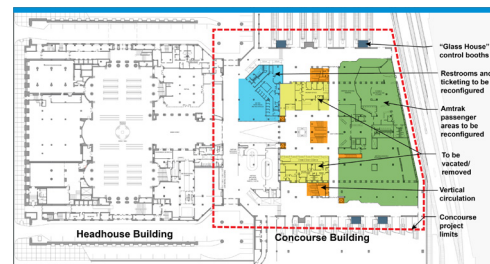
* MEGA grant application submitted under the name "Chicago Access/Michigan East Program"

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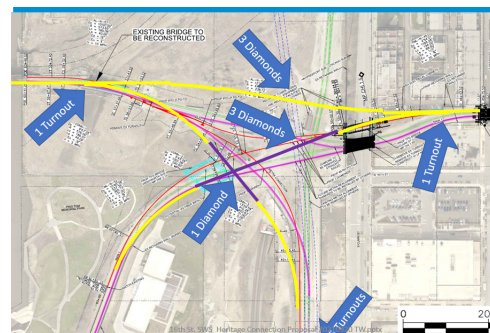
It's time for a new and transformational vision that will improve and expand passenger rail. The \$418 million program will significantly enhance the passenger rail experience in and out of Chicago and provide a range of improvements to passenger rail service in Illinois and throughout our region. I'm glad to join Mayor Lightfoot 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



SCAL and Rock Island District trackage connection



Connection between CUS and SCAL