



ICC Grants \$3.1 Million to Advance Safety Improvements at Dangerous West Grand Avenue Rail-Highway Crossing in Elmwood Park

Chicago, IL – On Wednesday, the Illinois Commerce Commission authorized the use of \$3.1 million from the Multi-Modal Transportation Bond Fund, part of Governor Pritzker’s bipartisan Rebuild Illinois Capital Bill, to pay for Phase 2 Engineering costs to develop plans for a grade separation at the West Grand Avenue highway-rail crossing in Elmwood Park. 16 people were injured at the site on November 23, 2005 when a Metra train traveling 70 mph struck six vehicles on the tracks, forcing them to collide with another 11 vehicles.

“In addition to providing funds for Phase 2 Engineering, the action we took enables Elmwood Park to apply for federal grants to help fund construction of the project which is significant,” said ICC Chairman Carrie Zalewski. “This project exemplifies our agencies long-standing commitment to keep pedestrians, motorists, and railroad employees safe at rail-highway crossing.”

The authorized funding for Phase 2 Engineering will be used for the development of contract plans, specifications, and detailed estimates for a proposed grade separation. As the bridge plans near completion, the Village of Elmwood Park must file a formal petition with the Commission for approval of the design, construction, maintenance, and any associated items for the proposed grade separation.

“Due to the dangerous history associated with this crossing, this project is a top priority for the Village, the ICC, the Federal Railroad Administration, the Illinois Department of Transportation, and Metra, and the construction of the bridge is a longstanding finding from the National Transportation Safety Board’s investigation report of the 2005 crash. We are pleased the Commission approved the Stipulated Agreement so we can continue to move forward with this very important public safety project,” **said ICC’s Rail Safety Program Administrator Brian Vercruyse.**

The overall cost of the grade separation project is estimated at \$121,000,000. The ICC has committed to spend a total of \$24 million under the agency’s five-year Crossing Safety Crossing Improvement Plan (FY 2022-2026) for the project. The plan includes \$78 million as part of the Rebuild Illinois capital program. These funds have been appropriated to IDOT from the Multi-Modal Transportation Bond Fund for grading crossing protection or grade separation projects as ordered by the ICC.

“To this day I remain amazed and thankful that no one was killed in that horrific 2005 crash. This is a long time coming and vital to the safety of the thousands of people who make this crossing daily by car and train. This investment will make our community safer,” **said Senate President Don Harmon (D-39th).**

“I am appreciative of and encouraged by the wide-ranging support that this project has already engendered,” **said Elmwood Park Village President Angelo "Skip" Saviano.** "Not only have we received this funding from the ICC, but we have received support from federal agencies, IDOT, and Cook

County. We look forward to our continued partnership with these agencies as we assist IDOT in its completion of the mandate from the NTSB to construct a grade separation at this crossing. We all recognize that this project benefits the safety and commerce of the entire region.”

The estimated total cost for Phase 2 Engineering is \$4,500,000. Under the Stipulated Agreement and Commission Order, the Village of Elmwood Park (\$1.4M) and Multi-Model Transportation Bond Fund (\$3.1M) will divide the remaining Phase 2 Engineering costs. All work is to be completed by December 31, 2024.

2021 is the ICC’s sesquicentennial anniversary of its earliest origins as the Railroad and Warehouse Commission and rail safety efforts in Illinois.

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