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CSX Tunnel Draft EIS Is Wrong and Must be Revised

In comments to DDOT and the Federal Highway Administration, Monte Edwards, Vice Chair of the Committee of 100, called for a Revised Environmental Impact Statement on the CSX Virginia Avenue Tunnel citing three major problems. “The Draft Environmental Impact Statement, prepared by a consultant and issued by the District Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, should be *substantially revised* because it is incomplete, contains false statements and is biased in favor of the proposed multiyear, open trench continued-freight-traffic project, ignoring existing low-impact alternative rail routes,” said Edwards.

http://www.committeef100.net/download/transportation/commuter_passenger_and_freight_rail/2014-02-27%20C100%20Supplemental%20Comments%20Requesting%20a%20CSX%20Rerouting%20VA%20Ave%20Tunnel.pdf
<http://dcsaferail.org/csx-using-facts-that-are-just-plain-wrong-to-justify-vat-plans/>

The DEIS claims that CSX’s ability to operate on the tracks of another railroad is not feasible because they are only used in emergencies and that negotiating a 2+-year operating agreement would be very difficult. This is false. Right now, 20% of the tracks on which CSX operates in Virginia alone are owned by other railroads with arrangements that are set for as long as 10 years.

Second, the DEIS cites single-tracking, inadequate sidings and significant vertical and horizontal curves as physical limits on possible alternative routes, ignoring the elimination of these problems in a multi-million-dollar project funded by the Commonwealth of Virginia and completed years before the DEIS was issued. The alternative routing analysis in the DEIS is based on erroneous, false, and misleading information. The C100 urges DDOT and FHWA, under the leadership of the Mayor and other officials, to hire new consultants to correct this information in a revised DEIS.

A third glaring hole in the DEIS is its failure to discuss the effect the new tunnel will have on the expansion of passenger traffic, both for commuters and Amtrak. Because it will be double-tracked and tall enough for double-decked cars, the new CSX tunnel will handle as many a four times more trains. This increased freight traffic will create a chokepoint in Southwest where passenger, commuter and freight rail merge; and a bottleneck at the Long Rail Bridge. Because CSX owns the tracks, the company will naturally give preference to its freight trains, thus limiting passenger traffic. Without the planned increase in commuter rail, there cannot be a reduction in the two-thirds of cars in the District on weekdays driven by commuters, nor a reduction in the parking, congestion, higher energy consumption per mile and air pollution problems cars generate.
