



July 2, 2014

The Honorable Vincent C. Gray  
Executive Office of the Mayor  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 316  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mayor Gray:

On January 16<sup>th</sup>, you joined more than 400 District residents who expressed ongoing concerns about CSX's plan to expand and shift the Virginia Avenue Tunnel beyond its current right of way and vastly increase the amount of freight—including Bakken crude oil and other hazardous materials—through the District.

During this meeting, you promised District residents that “there is no way that we are going to allow people’s safety and security concerns to be compromised.” The recently released Final Environmental Impact Statement announced a preferred alternative with trains running through a partially open construction trench paired with an increase of hazardous materials shipments through the District. The derailment threat remains real, and the District’s safety and security concerns remain unaddressed. Therefore, we are asking you to uphold your promise.

In addition to the very real safety and security concerns, CSX’s proposal harms the District by frustrating any attempt to expand passenger and commuter rail for generations. This is why the DC Council has funded in its FY2015 budget a comprehensive Rail Plan to ensure that all modes of rail (passenger, commuter, and freight) can co-exist as they expand. Allowing CSX’s rushed attempt to break ground will render this contemplated Rail Plan meaningless and stymie future efforts to get cars off the road and curb air pollution.

Therefore, we are asking that you direct DDOT to withhold final approval for CSX’s proposed freight expansion unless and until:

1. CSX addresses the community’s ongoing safety concerns; and
2. The budgeted Rail Plan has been successfully completed.

Mayor Gray, you serve a direct role in deciding the fate of the District and our community. You have every right—in fact, the duty—to withhold approval for this project until these conditions have been met. The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 in no way mandates that a project be forced upon a community without its consent. NEPA does not place any restriction on your ability to enforce DC laws. We look forward to seeing your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,

Natalie Skidmore  
DCSafeRail.org

cc: DDOT Director Mathew Brown  
DC Councilmembers  
DC Council staff