



For Release: July 23rd, 2014

Contact: Natalie Skidmore, 202.657.1911, Twitter @DCSafeRail, Facebook.com/DCSafeRail

DC Council Sets Oversight Hearing on CSX Tunnel

Residents Thank Councilmembers Mendelson, Cheh

In response to numerous requests by residents and DCSafeRail, Chairman Phil Mendelson and Councilmember Mary Cheh have scheduled a DC Council hearing for August 26 on CSX's multi-year proposal to expand and shift the Virginia Avenue Tunnel that goes through the heart of the expanding business and residential neighborhood in southeast.

“We want to express our deep appreciation to Chairman Mendelson and Councilmember Cheh for holding this unusual summer hearing,” said resident and DCSafeRail member, Jennifer McPhillips. “This will finally be an opportunity to explore the many questions that we have raised about CSX's proposal, including the inherent danger of trains running through a partially open construction trench for many years, how the additional freight traffic - including some Bakken crude oil and other hazardous materials - will impact the planned expansion of passenger and commuter service in the District, and why the government cut corners in its rush to judgment during the environmental review.”

The hearing will also likely explore the role of pre-approvals and other promises made behind closed doors by government officials beginning in 2010, which only just came to light last month when the Federal Highway Administration/U.S. Department of Transportation and the District Department of Transportation issued the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

“This oversight hearing gives the DC Council an opportunity to request that DDOT's final decision be put on hold until the Council's own comprehensive rail service study is completed,” added McPhillips. “With the Council kicking off the District Rail Plan process in the coming days, no decision on the tunnel should be made until we look at all the options, understand all the facts, and ensure the best interests of the District are truly being considered.”

+++++

DCSR is a coalition of citizens, organizations, and elected officials asking for accountability and oversight in ensuring the community's health, safety, and security in the Virginia Avenue Tunnel expansion project.