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NBC4 Spotlights Wide Hazmat Threat from CSX Expansion & Murky Money Trail between CSX and DDOT

Chairman Mendelson Calls for Rerouting Around District

In the three-part I-Team series that aired on January 7th and 8th, NBC4 Investigative Reporter Tisha Thompson highlighted the huge blast and evacuation zone for hazardous cargo that CSX routinely carries through the District. The evacuation zone is a mile-wide for materials - including molten sulfur, ammonium nitrate, and molten phenol - that the I-Team spotted on CSX trains traveling through the city's monument core. That evacuation zone includes the U.S. Capitol, numerous federal buildings, national landmarks on the Mall, 395, 295, and 10 metro stations. Hazardous materials will travel through the District in much greater quantities, and at higher speeds, if CSX is allowed to build new twin tunnels in southeast.

The I-Team also found a murky money trail between CSX and the District Department of Transportation. DDOT refused to explain inconsistencies in the documents that it provided in response to the I-Team's Freedom of Information Act Request. That prompted Council Chairman Phil Mendelson to recall DDOT's "gag order" restricting witnesses at Council hearings about the CSX expansion.

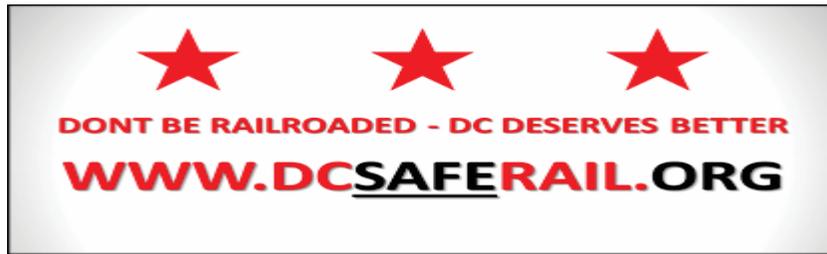
Chairman Mendelson told Thompson that these chemicals shouldn't move through the city at all. "It does not have to come through here," he said. "It's not that complicated. Just reroute that hazardous material which has an evacuation area that includes the Capitol." The Council is trying to reduce risks through rail safety legislation introduced on January 6 by Councilmembers Mary Cheh (who chairs the transportation committee), Charles Allen (whose Ward 6 includes the CSX tunnel), and David Grosso (at-large). The Council is also preparing a District Rail Plan.

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City has sued to stop the CSX expansion, saying that the environmental review process and the hidden grant of new right of way to CSX violated federal and city law. The lawsuit will examine DDOT's pre-approval of the expansion, before the environmental review had even begun, and the exchanges of money between CSX and DDOT.

On February 17, the court will hear arguments about the C100's motion for a preliminary injunction to halt permits and construction for the CSX twin tunnels pending the final outcome of the litigation.

Links to the entire NBC4 I-Team Series, and a map of the evacuation zone, are available at <http://dcsaferail.org/nbc-4-investigative-report-shows-csx-rails-pose-hazmat-risks-to-dc/>

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 CSX Tunnel expansion project.



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