

March 11, 2014

**VIA E-MAIL**

Mayor Vincent C. Gray  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Suite 316  
Washington, DC 20004  
Email: eom@dc.gov

Dear Mayor Gray:

During a regularly scheduled and properly noticed meeting of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6B (“ANC6B”) on March 11, 2014, ANC6B voted 9-0 to send this letter.

**ANC6B writes to convey its position about the proposed Virginia Avenue Tunnel (“VAT”) project. We have serious concerns about the VAT project proposed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (“DEIS”), and we urge you to ensure those concerns are adequately addressed before the District issues the requisite approvals for the project.**

Despite the significant impact it will have on our neighborhood, ANC6B did not reflexively oppose the VAT project. To the extent trains will continue to travel under our community, ANC6B believes that updates should be made to address any safety issues in the century-old tunnel. However, ANC6B has serious concerns about this project, which it outlined in comments (attached) submitted in response to the DEIS. ANC6B’s comments, among other things:

- Opposed the project duration in one of the four alternatives (Alternative 4 - up to 66 months) as “unacceptable” in length.
- Expressed concern about and/or noted inconsistencies in: the draft Maintenance of Traffic plan; the borders of the Limits of Disturbance; the noise analysis; and the vibration analysis, including its failure to account for the fact that buildings in “Lower 8<sup>th</sup> Street” contribute to the Capitol Hill Historic District.
- Explained that ANC6B would likely have opposed the project but for the commitment to keep open the north-south crossings of Virginia Avenue and the 6<sup>th</sup> Street freeway off-ramp for the duration of the project.
- Requested more information about mitigation, including regarding rodent control, dust control, utility outages, and parking.
- Requested post-construction restorations, including for Virginia Avenue Park, Garfield Park, and the north side of Virginia Avenue.
- Requested that a formal complaint process be established for residents and businesses to pursue compliance with the requirements and limitations in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (“FEIS”), and that a community group be created to advise CSX throughout the duration of the project.

If ANC6B's concerns are not addressed in the FEIS or through some other enforceable mechanism, ANC6B may end up opposing the VAT project. We hope, however, that these concerns will be addressed so the VAT project will be started and completed expeditiously, as important development in our community is on hold pending clarity on and/or completion of this project.

We would also like to take this opportunity to note ANC6B's concern about shortcomings in the DEIS identified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA"). ANC6B did not have the benefit of the EPA's opinions when ANC6B submitted its own comments. The EPA stated that the DEIS failed to adequately analyze the health and safety impacts that may disproportionately impact children. The EPA recommended "that the [FEIS] include an evaluation of potential direct, indirect and cumulative health impacts of the project that may have a disproportionate effect on children's health." The EPA also recommended, among other things, that: dust be controlled through a Construction Environmental Protection Program that includes spraying of a non-hazardous suppressing agent on dust piles; construction vehicles use technologies to reduce emissions; and unnecessary idling of diesel-powered trucks be limited to three minutes. ANC6B defers to the EPA's expertise on these matters and supports their recommendations. We encourage the Mayor's office and DDOT to work with the EPA to ensure that this project proceeds in a safe and environmentally sensitive manner.

Finally, since ANC6B commented in September 2013, we have increasingly heard concerns from neighbors living near the project about potentially hazardous material being transported through the tunnel. These neighbors are concerned that bringing certain materials through a densely populated community is ill-advised under any circumstances, and that the risk of an accident is increased when the materials are transported on tracks adjacent to an active construction site. Although some of the concerns about hazardous material seem reasonable, ANC6B's ability to analyze the safety risks associated with rail transportation of these materials is limited. We therefore ask that your office and DDOT work with railroad and safety experts to ensure that the proper safety precautions have been taken before approving this project, which may include limitations on what is transported through the tunnel during the construction. And we request that a clear statement be issued, either in the FEIS or elsewhere, about what CSX is permitted to transport through the tunnel, to clarify for residents what may be traveling under their neighborhood.

If you have any questions about this letter or ANC6B's position, please contact Commissioner Kirsten Oldenburg, ANC6B Transportation Committee Chair, at 202-546-8542 or [kirsten6b04@anc6b.org](mailto:kirsten6b04@anc6b.org)

Sincerely,

Brian Flahaven  
Chair, ANC6B

Attachment

CC: Christopher Murphy, Chief of Staff to the Mayor  
Terry Bellamy, DDOT  
Faisal Hameed, DDOT  
Michael Hicks, FHWA  
Joseph Lawson, FHWA  
Stephen Flippin, CSX  
Councilmember Tommy Wells