



*Reservoir Hill . . . A Community Blooming With Opportunity!*

February 21, 2016

B&P Tunnel Project  
81 W Mosher Street  
Baltimore, MD 21217

To B&P Tunnel Project Management:

I am writing on behalf of the board of directors of Reservoir Hill Improvement Council to express our concerns regarding the B&P Tunnel project and our objections to the project as currently proposed. The Reservoir Hill improvement Council (RHIC) has worked on behalf of the residents of Reservoir Hill since 1993. The organization has long been a central part of the community, developing a wide range of partnerships around the city, and establishing a track record of bringing investment into the community. Arguably, RHIC's office receives input from more segments of the community than any other organization. This gives us the responsibility of speaking about matters that impact the well-being of Reservoir Hill and articulating the concerns we hear.

Reservoir Hill is a residential neighborhood of ~5600 residents. The neighborhood is experiencing a renaissance with significant investment in our neighborhood elementary school (John Eager Howard), rising homeownership and residency rates together with significant property renovation, and the creation of the Whitelock Community Farm in the center of the neighborhood, bringing together residents toward the goal of improving health outcomes by addressing the lack of available fresh food. The B&P Tunnel Project threatens the stability and health of Reservoir Hill and further underscores decades-old feelings that this racially and ethnically diverse neighborhood is expendable in the eyes of outside interests.

As a residential community, we have several concerns about the tunnel as currently proposed:

- 1) The tunnel plan calls for a Vent Stack Facility to be placed in the center of the neighborhood on the site of a community park that was dedicated last year after years of work and community building. It is unclear how much noise will continually be made by this facility but it is acknowledged that there will be some level of constant noise from the sound of the ventilating fans. In a residential neighborhood with limited traffic, the noise will be disruptive and invasive to local residents. In addition, the site of the Vent Stack Facility on the community park will not only destroy the park itself, but will also destroy the adjacent community farm by reducing sun exposure and potentially venting toxic particles in the vicinity.

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*Representing the Neighborhoods and Friends of Reservoir Hill*

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- 2) The current plan does not include any filtering of particles or fumes from the Vent Stack Facility to protect neighborhood residents from the fumes that will be released during normal operations. Should there ever be an accident resulting in toxic materials being released, there will be no protections for local residents as outlined in the proposal. Regardless of cost, the Vent Stack Facility should be located in an area more appropriate for its presence, such as an industrial or commercial area. In addition, safeguards and filtering need to be incorporated to protect the local environment.
- 3) The current plan calls for four tunnels, high enough to allow for double-stacked freight cars. The tunnels will serve both passenger and freight rail, which diverges from the originally presented plan to bring two single-level tunnels through the area, for passenger train use only. Little or no information has been provided about the nature and potential dangers of the freight to be transported. The plan currently states that oil, gas, toxic chemicals, and potentially radioactive material may pass through the tunnels at high rates of speed. The prospect of a potentially catastrophic crash inside the tunnel must be addressed, particularly given that the DOT111 Tank cars used to transport crude oil have an established history of failure in the event of accidents. Such an accident could release toxic fumes, damage property, and cause injuries and death to local residents. Currently, no information has been given about safeguards to protect against this possibility or an emergency response plan should an accident occur. When challenged on this question, project spokespeople have only indicated that hazardous materials must be properly labeled, which clearly does not address residents' concerns about either venting or accidents.
- 4) Both the process of creating the tunnel and the ongoing use and maintenance of a rail tunnel present risks, both known and unknown, to the structural integrity of neighborhood buildings, many of which are more than one hundred years old. Investment in the neighborhood has increased in recent years, with more and more families moving into the neighborhood. They are depending on their investments to grow over time. With the potential for property damage in the short and long term, and with unknown environmental impacts, property owners are likely to find their investments losing value. The current plan indicates no willingness to protect the investments of homeowners should their properties be damaged or lose value as a result of the tunnel project. This is a particularly prevalent issue for property owners in the immediate vicinity of the Vent Stack Facility and those on the side of the neighborhood closest to Penn Station, where the tunnel will be closer to the surface and therefore closer to their homes' foundations.

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As residents of Baltimore City, we understand the importance of supporting our local economy and infrastructure. We understand that moving more freight through the Port of Baltimore has the potential to add jobs and support local residents, and that increasing high speed rail access has benefits for commuters and freight movers alike. We have no desire to stand in the way of safe progress that benefits the city we all call home. However, the well-being and safety of the residents of Reservoir Hill cannot be sacrificed for any economic gain, nor can we quietly accept the risks to our homes and our lives while receiving no direct benefits and little to no assurances of safety. Other options that do not run the tunnel substantially under any neighborhoods should be pursued, including options to align the tunnel's path with an existing major traffic thoroughfare.

We ask that the B&P Tunnel project not move forward until environmental studies are fully completed, risks safely addressed, and a plan is created to ensure the safety, well-being, and economic stability of the Reservoir Hill community and all neighborhoods in the path of the train tunnels.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Karen V. Brown".

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Rev. Dr. Karen V. Brown  
President - RHIC Board  
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