



Office of Mayor Betsy Hodges

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September 21, 2017

Alene Tchourumoff, Chair
Metropolitan Council
390 Robert Street N.
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: Proposed Barrier Wall for Southwest Light Rail Transit Project, Supplemental EIS

Dear Ms. Tchourumoff:

We have been working with the Metropolitan Council for many years on the Southwest Light Rail Transit project. We have worked hard to encourage design of a project that serves the metropolitan area and, at the same time, benefits the communities through which it runs and is fair to the immediate neighborhoods through which it passes. We have continued to consult with your agency despite large and unwelcome changes to the project, including the co-location of LRT and freight rail, which our residents had earlier been promised would not occur, and despite the fact that moving freight rail out of the corridor was proven by the Met Council's own consultant to be technically and financially feasible.

In 2014 the City of Minneapolis entered into various Memorandums of Understanding and had an understanding with the Metropolitan Council regarding the basic design of the project. Despite that existing understanding, we are now being told that a substantial barrier wall, not part of prior plans, is being considered for inclusion between the light rail and freight rail in the area between Bryn Mawr Station and Royalston/Farmer's Market Station. We find the proposal for this substantial barrier wall to be a significant and substantial change to the design that was established in 2014.

As elected officials representing residents of Minneapolis, we are surprised at the lack of information about the proposed barrier wall that has been provided to us. We are also surprised about the lack of a public process and open community engagement about a subject that is important to our residents.

City staff have been in contact with Met Council staff and some questions about the wall have been answered. While the response from your staff implies that many other questions may eventually be answered, that provides no reassurance to our constituents who know that full answers to all these questions should have been provided before, not after, the vote by the Met Council to approve the barrier wall. The Met Council's decision to vote first and provide answers after undermines confidence.

We understand that the FTA will ultimately direct the Met Council as to what questions they believe must be answered. Additionally, the Council is required to comply with state and federal rules on environmental review. More importantly, there is a public obligation on the part of the Council as a state entity to provide timely answers and information to state and local policy makers and the public and to ensure that our City and our environment are protected. We, as elected local and state officials, call upon the Met Council to not wait to be instructed and commit on its own accord to promptly prepare a Supplemental EIS regarding the construction and use of the proposed barrier wall and its impacts upon the community and the various users of the corridor.

Furthermore, we are deeply concerned about provisions in the rail agreement that put the Met Council in the principal position of usurping local authority and control and requiring the Agency to file lawsuits against its own partners, municipal governments, at the behest of railroad companies -- private, profit motivated entities. Having

not been able to read the actual agreement, but only Met Council staff's descriptions of it, we cannot confirm the situation. Again, this provision comes under the cover of secretive negotiations between agency staff and corporate employees, with totally inadequate notice to the citizens of this region, nor their elected representatives.

While nothing can be done to provide information to the public before the Met Council's vote, a Supplemental EIS is the best remaining tool to reassure the public that the right questions will ultimately be answered. This is a public project that requires disclosure of all the information connected with the proposed and substantial barrier wall, arrangements for private preemption of local authority, as well as clear disclosure of the impacts that such a wall and these agreements may have on the surrounding community.

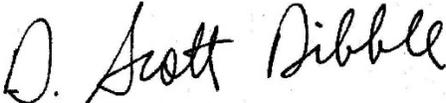
Sincerely,



Betsy Hodges
Mayor of Minneapolis



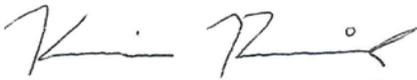
Frank Hornstein
State Representative, District 61A



Scott Dibble
State Senator, District 61



Lisa Goodman
Minneapolis City Council Member, Ward 7



Kevin Reich
Minneapolis City Council Member, Ward 1



Lisa Bender
Minneapolis City Council Member, Ward 10



Cam Gordon
Minneapolis City Council Member, Ward 2

Cc: Brian Lamb, General Manager, Metro Transit
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