

September 8, 2024

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

As a resident of the Reservoir Hill community, I am writing in strong opposition to Bills 24-0562, 24-0563, 24-0564, 24-0565 and 24-0566.

The passage of these bills will mean that the City Council is approving the illegal sale of land to further the unlawful B&P Tunnel Replacement Program, also known as the Frederick Douglass Replacement Program by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (“Amtrak”).

Amtrak will be using the right of way to this public land to further inequality along the new alignment. This disregard of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is currently under investigation by the Federal Railroad Administration (Complaint No. 2024-0258). Selling land to Amtrak before a finding is made is aiding and abetting Amtrak in disregarding our constitutional rights as a community.

Further, Amtrak has not fulfilled their obligations to Section 106 and Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Thus, selling land to Amtrak before they have fulfilled their obligations is not only waving the rights of citizens and the city to preserve the historic character of our communities, but also failing to protect one of the oldest buildings along the alignment, which is also city owned, 2001 Park Avenue.

Additionally, Amtrak has had a dismal record of community engagement, which has been publicly noted in the press, to our representatives and in official complaints. It’s Amtrak’s legal obligation to clearly share with impacted community members why these purchases should be allowed by our city government, while disregarding the concerns of its citizens.

Finally, Amtrak does not value Baltimore City as I do. Amtrak has sent numerous letters to community members offering the purchase of their subterranean rights well below the fair market value for land as evaluated by the State of Maryland. As members of the Ways and Means Committee, we beg that you oppose any effort by Amtrak to dispossess and undervalue the land of citizens of this city.

Our communities advocate for equitable and inclusive public transportation infrastructure. By voting to approve this project, you would be ensuring a continuation of inequitable transportation planning. The City Council has the unique opportunity to plan for a more equitable future. We call on you to be pro-transit and anti-racist. Please protect the citizens of Baltimore and ensure the least amount of harm to our communities now and in the future.

Thank you,

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