



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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LOWELL D. KERN
Chair

JESSE R. BODINE
District Manager

July 28, 2021

Western Rail Yard Infrastructure Project
c/o FHI Studio
416 Asylum Street
Hartford, CT 06103

Re: Comments on Draft EIS and Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation

To Whom It May Concern:

On July 14, 2021, Manhattan Community Board 4's (MCB4) Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee held a public hearing on the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and draft section 4(f) evaluation for the Western Railyard (WRY) Infrastructure Project.

At its Full Board meeting on July 28th, MCB4, by a vote of 35 in favor, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions, and 0 present but not eligible to vote, MCB4 recommended the following concerns be specified:

1. The encasement tunnel under the Western Rail Yards, as part of the Gateway project for the new Hudson River tunnel, must be designed and built to allow multiple rail options to expand rail service to and through Penn Station; and,
2. The Gateway Project tunnels should not preclude any options available for the best and most efficient expansion of Penn Station that preserves affordable housing and jobs.

Background

WRY Tenant LLC (affiliated with The Related Companies, LP) and Amtrak are partnering in a joint venture to seek federal assistance through a loan program, or an available grant program administered by the United States Department of Transportation.

The joint venture includes the construction and operation of a structural platform and a railroad right-of-way preservation tunnel encasement. The structural platform allows for privately funded

mixed-use development and public open space previously adopted by the New York City Council into the applicable local zoning. The tunnel encasement preserves the right-of-way for new rail infrastructure.

Tunnel Encasement

The Board understands that the design of encasement tunnel and tracks under the Western Rail Yards could limit the options for the design and placement of the new Penn Extension. This casement design should not preclude any of the options for the expansion of Penn Station including through-running of tracks to the east; connections to tracks at levels below the current platform levels; and connections to both the north and south of the existing tracks.

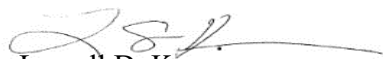
The availability of such options will have a drastic impact, not only on the station's efficiency but on whether or not two dense blocks of Midtown Manhattan, which house 120 low-income residences and a myriad of small businesses employing over 10,000 workers, will be razed. Historic resources on the blocks — a Catholic church and the last building of the original Penn station — may or may not be preserved.

Community Benefit

In July 2009, when MCB4 commented on the Western Rail Yard Rezoning that would trigger this infrastructure project, it advocated for community benefits to mitigate the radical development contemplated over the Hudson Yards rail yards (comprising Eastern Rail Yard and Western Rail Yard). As one of the community benefits, MCB4 insisted that 27% of residential development be affordable and that housing be permanently affordable. The finances at the time ruled out the possibility of permanent affordability. Given that a federal loan may now be added to the finances of the development, consideration should be given to making the affordable housing permanent.

MCB4 thanks everyone associated with this project and with the draft EIS for their hard work and their consultation with the Board.

Sincerely,



Lowell D. Kern

Chair

Manhattan Community Board 4



Jean-Daniel

Chair

Clinton/Hell's Kitchen Land Use Committee

cc: Hon. Jerry Nadler, U.S. Congress
Hon. Robert Jackson, New York State Senate
Hon. Brad Hoylman, New York State Senate
Hon. Richard Gottfried, New York State Assembly
Hon. Linda Rosenthal, New York State Assembly
Hon. Corey Johnson, Speaker, City Council
Hon. Gale Brewer, Manhattan Borough President