



Working to protect the Mississippi River
and its watershed in the Twin Cities area.

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August 31, 2018

District 1 Community Council
2105 1/2 Old Hudson Rd
St. Paul, MN 55119

RE: Port Authority proposal for Eagle Lake

District 1 Community Council:

Friends of the Mississippi River (FMR) is a local non-profit community-based organization that works to protect and enhance the natural and cultural assets of the Mississippi River and its watershed in the Twin Cities. We have 2,700 active members, 3,200 volunteers and more than 1,800 advocates who care deeply about the river's unique resources. FMR has been an active and ongoing participant in planning for the future of the St. Paul riverfront for 25 years.

We are writing today regarding the Port Authority's proposal to acquire city land, park and wetland on the isthmus between Eagle Lake and Pigs Eye Lake for new rail tracks.

We respectfully request that the District 1 Council solicit further consultation with the proposers and other community stakeholders before making any decisions or recommendations about the proposal. We believe doing so would honor the significance of the site and the communities long-standing vision for the area. It would also allow community members to better understand the full impacts of the project and make an informed decision.

Significance

The proposed area is extremely significant being located along one of the world's great rivers, our internationally significant migratory corridor, our National Park (Mississippi National River and Recreation Area), a Minnesota Critical Area, Pig's Eye Lake Regional Park, city of St. Paul parkland and adjacent to Pig's Eye Island Heron Rookery SNA.

Community Vision

As city staff mentioned at the District's August 21st community meeting, numerous community plans have been done for this area recently as well as over the past few decades. The plans call for improved access to the riverfront parkland and contiguous trails throughout. To honor the significant time community members put into creating these plans, as well as their economic cost to the city, it's important to understand how this proposal would impact those greatly anticipated community visions.

Some of the questions we would like to have answers to before making recommendations about this proposal include:

- How is this proposal going to solve the safety issue that businesses experience along Red Rock Road?
- What recourse does the community have if the safety issue returns?
- What alternatives to this solution have been considered to address safety improvements for workers?
- What are the long-range plans and schematic designs for the Gavilon site? CP Rail's future in the area? Does the Port Authority have a master plan for the area?
- How will Gavilon, CP Rail and Port Authority plans impact community plans for the area?
- How would the ownership structure work between the Port Authority and CP Rail?
- What type of wall or slope would the Port Authority use when filling the wetlands?
- How would public access to Eagle Lake and Pigs Eye Lake be impacted? If there are impacts, how would those be mitigated?
- What would the environmental impacts be? How would they be mitigated?
- What permits will be required before proceeding with this project?

Friends of the Mississippi River is committed to working with District 1 and other stakeholders to better understand the impacts of this proposal as well as to develop informed recommendations about possible mitigation. We urge you to delay your decision timeline for this purpose.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Whitney L. Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Whitney L. Clark
Executive Director