



June 8, 2015

Jeffrey Wilson, Senior Manager - Government & Community Relations  
Chicago Transit Authority  
Strategic Planning, 10th Floor  
Attn: Red-Purple Bypass Project  
567 W. Lake Street  
Chicago, IL 60661

Dear Mr. Wilson:

On behalf of the Hawthorne Neighbors, a branch of the Lake View Citizen's Council, I am writing to voice our organization's **opposition** to the Chicago Transit Authority's proposed Red-Purple Bypass Project as currently designed and described in the Environmental Assessment (May 19, 2015). Though we have concerns related to the overall transit need and public funds being expended for this project, our organization's primary opposition is related to the proposed project's **local community impacts** which include the following:

1. **Use of eminent domain and demolition of 18 properties** – A total of 18 buildings would be acquired for the project. These buildings include small and large residential structures as well as many traditional pre-war commercial and mixed-use buildings. The demolition of the residential structures, especially along Wilton Avenue, will disrupt the lives of neighborhood families that have invested heavily in the community. The demolition of the commercial and mixed use buildings that line Clark Street will create a large void in the continuity of the Clark and Sheffield Street corridors, making them far less pedestrian friendly and affecting both the vibrancy of the area as well as the commercial vitality of nearby businesses. Because of the uncertainty related to the flyover, businesses have closed and reinvestment along Clark Street is currently in a holding pattern. It is likely that additional businesses may close during the 4+ years of anticipated construction. Many of these 18 buildings are being demolished not for the flyover itself, but for a slight straightening of tracks north of School Street.
2. **Difficulty of redevelopment on left over parcels** - One of the most important resources our community has is its stock of pre-war urban buildings. One of the worst things that could happen to the neighborhood would be the creation and proliferation of vacant spaces or surface parking lots. Even with future redevelopment, the planned demolition of many of these buildings along the Clark Street corridor will result in the creation of a void for 5+ years in the heart of the neighborhood. If/when new infrastructure is completed, many of the remaining parcels will be difficult to redevelop based upon both their geometries as well as the fact that per the City's zoning code, new development will need to supply off-street parking, something that none of the existing buildings include today. This off-street parking will result in larger building forms, blank walls on ground floors and additional curb-cuts, all of which greatly affect the pedestrian experience. In addition, the character and quality of many of the existing structures, such as 3334 - 3342 N. Clark will not be matched with the modern standards of articulation and materials typical of infill redevelopment here in Chicago. Once these buildings are gone, they can never be replaced. Renderings of new buildings as shown in the EA are purely conceptual as the CTA is not a developer and has not shown the ability to entice quality transit oriented development on vacant properties that were created as a result of the Brown Line improvement project.
3. **Visual quality of the proposed elevated rail structure** – One of the unique things about the intersection of Clark and School Streets is the how the historic L structure weaves closely between existing buildings, helping to create a sense of place that is unique to Lakeview. The "super sizing" of



the L infrastructure will eliminate this unique sense of character by destroying the buildings adjacent to the tracks. In addition, the poured concrete supports shown in many of the renderings are both unattractive and inelegant and resemble those used in suburban roadway construction. The existing steel supports have much more character and are significantly more transparent than those being proposed. The elevated flyover structure itself is a visual blight and will come to define the neighborhood when viewed from Wilton, School or Clark Streets. The renderings shown by the CTA illustrate what is essentially a highway overpass in the heart of Lakeview that lacks any true sense of beauty, elegance or compatibility with the surrounding context.

4. **Lack of alternatives and stakeholder engagement** – Though alternatives were internally evaluated by the CTA, the community has never had the opportunity to weigh in on the benefits and drawbacks of various infrastructure solutions. What was presented to the community in May of 2014 is essentially the same as what was presented in June 2015. Little to no modifications have been made to the design and community input that was received appears to not have been taken into account. A credible planning or design process would present a series of alternatives aligned with both CTA and community goals, allowing stakeholders to work together to create a preferred alternative. In this case, the design has essentially been presented as a “done deal.”
5. **Lack of local community benefits** – Apart from new transit infrastructure, the CTA has not involved the neighborhood in discussions related to possible community benefits that could be created through this project. Community benefits could include new plaza or park spaces, public art, bicycle or pedestrian paths, colorful, innovative or attractively designed track supports or other elements that could contribute to making this infrastructure project a plus rather than a minus for the neighborhood.

The Red-Purple Bypass Project currently being presented by the CTA is **unacceptable**. If this project is to win the support of the Hawthorne Neighbors and other community groups, a neighborhood-sensitive solution must be developed. The plan must reflect both the needs and desires of the community and the CTA, respect the local context, and integrate transportation with land use, urban design, historic preservation and open space to improve Lakeview and the quality of life of area residents. The only way this can be done is through a process that truly engages residents, business owners, community leaders and other stakeholders in creating a vision, strategies and actions that will lead to **beneficial outcomes**. We welcome the opportunity to work with the CTA moving forward. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments in regards to this letter.

Sincerely,

Adam Rosa, AICP  
President, Hawthorne Neighbors  
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