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CITY OF  
JERSEY CITY

MARIANO VEGA JR.  
Council President



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April 6, 2009

Ms. Anne K. Quinlan  
Acting Secretary  
Surface Transportation Board  
Case Control Unit  
395 E. Street, S.W.  
Washington, DC 20423-0001

Re: Docket No. AB-167(Sub-No. 1189X)

Dear Ms Quinlan:

As Council President and Councilman-at-large of the Jersey City Municipal Council, representing all the 240,000 residents of our City, I am writing to reiterate the requests of great numbers of my constituents for a full Environmental Impact Statement for the Harsimus Branch.

There are numerous environmental issues surrounding abandonment that are not addressed in the current Environmental Assessment. These include but are not limited to all the problems that will result from the demolition of the National-Register-eligible Harsimus Branch Embankment. These problems include not only adverse physical impacts to the historic asset and to others in and outside of the adjacent National Historic Districts but also on flooding, air and noise pollution, disbursement of contaminants, and quality of life. The Branch provides habitat on the Embankment and also west of the Embankment near the Harsimus Cemetery and Waldo; a study should be undertaken so we can understand what species are using these sites.

Further, the City of Jersey City is interested in a continuing transportation role for the Harsimus Branch. We endorsed its use for the East Coast Greenway several years ago and our current Administration has long sought its use for light rail. Our Planning Division is interested in extending the use of light rail for light freight, on a European model; this use is now part of the City's Master Plan. Numerous public uses can co-exist on the site; a good EIS would document the benefits and drawbacks of these and other uses.

Sincerely,

Mariano Vega Jr.  
Council President  
Municipal Council of Jersey City