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**City
of Albany
Common Council**

Chair
Parks, Recreation & Family
Services

Member
General Services, Health &
Environment
Housing and Community
Development

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Albany Convention Center Authority
386 Broadway
Albany, New York 12207

RE: Notice of Acceptance of Albany Convention Center Draft Generic Environmental Statement

Financing: The project should not go forward until all of the financing for the convention center/hotel project is in place. Currently, the project is costing almost \$200 million more than the Albany Convention Center Authority has secured in funding. To begin a project of this magnitude without all of the necessary funding in place is a disservice to the taxpayers of Albany and New York State. If the project is commenced without all of the financing secured it will lead to one of two possibilities: the project is started, but never finished or the project is started and the state, county or city, or any combination of the three will have to develop a financing scheme to raise \$200 million that the citizens of the state, county or city will have to pay for with increased taxes.

Presently, the ACCA is discussing alternative ways to finance the \$400 million project. Any scheme that does not require New York State to pay the full cost of the New York State Convention Center should not be considered as a proper solution to the financing problem that must be solved in order for this project to be completed.

Parking: The proposed plan for the project calls for the removing of hundreds of parking spaces under I787 and moving the users of these parking spaces to Church Street. This may require the establishment of a shuttle service for the displaced drivers in order to get them to their places of employment. Who is going to pay for this service? Furthermore, the removal of the parking on the proposed site will place more stress on the surrounding neighborhoods where commuters to downtown are already taking up scarce on-street parking. This will have a

negative affect on the quality of life of the residents in these neighborhoods.

The DGEIS makes suggestions for the City of Albany to investigate ways to alleviate the parking problems in the City, such as encouraging more car pooling, increasing the use of mass transit, etc., but at the same time, the DGEIS is requiring one parking space for each of the 400 rooms of the proposed convention center hotel. The ACCA should take its own advice and require conventioners to car pool and take mass transit, thus cutting back on the number of parking spaces needed for the proposed hotel. It is not fair to ask workers who come to Albany five days a week to sacrifice their convenient parking so that conventioners visiting Albany for one, two or three days out of the entire year will not be inconvenienced by having to walk a short distance to the convention center and/or hotel. The ACCA must do further study on the parking issues and the negative affect removing hundreds of parking spaces will have on the neighborhoods adjacent to the project.

Air Pollution: The City of Albany received a “D” for air quality from the American Lung Association last year. This was an improvement from the “F” rating the City had been receiving over the past few years. The DGEIS uses air quality numbers from Loudonville, a nice community that does not have the vehicle traffic that downtown Albany has. I suggest that the American Lung Association studies be used in determining the air quality for downtown Albany. The ACCA should also consider the affect of adding hundreds of cars into the Church Street area will have on this minority and low-income neighborhood. Environmental justice guidelines which require that minority and low-income communities no longer bear the brunt of unsafe, unhealthy and environmentally dangerous conditions, must be adhered to when the decisions are being made on where to move the hundreds of motor vehicles that are going to lose their parking lots for this project. The Church Street area is already adjacent to I787, railroad tracks and truck traffic into and out of the Port of Albany. To impose additional motor vehicle traffic onto the residents of the Steamboat Square neighborhood is unjust at best, and possibly in violation of environmental justice rules and regulations.

Historic and Archeological Resources: The DGEIS does not give enough details as to what could happen should significant findings be uncovered during the archeological study of the construction phase of the project. 48 and 50 Hudson Avenue must not be injured in anyway. Even the rear additions to these buildings are more than a hundred years old. Perhaps a way to show the different layers of development of these buildings over the past 300 years should be included in the preservation plan for the buildings. These buildings have stood the test of time, will we be able to say the same for the convention center/hotel 300 years from now?

Shuttle Service: The DGEIS refers to the need to offer a shuttle service to the conventioners and trade show attendees. This amenity is necessary in order to make Albany more attractive to the convention center and trade show booking agencies. However, the DGEIS never mentions where the funding for the free shuttle is going to come from. Is it the City of Albany? The County of Albany? The Downtown BID? Who is going to pay for this free service for attendees to conventions and trade shows? A study done by the Common

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Parks, Recreation and Family Services Committee (Calsolaro – Chair) in 2006 found that while there are many programs for youth in the City, there is a lack of transportation to get the youth from their neighborhoods to the programs. Thus, if we are going to fund a “free” shuttle service for one-time visitors to Albany, that same amenity must also be offered to the youth of our city. This community benefit must be made a part of any contract entered into for the provision of the free shuttle service for conventioners and trade show attendees.

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