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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Speakers and parking information for Sunday's Riverfront Rally

GERMANTOWN—A bus shuttle on Sunday will take attendees from Palatine Park in Germantown to the Germantown Waterfront Advisory Committee's riverfront rally at Ernest R. Lasher, Jr. Memorial Park.

The shuttle will be free to attendees and the first takeoff from Palatine Park is scheduled for 11:30 a.m. Sunday. The Earth Day rally, part of an organized response to Amtrak's proposal to install fencing and gates designed to block access to miles of river shore that have long been accessible to river enthusiasts, is scheduled to begin shortly after Noon.

There will be a handicap drop-off area at Lasher Park. If boaters need to access the boat launch, access will be provided. In order to manage space, though, the committee does encourage boaters to find alternative launch sites or join us at the rally via shuttle. Other vehicles will be directed to Palatine Park on Palatine Park Road off Route 9G, with possible overflow parking at Germantown Central School if needed, due to limited parking space at the riverfront park.

A bipartisan slate of speakers for the rally is taking shape. In addition to sportsmen, first responders and environmental advocates, elected officials will offer their views on Amtrak's proposal, which is under review by the New York State Department of State.

Germantown Supervisor Robert Beaury plans to speak on Sunday. "I don't believe Amtrak's proposal for Germantown is consistent with the NYS Coastal Management Program and should be stopped in its tracks," he said this week.

Assemblymember Didi Barrett also plans to speak. "Our communities along the Hudson River have every right to expect public meetings to hear first hand why Amtrak feels these barriers are needed and to share their perspectives and concerns about their threatened river access," she said. "I look forward to joining my constituents at Sunday's rally to help ensure their voices are heard."

New York State Senator Kathy Marchione said, "I strongly and categorically oppose Amtrak's misguided proposal to install nearly 8,600 feet of fencing and gates. This project has elicited numerous local concerns about its expected negative impacts on the quality of life for Columbia County communities. I share these concerns and have serious reservations about how Amtrak's proposal would impair Columbia County first responders and other public safety personnel in water rescues, as they would now have to navigate fencing and gates, extra steps that could delay response times and needlessly endanger public safety."



WATERFRONT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Town of Germantown, NY

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“In addition,” Marchione said, “Amtrak’s proposal would severely limit local access to the Hudson River and would undo years of tradition that allowed for regular access to this critical waterway, as well as affecting the area’s scenic beauty.”

Marchione added, “I am proud to stand with citizens and local elected leaders in Germantown, Livingston, Clermont, Stuyvesant and Stockport in opposing this project.”

Jen Crawford, chairperson of the Germantown Waterfront Advisory Committee, will offer opening remarks at the rally.

“This proposal from Amtrak could not have come at a better time for the town of Germantown: we are already organized and inspired,” Crawford said. “Thanks to a grant from the NYS Department of State, a committee of local volunteers has been studying our waterfront and conducting public visioning sessions for over a year now. This proposal is not consistent with our town’s goals, and it is not consistent with the state’s Coastal Management Program. We’ve done our homework, but Amtrak has not. I’m thoroughly impressed with the dedication and enthusiasm of my fellow Germantownies, and invite everyone else to come hear what we river rats have to say.”

Former longtime Germantown Supervisor George Sharpe, who also has more than fifty years of active firefighter experience, said, “The main point I want to share Sunday is safety to and from the river—‘our poor person’s park’ along our beautiful shore. Maximum safety exists more today than ever before and I have the facts to share and prove that point. Actually the fences and gates will hinder safety.

“Our three parks—Cheviot Park, Anchorage Dock Park, and our Ernest R. Lasher, Jr. Memorial Park (Ernest gave his life in Vietnam fighting a political war, while in the U.S. Army)—all of these parks border the Emergency Rescue Road that runs from North Germantown to Tivoli.”

Sharpe added, “I will give a short history on the safety, the use, the need, the enjoyment, the participation, the beauty and the volunteer effort to keep our—your—park busy and beautiful.”

Jennifer Benson, outreach coordinator for Riverkeeper, plans to speak on Sunday as well.

“As proponents of public access, Riverkeeper shares the concerns expressed by river communities about Amtrak’s proposal for installing gates and or fences along the railroad right-of-way,” Benson said. “For decades, these communities have enjoyed access to the Hudson River and held annual cleanups and restoration projects. They deserve a full opportunity to participate in decision-making processes that affect local quality of life. Public meetings are needed in each municipality where specific data and justifications for the projects can be shared, and questions answered. A 30-day public comment period should begin only after the conclusion of the final public meeting.”

Jeff Anzevino, Scenic Hudson’s director of land use advocacy, will also speak at the rally and said, regarding the proposed Amtrak barriers: “Because the railroad was constructed on fill along the shoreline over 150 years ago, places to enjoy the river are few and far between. Hungering for river access, people found places between the railroad and river to enjoy boating, fishing, windsurfing and iceboating. Amtrak’s proposed gates and fences could prevent these activi-



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ties and be inconsistent with state policies that protect public access and prioritize water-dependent recreational uses.

“Because Amtrak’s application was vague about impacts to public access, several weeks ago Scenic Hudson and many elected officials and stakeholders asked for public meetings in affected municipalities. We haven’t heard back—and now the comment period closes in less than two weeks. We are glad the public comment period was extended to May 1, but because Amtrak still hasn’t provided adequate information, we request that the public comment period be extended indefinitely until public meetings are conducted and such information is provided. “

Citizens have until May 1 to have their voices heard on the matter. Anyone looking to comment to the department of state regarding Amtrak’s proposal can email cr@dos.ny.gov using the subject line “F-2018-0060” and are encouraged to c.c.gates@gtel.net on the comment email, so Germantown has a record of your comments.

Comments by postal mail can be sent to “New York State Department of State, CR F-2018-0060, Office of Planning, Development & Community Infrastructure, One Commerce Plaza, 99 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12231.” So the town has a record, please mail a duplicate of comments to “Amtrak Gates Comments, Town Hall, 50 Palatine Park Road, Germantown, New York 12526.”

Members of the waterfront committee on Sunday will have postcards with address labels, which citizens may use to comment on Amtrak’s proposal to the state, as well as elected representatives. Much more information, including links to press coverage on the issue, can be found at gatesgate.org.

The Village of Castleton-on-Hudson is coordinating with the Germantown committee to hold a rally at the locked gates to their park Sunday as well beginning at Noon.

Anyone interested in volunteering or coordinating for the Earth Day Germantown rally may contact Martin Overington by emailing germantownwaterfrontcommittee@gmail.com.

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