



**Joint Public Hearing on Klingle Valley
Committee of the Whole & Committee on Public Works & the Environment
March 13, 2003**

**Presented by:
Chris Weiss, Director, D.C. Environmental Network
Friends of the Earth**

Thank you Chairman Cropp and Chairman Schwartz and Councilmembers for holding this joint hearing.

My name is Chris Weiss. I serve as Director of the D.C. Environmental Network at Friends of the Earth. Friends of the Earth is a national environmental group with over 1800 members in the Metropolitan Washington region. The D.C. Environmental Network, spearheaded by Friends of the Earth, consists of over 150 environmental, health and civic associations who believe the economic and environmental well being of District residents is tied to successful stewardship of our fragile urban environment.

I am here today to express organizational support for Mayor Williams plan to open Klingle Valley to pedestrians, bicyclists and emergency vehicles and oppose any attempts to make this resource into an unnecessary road.

Keeping Klingle Valley closed to vehicular traffic is good for taxpayers and good for the environment.

- **Keeping Klingle Valley Closed to Traffic is Good for Taxpayers:**

As you know, in September 2002 testimony given to the City Council, Chief Financial Officer Natwar M. Gandhi stated, “Cumulatively, over the FY2003 through FY2006 period, we now estimate that ...total local source revenues will be approximately \$1.3 billion lower than projected.” Just last February the CFO reported that DC faced an additional “\$128 Million in budget pressures” due to decreased revenue estimates and increased demands for mandated programs including snow removal, Medicaid and other court-ordered spending.

Friends of the Earth and over 15 District based civic and environmental organizations responded with the release of the first ever D.C. Green Scissors report. The report highlights more than \$642 million in budget savings that could be attained by ending wasteful transportation projects and sports boondoggles, reforming the property tax system and requiring the beneficiaries of the District’s environmental infrastructure to pay their fair share.

The first of eight recommendations (see chart) is that the District of Columbia save as much as \$4 Million dollars by banning vehicular traffic on Klingle Road. In a recent presentation, Dan Tangherlini, Director of the District Department of Transportation stated that the inflation-adjusted cost of rebuilding Klingle Road is a “whopping” \$5.7 million. The road would cost upwards of \$4 million more than the \$1.45 million cost of converting the road into a recreational trail.

Whether or not we can agree on the environmental benefits or harms of opening up Klingle Valley to vehicular traffic, it is clear to many that the District cannot afford to spend any monies on a new shortcut...especially on a road that operationally, has not existed for over a decade. D.C. has hundreds of miles of open and operational roads District residents rely on, and because of recent storms, will need special attention and significant resources to fix.

Additionally we should not burden low-income residents by continuing to require programs such as Human Support Services, to take disproportionate cuts, as were recently implemented to balance the FY2003 budget.

Table 1
Reductions in the FY 2003 Budget
(\$ in millions)

	Spending Reductions	Share of Allocated Reductions	Share of 2003 Budget
Human Support Services & Other Low-Income Programs*	\$62.7	45%	31.7%
Public Education	36.5	26	27.4
Government Direction & Support	16.5	12	5.1
Public Safety & Justice	15.7	11	18.1
Public Works	5.1	4	8.2
Economic Development & Regulation*	3.5	2	1.4
Unallocated Reductions	55.5	N/A	N/A
Source: DC Council, Committee of the Whole			
* In this analysis, the housing and employment services agencies, which officially are part of the "Economic Development & Regulation" title, are considered as part of the "Human Support Services" title. The housing and employment services agencies largely provide services to low- and moderate-income residents.			

Table taken from: "Dealing with the Deficit: Eliminating DC's \$323 Million Budget Shortfall for 2003 has Meant Substantial Spending Cuts, Notable Revenue Increases," D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute Report, February 11, 2003.

We cannot ignore these "greater" needs in order to build and maintain an unnecessary half-mile stretch of road. Building an expensive road, with our present budget picture, makes no sense.

- **Keeping Klingle Valley Closed to Traffic is Good for the Environment:**

Friends of the Earth believes opening Klingle Valley to vehicular traffic poses significant threats to Klingle Valley and Rock Creek Park's natural environment. Please pay special attention to the numerous District residents who will expand on this important consideration. (I will sum up my remarks in order to save time.)

Friends of the Earth and the D.C. Environmental Network's Green Scissors Campaign thank the Mayor and Council for supporting the principles that District policies should be fiscally responsible and environmentally sound. Continuing to follow these principles when you make your decision on Klingle Valley will benefit D.C. taxpayers in every corner of the city.

Thank you.