

Testimony in Support of Maryland Senate Bill 253

Budget and Taxation and Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

February 5, 2020

Dear Chairman,

I am Brian Almquist from Greenbelt. I am speaking on behalf of Greenbelt Advocates, which is leading a grass-roots campaign to unite residents opposed to the MAGLEV train project.

We support Maryland Senate Bill 253.

SB 253 protects State funds so they can be used to expand current infrastructures (AMTRAK, MARC) which is a more efficient use of State funds.

According to the Final Alternatives Report the project requires a completely new and massive infrastructure which will forever change our communities.

The project will have no meaningful impact on local vehicle traffic. SB 253 protects State funds so they can be used to upgrade our current mass transit system – which will reduce congestion.

The project will not reduce regional automobile traffic or reduce congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. With only three stops, it will not serve intra-regional traffic which makes up the majority of automobile trips in the region.

SB 253 will prevent the use of State funds on a project that consumes large amounts of energy to transport a relatively small number of riders.

According to the Final Alternatives Report, the project will draw power from the **grid**. As expected the train will use electricity from conventional power sources, which are the primary sources in Maryland and the rest of the United States. These conventional power sources include coal and natural gas, which do cause pollution. But even before the train begins to transport passengers, the extensive use of concrete and other materials to construct the infrastructure, the transportation of parts and materials in the supply chain, and the generation of electricity for interrelated processes will consume energy and produce pollution.

According to the Final Alternatives Report the train will consume 30% less energy than other high-speed MAGLEV trains, and 50% less than a commercial airliner. The Report does not provide **estimates of ridership**, which are **critical** to make an accurate comparison of alternative modes of transportation.

SB 253 will prevent State funds from being used to build a massive and unnecessary infrastructure; thus protecting Maryland's natural environment for future generations.

According to the Final Alternatives Report the above-ground portion of the final route would cross or run on open and forested lands adjacent to the BWP and across wetland areas and other resource areas. Wildlife habitat, open space, and forests, which affect our quality of life, do not need to be sacrificed just to get somewhere a few minutes faster. According to the 2018 World Wildlife Fund Living Planet Report ("the Planet Report") transportation is one of the common causes of habitat loss and degradation of natural areas. The Planet Report identifies infrastructure projects as one of the most common pressures causing deforestation and forest degradation.

The project is not economically feasible. SB 253 will protect Maryland residents from a future bailout.

We contend the project is not economically feasible due to low ridership and will end up being a **tax burden** on Maryland residents. The costs to ride the train will eliminate the average commuter or leisure traveler. The Report mentions the project expanding into Boston and New York City, which may be an **early warning** that the company does not expect the limited service between Washington D.C. and Baltimore City to attract a sufficient number of riders to cover the cost. **There are better alternatives for Maryland.**

We would like to see investments in **mass transit systems** that serve all travelers not just the elite traveler, and that use only existing infrastructure to avoid the destruction of precious wildlife habitat, open space, forested lands, and established communities. We contend the project will leave a negative legacy for future generations of Maryland residents.

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