

Title: **LSIA Supports the Maryland General Assembly Senate Bill 253**

Speaker: Dan Woomer, Vice President  
Linthicum-Shipley Improvement Association (LSIA)

Hearing: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee  
West Miller Senate Building  
11 Bladen Street - Room 3  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Date: Wednesday, February 5, 2020

Time: 2:00pm

Summary:

The Linthicum-Shipley Improvement Association (LSIA) joins with Senator Pinsky and Senator Beidle to support this session's Senate Bill 253 – “prohibiting the State and certain units and instrumentalities of the State from using any appropriation for a magnetic levitation transportation system in the State; prohibiting a public or private entity that receives money from the State from authorizing a permit or giving any other form of approval for a magnetic levitation transportation system in the State; prohibiting a proposal for a magnetic levitation transportation system from using certain right-of-way or track owned or operated by certain railroad companies; and generally relating to State appropriations for magnetic levitation transportation systems.”

Testimony:

Good afternoon. My name is Daniel E. Woomer, I'm the Vice President of the Linthicum-Shipley Improvement Association, also known as LSIA. I've lived in Linthicum over 39 years. I'm authorized to speak for our community association.

Thank you for scheduling this hearing and for the opportunity to speak with you in support of Senate Bill 253.

Linthicum, comprising the communities of North Linthicum, Linthicum, Crestwood, Andover Estates, and Linthicum-Shipley is a town located south of Baltimore City, in Anne Arundel County. Our history dates back to the mid-1600's as part of a land grant from England which led to the Linthicum and Shipley families establishing some of the earliest agricultural interests in our County. This farming area has evolved over the past centuries into a residential community. Following the advent of train travel, our community became a place for lawyers, doctors, bankers, and others to move out of the city and into a more open and quiet community. Following WWII, Linthicum evolved into a suburb made up of residences, schools, our own fire station, our own post office, with small, medium and large businesses. Linthicum families typically come to stay, with many families having five or more generations rooted in our community. Of course, the Linthicum and Shipley families have far deeper roots. LSIA represents over 10,000 residents and numerous businesses, and has over 500 active

household members. LSIA is opposed to the building of the SCMagLev and supports Senate Bill 253.

There are four principal reasons LSIA is opposed to building the SCMagLev:

- (1) It does not serve Marylanders, yet destroys our communities and green spaces.
- (2) It will generate Insufficient revenue requiring Government subsidies.
- (3) It will follow previous world experiences with such systems; many of which have failed or are being maintained with large government subsidies.
- (4) The need for other far more higher value transportation infrastructure improvements outweigh wasting funds on building the SCMagLev.

## **(1) SCMagLev Does Not Serve Marylanders, Yet Destroys Our Communities and Green Spaces.**

SCMagLev project will result in the:

- The destruction of swaths of homes, businesses, historic sights, and greenspaces through Prince Georges county with the erection of the elevated sections of the SCMagLev.
- The potential disruption of Anne Arundel aquifers.
- The potential release of toxins, carcinogens, and Radon gas into our communities collected in the SCMagLev tunneled sections through their surface ventilation facilities.
- Concerns of our schools' structures, personnel, and students on the impact of a high-speed oscillating magnetic field train running under them.
- Increased traffic with SCMagLev facilities and track maintenance equipment on I-95 and the BWI Parkway.
- One stop in Anne Arundel County, and no stops in Prince Georges County, virtually no benefit to the residents and businesses in our counties, yet we will carry the burden of the destruction.

## **(2) SCMagLev Will Generate Insufficient Revenue Requiring Government Subsidies.**

LSIA, as many others having followed the SCMagLev project for about two years, do not see how this system will generate the revenues needed to operate and maintain itself without the need for government subsidies. You all, as we, have received mixed signals for the SCMagLev leadership, one time saying all of the funds needed for maintenance and operation (M&O) will be generated by ridership, and another saying, any system like the one proposed requires a private and public support as in the use of tax dollars to provide financial support.

To date, no major public rail system in the world operates without government subsidy. Amtrak is actually one of the best, generating revenues which do cover the majority of its annual maintenance and operation (M&O) costs, and has shown improvement over the past decade, requiring a smaller percentage of M&O to be subsidized.

If ridership is pulled from Amtrak by the SCMagLev, Amtrak revenues will drop requiring

additional subsidies to maintain the Northeast corridor. In effect, taxpayers will be forced to subsidizing two competing systems. Such funds will enrich the private SCMagLev investors, negatively impact existing transportation systems, and pull funding from other needed more critical transportation infrastructure projects.

### **(3) SCMagLev Will Follow Previous World Experiences with Such Systems, Many of Which Have Failed or are Being Maintained with Large Government Subsidies.**

I call your attention to a recent report by Ms. Carol Park, an analyst at the Center for Business and Economic Competitiveness at the Maryland Public Policy Institute titled:

#### **Lessons from Asia for the Northeast SCMagLev.**

To quote Ms. Park - "SCMagLev enthusiasts have been pushing the project despite warnings of significant risks, just like the supporters of the bullet train did in Asia. For instance, the South Korean government built the Seoul-Incheon line despite consistent warnings of inadequate demand. The project was politically, rather than commercially, driven as Korean officials wanted to present a futuristic version of Korea to the international community as part of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics." The line was closed in 2018 after just four years of service because 77 percent of seats were unoccupied.

Germany experimented with building a MagLev train. Following several years of development and building, with large and growing annual government subsidies and the lack of ridership, Germany abandoned the project.

For a current example of over promised and underperformance, look no further than California's experience with high speed rail system, which has become a financial nightmare. Massive overruns, building delays, homes, businesses and private properties taken, and still no working system. The Governor finally "pulled the plug" and the project has been significantly downsized. However, all of the destruction of farms, vineyards, and personal property has occurred. All for nothing.

Ms. Park states: "Supporters of SCMagLev dismiss these concerns. They argue that the success of bullet trains in Japan demonstrate that these hurdles can be overcome. That's exactly what officials in China, Taiwan and South Korea thought, only to discover that the situation in Japan is unique. Most of Japan's 128 million inhabitants live in a few densely populated cities. Many of those residents are rich enough to afford expensive train tickets."

Note, SCMagLev officials have repeated stated that the ticket prices will be similar to Amtrak/Acela.

"Compared to Japan, the situation is the polar opposite in Baltimore, where many of the residents who depend on public transit are low-income workers. If these residents are to commute between Baltimore and D.C., they would need an option that is affordable and easily accessible from their homes." The SCMagLev is neither. Whereas, MARC provides that reliable and cost-effective transportation system: moving well over 8 million passengers into and out of DC annually.

#### **(4) The Need for Other Far High Value Transportation Infrastructure Improvements Outweigh Wasting Funds on Building the SCMagLev.**

Supporters of the SCMagLev state the existing 150-year-old system is out of date and employs obsolete technology. Well, I rode MARC and Amtrak into DC for nearly 30 years, and not once was I on a train that employed a wood fired steam engine. Amtrak and MARC employ modern equipment, running on an upgraded high-speed rail system. Both are purchasing and implementing new, proven, state-of-the-art equipment.

Amtrak has just completed a multi-year Environmental Impact Study (EIS), secured loans totaling \$2.7 Billion, and are actively engaged in upgrading rail, equipment and stations all along the Northeast corridor. Note – This year, Maryland’s own BWI Rail Station has been replaced with a larger, modern, new tech, and improved comfort building. Amtrak is building and testing the next generation of train equipment capable of higher speeds. This information is readily available on the Internet.

Instead of wasting money to build a transportation system that will not serve Marylanders, and take funds needed for transportation infrastructure, LSIA and many others believe it would be far better to invest those funds into Maryland transportation infrastructure.

For example - Look around the room you are in. Everything you see – the structure, paint, electrical, electronics, furniture, the clothes and shoes we are all wearing, all were transported by commercial truck. Maryland commerce requires sound transportation infrastructure to operate efficiently. Such systems draw business to Maryland and improve the economic base of our State. How many Maryland bridges are rated C or lower, and are in need of repair or replacement? Such work would be a far better use of Maryland’s tax dollars than investing in and subsidizing an unnecessary high cost train for the well healed.

AND . . .

We haven’t spoken to security concerns associated with having a 300 plus mile an hour train flying down an elevated section of track, or through a tunnel. What catastrophic results would occur if someone manages to get to the track and execute an attack. Who is going to maintain the security envelop, and how much resources will the State and Counties be required to provide? All costing additional tax dollars better used elsewhere.

I agree with the Center for Business and Economic Competitiveness at the Maryland Public Policy Institute report recommendation – “The Northeast Maglev project should be scrapped before it is too late. There are many transportation priorities that are worthier of attention.”

There are two additional concerns I draw your attention to:

- (1) If built, the SCMagLev will potentially release toxins, carcinogens, and Radon gas into our communities.

- (2) If built, the SCMagLev will expose our school structures, personnel, and students to constant low-level vibration, and low-level oscillating magnetic fields as the train running under them.

Concerns Explained:

- (1) If built, the SCMagLev will potentially release toxins, carcinogens, and Radon gas into our communities.

As described during the 10/16/2017 BWRR-MTA Open House by the Louis Berger professional engineer, the ventilation facilities primary purpose is to clear smoke in case there is a fire in the tunnel. Located every 3 to 4 miles apart along the underground tunneled route, the ventilation units will be forcing air into the tunnel on one side of the tunnel section with smoke, and the next ventilation facility will be exhausting air from the tunnel. In other words, one ventilation facility will be pressurizing the tunnel ahead of the section of the tunnel with smoke, and the alternate ventilation facility will be de-pressurizing the tunnel to exhaust the smoke to the atmosphere.

Here's our concern. The source of a fire will likely be electrical. Such a fire consumes electrical insulation and lubricants. These fuel sources when burned produce both toxic and carcinogen compounds, which according to the planned use of the ventilation system described, will exhaust these dangerous compounds into the atmosphere, exposing the surrounding communities to these unhealthy chemical compounds. Such carcinogen exposure released in the atmosphere can potentially create damaging respiratory effects possibly leading to life threatening scenarios for the residents living by the vents and inhaling these carcinogens. Our question - What is the short, mid and long-term health effect will this have on the affected community? If nothing else, it will have a negative effect on property values. After all, who wants to raise their family next to a facility that may poison them at any time?

As you all know, Anne Arundel and Prince George Counties have naturally occurring Radon gas. Radon gas is a known carcinogen, which is why homes and other buildings are tested across both Anne Arundel County and Prince Georges County. Infiltrating from the ground, this colorless and odorless gas finds its way into building basements through cracks and seams between the basement walls and concrete floor.

During the discussion with the professional engineer from Louis Berger hired to design the SCMagLev build, we asked about water infiltration, drainage and pumped water removal, as the tunneling under Linthicum will likely intersect the aquifer. Also, the question of monitoring and venting naturally occurring gases leaking into the tunnel through the same openings with which ground water enters, as the tunnel will serve as a large collecting system for ground leaching gases as it transits Anne Arundel County 80 to 150 feet below the surface. When these ventilation facilities exhaust into the atmosphere, anyone near these facilities will also be exposed to any radon gas collected in the tunnel. As with all radioactive materials, depending on the intensity of the exposure and length of exposure time determines the severity of the side effects. With that said any low-level exposure whether to radiation over a long time period is sure to have negative effects on the human body that will result in health issues at some level. And like long term exposure to low level radiation, long term exposure to low levels of electromagnetism may also have cumulative health effects on the human body and needs to be evaluated. Our questions – What long-term cumulative health effect will radon gas and electromagnetic exposure have on the affected community as radioactive radon gas is vented

into the atmosphere through the ventilation facilities? What is the long term health impact of exposure to low level oscillating electromagnetic fields as the SCMagLev transit passes under our homes, businesses, schools and their playgrounds?

- (2) If built, the SCMagLev will expose our school structures, personnel, and students to constant low-level vibration, and low-level oscillating magnetic fields as the train running under them.

As the train passes underground below our schools, homes and businesses, what affect will the resulting vibration have on the structures? As you know, masonry structures do not fare well with constant exposure to vibration. Now given, most of our homes and businesses are built upon concrete foundations and masonry walls, continuous exposure to even low-level vibrations will likely have a cumulative effect, to include cracking and then water penetration, negatively impacting the structural integrity of the building.

In Summary:

LSIA has provided a list of reasons why the SCMagLev should be stopped now before Maryland is leveraged into a position where it has no choice to but to make use of our needed tax dollars to directly or indirectly fund the SCMagLev building, Maintenance, operation, and security. Our tax dollars will be better spent to replace, repair and enhance existing transportation infrastructure. LSIA has pointed out the potential of venting toxic, carcinogens and radioactive gas into our communities. LSIA has noted the serious concerns we have with the low-level exposure to radioactive gas and low-level electromagnetic fields and the cumulative health impact these would have on our residents.

And my concluding question:

Are you willing to expose our children to find out what the health effects will be?

Again, thank you for this opportunity to speak before and provide written testimony to your Committee.

Attachments:

- (1) Report from the Center for Business and Economic Competitiveness at the Maryland Public Policy Institute - Lessons from Asia for the Northeast SCMagLev (two pages).
- (2) Certificate of Corporate Resolution for Daniel Woomer to represent the interests of the Linthicum-Shipley Improvement Association, signed by Kevin Plessner, Esq. (one page).

## **Lessons from Asia for the Northeast SCMagLev**

In China, a bullet train crash in the city of Wenzhou in 2011 killed 40 people. The crash was blamed on poor design and mismanagement. In Taiwan, the bullet train system rang up \$1.5 billion in losses over seven years, requiring a \$1 billion government bailout to date. In South Korea, a high-speed rail line connecting Seoul to Incheon closed in 2018 after just four years of service because 77 percent of seats were unoccupied.

Across the Pacific Ocean, supporters of “SCMagLev” in the United States are gearing up to create an American version of the Asian rail disasters. The Northeast Maglev is a proposed magnetic levitation train that would travel at 311 miles per hour, carrying passengers between Baltimore city and Washington in 15 minutes. The Maglev team hopes to start construction on the ostensibly private project in 2020.

SCMagLev enthusiasts have been pushing the project despite warnings of significant risks, just like the supporters of the bullet train did in Asia. For instance, the South Korean government built the Seoul-Incheon line despite consistent warnings of inadequate demand. The project was politically, rather than commercially, driven: Korean officials wanted to present a futuristic version of Korea to the international community as part of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics.

SCMagLev supporters in Maryland have similar non-business motives for backing the project. Baltimore has been experiencing a steady population decline over the years, and many supporters believe that connecting the city to economically vibrant D.C. could reverse that trend. This vision has blinded the advocates to serious concerns about the project.

First, though the project purports to be a private effort, high-speed train projects are generally magnets of questionable government subsidies. “We can’t build our infrastructure 100 percent privately,” said Wayne Rogers, the CEO of Northeast Maglev. Building the SCMagLev line from Baltimore to D.C. is estimated to cost between \$12 billion to \$15 billion (Others believe the cost will be far more). So far only \$5 billion in private investment has been secured for the project, so taxpayers will be on the hook to finance the rest of the project, likely taking funds needed for other far more valuable national infrastructure projects.

Second, it’s highly doubtful the SCMagLev will fail to attract sufficient ridership to make it economically viable. According to SCMagLev officials, the service would target the “elite business travelers” and charge higher prices than Amtrak, which already provides regular rail service between the two cities, and in the process of upgrading their infrastructure, equipment and stations to support faster trains on existing right-of-ways. Just as with the Seoul-Incheon line, there are also numerous bus companies that provide affordable trips along the Baltimore-D.C. route.

Finally, building the Northeast Maglev will inevitably disrupt the communities along the line because of noise and electromagnetic fields, destruction of homes and businesses during the

building of the elevated portions of the line, as well as destruction of remaining green space between Baltimore and DC, and the negative environmental impacts of tunneling, not to mention the hurtling trains. As the planned SCMagLev will only make three stops, the affected residents are unlikely to experience any commercial or economic development in their neighborhood. In short, residents along the route will pay the high price and receive little to no benefit from the SCMagLev.

Supporters of SCMagLev dismiss these concerns. They argue that the success of bullet trains in Japan demonstrate that these hurdles can be overcome. That's exactly what officials in China, Taiwan and South Korea thought, only to discover that the situation in Japan is unique. Most of Japan's 128 million inhabitants live in a few densely populated cities. Many of those residents are rich enough to afford expensive train tickets.

Compared to Japan, the situation is the polar opposite in Baltimore, where many of the residents who depend on public transit are low-income workers. If these residents are to commute between Baltimore and D.C., they would need an option that is affordable and easily accessible from their homes. The SCMagLev is neither. MARC provides that reliable and cost-effective transportation system, that last year moved over 8 million passengers into and out of DC.

The Northeast Maglev project should be scrapped before it is too late. There are many transportation priorities that are worthier of attention.

In early 2018, Baltimore's Metro subway line closed for a month. According to the American Public Transportation Association, the closure was due to the Maryland Transit Administration's lack of expertise and poor communication. Meanwhile, the D.C. Metro system is a never-ending series of service disruptions, crumbling infrastructure and safety failures.

If Maryland wants to improve its transportation system, it should focus on ensuring that its existing projects are safe and managed properly. Whether this is done by restructuring the MTA or by privatizing some of its operations to incentivize better performance, it will not take billions of dollars to ensure that Maryland residents have reliable public transportation.

According to SCMagLev's Chair, Wayne Rogers, "Infrastructure is fundamentally a government responsibility, which has failed." He is right. Many governments across the ocean have failed by partnering with private companies to build trains that turned out to be costly, dangerous, and increasingly reliant on government support. We can avoid recreating the same high-speed catastrophe in North America by abandoning the Northeast Maglev now.

The author of the original article is Carol Park, a senior policy analyst in the Center for Business and Economic Competitiveness at the Maryland Public Policy Institute. She can be reached at [cpark@mdpolicy.org](mailto:cpark@mdpolicy.org).

Source: Park, Carol. "Transportation Lessons from Asia for the Northeast Maglev." December 7, 2018. The Maryland Public Policy Institute. [www.mdpolicy.org/research/detail/lessons-from-asia-for-the-northeast-maglev?fbclid=IwAR2C1sAfojicOFJ7J6jXCqvtGmKADrtVAopQpP7XRZnc38V25p8G5wWp2s4](http://www.mdpolicy.org/research/detail/lessons-from-asia-for-the-northeast-maglev?fbclid=IwAR2C1sAfojicOFJ7J6jXCqvtGmKADrtVAopQpP7XRZnc38V25p8G5wWp2s4).



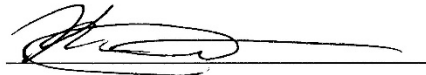
**CERTIFICATE OF CORPORATE RESOLUTION**

I, Kevin M. Plessner, the undersigned, Secretary of Linthicum Shipley Improvement Association, do hereby certify to the Hearing Officer for the State of Maryland that:

- (a) A meeting of the Board of Directors of Linthicum Shipley Improvement Association was duly called and held on September 28, 2017, a quorum being at all times present.
- (b) A Resolution directing “the President of LSIA and all members of the Executive Board to represent that LSIA and its members to all interested parties, including but not limited to the Federal, State and County governments and all private parties, that LSIA is vehemently opposed to all MAGLEV tracks that come within Linthicum or near its boundaries...the President and all Executive Board members are hereby authorized and directed, for and on behalf of LSIA, to perform all additional actions and to execute and deliver any additional instruments” in furtherance of the Corporation’s opposition to MAGLEV.
- (c) Such Resolution is in accordance with and pursuant to the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws of the Corporation.
- (d) Such Resolution is now in full force and effect and has not been revoked or amended in any manner.
- (e) Linthicum Shipley Improvement Association has more than 10,000 persons residing or owning property in Linthicum and the organization itself has more than 500 paid household memberships.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that **Dan Woomeer, Vice President of LSIA**, be and hereby is appointed to speak on behalf of the Corporation at the above-referenced hearing of Senate Bill 0253 in favor of passage of Senate Bill 0253 as currently drafted.

**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I have hereunto subscribed my name and affixed my signature on this thirtieth Day of January 2020.



Secretary, Linthicum Shipley Improvement Association