

Comments to Maryland Senate Finance Committee

Submitted on 1/25/2021, for the committee hearing on 1/27/2021

In support of SB 188, State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System

My name is Kyle Hart, and I am the Mid-Atlantic Field Representative of the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA). These comments are submitted today on behalf of NPCA and our 28,398 members and supporters in Maryland. Today we are submitting comments in support of SB 188, Senator Paul Pinsky's bill banning state appropriations from being used for a Maglev project.

The National Parks Conservation Association is the only national membership organization dedicated to advocacy of behalf of our country's national parks. NPCA's mission is to protect and enhance America's National Park System for present and future generations, a mission we have upheld since NPCA was created by the very first National Park Service Director Stephen Mather in 1919. Maryland is fortunate to be home to 18 national park sites, visited yearly by almost 7 million people and contributing to over \$300 million in economic benefit to the state.

The concept for Magnetic Levitation Trains is a mostly untested and unproven concept as a commuting system. It has been tested in several countries, notably Japan and China, but remains predominately a tourist attraction and not a proven transportation system. Projects for this technology consistently run over budget and over schedule.

As many of you likely know, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for a Maglev train running from Baltimore to Washington D.C. was released last week. The release of this DEIS is the first true attempt to bring this technology to America. However, the DEIS highlights an expensive project with near-certain ridership concerns. The DEIS estimates the project will cost \$12 billion dollars and predicts tickets will cost 7 times as much as the MARC train. A one-way MARC ticket from Baltimore to DC is \$8, making the price of a Maglev one-way ticket \$56. Ridership for Amtrak, MARC, and the DC metro have declined significantly since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. The DEIS also acknowledges that there is "not yet a consensus regarding the long-term impacts" of coronavirus on ridership for transit systems. Thus, it is likely that this project would eventually run into funding concerns.

As currently outlined in the DEIS, this project would bring tremendous harm to parks and local communities throughout the proposed route. While we have not fully reviewed the DEIS, initial readings show that all alternatives would impact National Park Service property, US Fish and Wildlife Service property, and US Department of Agriculture property. Elevated train lines, supported by viaducts, would run alongside the historic Baltimore-Washington Parkway which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, replacing wooded open space with concrete. In addition to the Parkway, Greenbelt Park would lose valuable green space to the Maglev, harming outdoor recreation and important wildlife corridors in an urban setting. Many build alternatives would have forest impacts on Greenbelt Forest Preserve, eliminating much of the buffer between residential areas and the BW Parkway, resulting in runoff that would pollute our rivers and streams. Placement of venting stations, stormwater management systems, and other proposed needs for this project are not clearly delineated in the DEIS, making assessment of impacts impossible.

Finally, the Maglev proposal would disproportionately harm Maryland residents of Prince George's County while not giving them any benefit as the current plan does not give communities along the route any access to the train. Marylanders should not bear the brunt of this expensive experimental project. Senator Pinsky's bill would be a great first step in ensuring that Maryland residents do not get stuck footing the bill for this disastrous boondoggle. Thank you for the opportunity to comment today.