

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a late testimony regarding HB0704.

To the Honorable Chair Barve and all members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

RE: HB0704: Prohibiting a person from constructing a magnetic levitation transportation system within 2 miles of certain property; prohibiting units of State and local government from taking certain actions related to the construction of a Maglev within 2 miles of certain property; establishing that the prohibitions under the Act do not apply if certain approvals have been obtained; authorizing counties to adopt local laws for the use of certain land under certain circumstances; etc

I am writing **in favor of HB0704** for the following reasons:

1. Public lands belong to the people. I believe that protected lands in Maryland are as important to Maryland as the Grand Canyon or the Arctic is to our country. These lands were put aside for specific reasons that do not include benefiting private corporations or facilitating projects that hurt tens of thousands of citizens to benefit just a few, increasing social injustice in the state.
2. Our remaining natural ecosystems are dwindling, and need ever stronger protections. Public lands such as the Greenbelt Forest Preserve, National Park Lands, the Patuxent Wildlife Research Refuge, the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center are essential for Prince Georges County's citizens. Forests and natural green spaces are critical to human health, clean air and clean water, stormwater management, and climate resiliency.
3. The Greenbelt Forest Preserve (like many other protected lands) is the result of many decades of efforts from countless citizens. The threatened portion of the Greenbelt Preserve includes areas designated as Wetland of Special State Concern. Destroying those protected lands will also destroy the trust those citizens have in your commitment to serving them and their families.
4. Destroyed public lands do not get a second chance. The fragile and unique ecosystems found in those protected land will just be gone for ever... On the other hand, existing rail networks can be improved, and become at least as effective as conventional train systems are in other countries (i.e., much better than our US rail system). I hope the state will focus on providing support for significant improvements to existing public transportation systems (rail, buses, metro) i.e., those systems which provide transportation to large numbers of state citizens. Fantasy projects which rely on exaggerated promises will only create a short term buzz of satisfaction from an ephemeral spike of jobs, but no real reduction in road congestion or global energy use, little to no benefit to citizens of Maryland in the present or future, widespread destruction of natural habitat, and the inevitable high cost that will make other more effective projects impossible.

In summary guaranteeing the protection of protected lands is the only option that has clear and certain benefits to the citizens of Prince George's county, today and in the future.

Thank you for your consideration of these points.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Plaisant". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter being a large, stylized capital "P".

February 20, 2021

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