



HB 704
Land Use – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System Siting (Maryland
Stop the Maglev Act of 2021)
Environment and Transportation Committee
Position: Unfavorable

Maryland AGC, the Maryland Chapter of the Associated General Contractors of America, provides professional education, business development, and advocacy for commercial construction companies and vendors, regardless of labor policy. AGC of America is the nation’s largest and oldest trade association for the construction industry. AGC of America represents more than 26,000 firms, including over 6,500 of America’s leading general contractors, and over 9,000 specialty-contracting firms through a nationwide network of chapters. Maryland AGC members include many contractors who construct transportation systems. Maryland AGC opposes HB 704 and respectfully requests the bill be given an unfavorable report.

This bill prohibits the State (or any unit or instrumentality of the State) from using any appropriation for a magnetic levitation (Maglev) transportation system located or to be located in the State. The bill does not apply to expenditures for the salaries of personnel assigned to review permits or other forms of approval for a Maglev transportation system.

As the Fiscal Note points out, HB 704 effectively prohibits the construction of a Maglev system anywhere in Maryland by its inclusion of “protected properties”, so broadly defined as to render any feasible Maglev route untenable. The bill does so regardless of the benefits from its construction, including potentially thousands of construction jobs, and the tax revenues Maryland would realize from income and sales taxes. It does so regardless of the benefits of reduced vehicle traffic and associated accidents and exhaust emissions, and reduced or, practically speaking, eliminated rail accidents. It does so regardless of the benefits to both the Baltimore and Washington DC Metropolitan areas of speedy commuting. It does so without any consideration of alternative financing mechanisms, such as a public-private partnership. Indeed, HB 704 does so without any regard for or consideration of the merits of Maglev or the potential for solutions to issues that opponents may have regarding Maglev.

The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) are in the process of preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate the potential impacts of constructing and operating a Maglev system between Washington, DC and Baltimore, Maryland with an intermediate stop at BWI Airport. There are 13 alternatives moving forward in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). There is a No-Build alternative and 12 Build Alternatives. HB 704 would ban Maglev regardless of the conclusions of the EIS, including potentially positive impacts in reducing global warming.

Decisions about appropriate transportation modalities should be made based on the expert advice of transportation planners and Federal, State, and county transportation professionals. Public policy considerations are always appropriate, but should be based on a complete understanding of all of the relevant factors, pro and con, not *a priori* conclusions. Essentially HB 704 takes the position “my mind is made up; don’t confuse me with the facts.”

Accordingly, Maryland AGC opposes HB 704 and respectfully requests the bill be given an unfavorable report.

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