

Date: 20 February 2024

Subject: Written Testimony in Favor of HB0170 – State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System (Cross-file SB0079)

To: Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

From: Deborah Barrett, longtime resident of Laurel, MD.

I am writing in support of House Bill 170, sponsored by Senator Alonzo Washington.

House Bill 170 would prohibit Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) from appropriating funds from the state of Maryland to build the proposed SCMaglev transportation system, “providing that the prohibition does not apply to certain expenditures for salaries” of state employees. This exception is in response to Northeast Maglev’s concerns that earlier versions of this bill had unintended consequences in that it would inadvertently tie their hands to work with the appropriate state personnel to acquire permits or other required approvals should the project go forward. By including this provision, the bill should be acceptable to BWRR and the Northeast Maglev.

Testimony:

The state’s transportation funding is already facing limitations and funding needs to be allocated toward *urgent and practical projects* – those that will benefit Maryland citizens – *the taxpayers who pay for these projects*. The transportation needs of the state and its residents are for *effective, affordable, and accessible commuter options*. The smartest course of action is to continue upgrading our existing Amtrak and MARC systems.

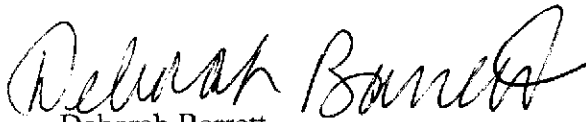
- BWRR and Northeast Maglev claim they want to be able to access state funding “if” they need financial funding later in their project. Projects of this size *always* have cost overruns, and BWRR and Northeast Maglev are *currently* facing loss of federal funding. *State* funds should serve the greater good of Maryland residents.
- If this project were to ever “begin,” it will run out of funding over and over and over again and be *continuously* over budget, becoming a black hole for greater and greater amounts of state funding. The end result? Our financial resources will be seriously compromised *for an unneeded project that will never be completed*. And our precious natural resources will be *forever* damaged – for ABSOLUTELY NO BENEFIT TO ANYONE.
- The NEPA process is currently paused on this project. To move this project to the next level significant work needs to be done, *but the federal funding to allow this is not in place*. In addition, BWRR has been *unable* to demonstrate to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) that the construction of this project will meet MDE’s requirements for *protecting our waterways*. This project will destroy *hundreds of acres of wild green spaces* including a forest preserve, wetlands and wildlife refuge all of which are needed for CO2 storage, clean air and water, and climate cooling.

- The Japanese government has offered to invest in the project, but this puts Maryland at risk of having the Japanese government demanding funds for this project. It is very important to have legislation to impede this.
- And last but not least, **this poses a huge SAFETY concern** for our residents and taxpayers. It is *commercially unproven* technology for which the U.S. *has no safety standards*, yet safety certification is planned for “after construction starts.” (DEIS Appendix G, Part 3, page 4, “Construction can proceed prior to the completion of the Rule of Particular Applicability (RPA), but operation cannot commence without it.”) *Not having safety regulations worked out prior to construction design* makes no sense, and it is *contrary* to the U.S. Department of Transportation policy in its 2020 report, “Pathways to the Future of Transportation,” noting **safety should be the first priority**.
Please do not let BWRR and the Japan financiers use Maryland as a guinea pig.
- **WHAT DO MARYLANDERS NEED?** Our need for far more high-value and equitable transportation infrastructure improvements, such as MARC and Amtrak, far outweighs expending excessive funds on building and operating the SCMaglev.
 - Maryland needs transportation options that dovetail with other options, use similar rail lines, and share ticketing systems.
 - As improvements are completed, Amtrak and MARC project much higher speeds on their lines: investing in Amtrak and MARC makes sense.

Much is on the line in this bill. Maryland’s financial resources, our natural resources of land and water, and the safety of our residents and our communities. Protecting the state from losing funding for much-needed transportation and infrastructure projects throughout the state is the best option.

I strongly recommend that HB0170 be given a **favorable** vote and moved out of committee. For the state economy, our communities, our taxpayers, the environment, and our future!

Sincerely Yours,



Deborah Barrett
10302 Bristolwood Ct.
Laurel, MD 20708
301-953-2253