

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

Submitting: Catherine Plaisant

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: 2.22.2024 at 1:00 p.m.

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

My name is Catherine Plaisant, speaking as an individual. I am writing in support of HB0170, sponsored by Delegate Nicole Williams, because magnetic levitation transportation is a long-rejected impractical technology which – compared to traditional high-speed trains - has no environmental benefits, and lacks the flexibility needed to improve the connectivity of our transportation network.

My objections are inevitably connected to the proposed MAGLEV project. Here are a few:

1) Lack of connectivity

Magnetic levitation transportation systems are a bad choice because they are so inflexible - by design. Lines cannot be shared with a regular train system, even for a few minutes to connect to existing stations. They do not share stations either. Their design is so inflexible that they cannot even bend to use available abandoned industrial land for train yards. **Sensible trains improvements enhance the connectivity of networks, a magnetic levitation transportation system cannot achieve that.**

2) Emissions / energy use

The Federal Railroad Administration found that operating the Proposed Baltimore-Washington Maglev would **increase greenhouse gas emissions**. Compared to the traditional trains (including the standard high-speed trains in used today in the rest of the world) a **magnetic levitation system is an energy hog**.

In addition, the destruction of wild land, reduced carbon sequestration, destruction of streams, pollution of ground water from tunnels, noise pollution, etc. will more than counterbalance the benefit of taking a relatively small number of additional cars removed the road.

3) Cost

All the trains in the world require government subsidies. Having different train systems running in parallel is a financial aberration. Maryland taxpayers will be left to pay for this mistake. Only a few wealthy residents will benefit.

4) Safety

The safety record of Maglev technology is non-existent, despite being an old technology. The MAGLEV project is like a Boeing 737 MAX, ready for a fiasco. In

addition, we have quickly forgotten that terrorism LOVES such high-profile vulnerabilities.

5) Jobs

The only valid comments I have heard in favor of MAGLEV are that jobs would be created, but please remember that **ANY** expensive transportation project creates job, so job creating is not an argument for magnetic levitation. The state should focus on creating **jobs for sensible projects, not magnetic levitation projects.**

6) Ridership estimates

The number of people driving every day from downtown DC to downtown Baltimore is actually very small. Their impact on the overall daily peak-hour congestion on our highways is quite limited. **The estimated ridership of the MAGLEV project is extrapolated from an extremely small number of actual recorded origin-destination trips and therefore highly uncertain, and has been debunked by scientist Dr. Owen Kelley.**

On the other hand, any magnetic transportation system between DC and Baltimore WILL, with absolute certainty:

- Divert funding for the public transportation we use and need to get to work.
- Bulldoze over public lands which should be protected
- Worsen environmental justice if built between DC and Baltimore.
- Reduce the quality of life of a large number of Marylanders (water quality, noise, vibrations, etc.)
- Irreversibly damages lands listed as priority for protection

Refuse to pay for Magnetic Levitation Transportation Systems, **instead** I hope the general assembly will focus on improving **existing infrastructures to improve their capacity.**

To close, I will relate an example of **my experience** with MD public transportation:

While working at the University of Maryland until recently I would take the MARC train in College Park to go to the School of Medicine in Baltimore: an old diesel train arrives, a conductor opens a single door and comes down with a stool for passengers to use. This is slow, polluting, 19th century transportation! MARC may be planned to be improved, but instead we can dramatically revamp the MARC trains and lines, decuple capacity, add more direct services, and attract many new commuters. Who knows... maybe even bring electricity?

I ask that HB 170 be given a favorable vote and moved out of committee.

Sincerely,

Catherine Plaisant, PhD
8G Laurel Hill Rd. Greenbelt MD 20770
301 529-1089