

February 22, 2024

Oral and 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,

My name is Susan Barnett. I am submitting testimony as an individual. I am in support of HB0170, sponsored by Delegate Nicole Williams.

About this bill: This bill 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 directly addresses concerns expressed by Northeast Maglev that a previous version 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.

There are so many reasons this bill should receive a favorable report. Here are just a few:

1. Building and upkeep would be dependent on Japanese resources and expertise. Compare this to the upgraded train cars for Amtrak – being made here in the USA. The SCMaglev will require resources to be produced in Japan and shipped to the USA – a serious expense that Maryland should not be tied to.
2. JOBS: The Northeast Maglev (TNEM) and Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) have yet to disclose how the highly varying job numbers they project were calculated; how many are fulltime or long term, how many will be for local residents vs out of state or out of country jobs. And why these increasing numbers are not correlated to an increase in the cost of building and maintaining the train, the cost of which remains unchanged according to TNEM and BWRR. It leaves one to wonder about their ability to successfully manage the math and other technical aspects of this project!?
3. CLIMATE CHANGE CONCERNS: It has been determined through thorough research that this project will increase GHG. Also, the Baltimore-Washington **SCMAGLEV will require twice the energy per passenger mile as Amtrak**, increasing energy usage by approximately 3.0 trillion additional BTUs per year — enough energy to power around 88,900 homes per year. Research shows, generating the electricity needed to operate the SCMaglev would increase CO2 emissions. As noted in the EIA’s Maryland [Energy] Profile Analysis, Maryland consumes about five times more energy than it produces. Maryland purchases about 80 percent of its energy from surrounding states, as well as fuel from foreign countries. As the cost of electricity is increasing BWRR will want to ask the state for help in paying for this cost.

These are just a few points why this project is on very shaky ground financially and should give this committee reason to protect the state’s financial resources and block the option for these companies to request money.

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

Sincerely,

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