

## **Written Testimony in Support of HB0170 – State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System (Cross-file SB0079)**

February 22, 2024

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

My name is Tom Taylor. I am submitting testimony as an individual, and I am writing 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.

I support this legislation because I am very concerned about the impact that the proposed SC Maglev will have on state finances, the possibility of needing taxpayer funding to support the project, and the significant and detrimental impact the project will have on Maryland’s dwindling amount of green space.

I am particularly concerned about the following:

- I question whether the SCMaglev will generate sufficient revenue for operation and maintenance without public funding. The project sponsors – The Northeast Maglev (TNEM) and Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) – have made conflicting statements about project financing. At one point, they stated that all the funds needed will be generated by ridership, and at another time, that any such system necessitates private and public support. Independent research raises questions about the stated ridership projections. Experience with other such systems elsewhere in the world shows that many have failed or are being maintained with large government subsidies.
- The project is designed to provide high-speed transportation between Washington and Baltimore, with only the one stop at BWI airport in between. Ticket prices are projected to be high, and the service likely will benefit mostly higher-income residents. The project will do little to better the transportation options for ordinary residents and businesses in the state. MARC trains, by comparison, provide a low-cost transportation option to far more Maryland residents. MARC is much more affordable and more accessible. Taxpayer funding would be much better used to improve and expand MARC and other already-existing transportation infrastructure.
- The projected route of SCMaglev would have a strong and damaging environmental impact on a large swath of existing green space located at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC), the Patuxent Research Reserve (PRR), and the Greenbelt Forest Preserve. These tracts of land encompass a significant portion of Maryland’s remaining green space, known as “the lungs of the Chesapeake,” and include streams, forest canopy,

wetlands, wildlife habitat, and other natural systems. These systems are essential for providing climate cooling, CO<sup>2</sup> storage, and ecosystems that help maintain clean water and healthy air. These resources are priceless, and cannot be measured by revenue streams. Industrial-level pollution resulting from the project will further threaten these natural resources.

With these concerns in mind, I ask for your support of HB0170. Maryland should make sure that needed state transportation funding is used to support affordable, accessible transportation infrastructure that benefits all Maryland residents and does no harm to the state's invaluable natural lands.

As the *Lessons from Asia for the Northeast SCMaglev* report recommended: "The Northeast Maglev project should be scrapped before it is too late. There are many transportation priorities that are worthier of attention."

Please give a favorable report on HB0170. Thank you for considering my views.

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