



## GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL

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February 22, 2024

Maryland Senate and House Members:

On behalf of the City of Greenbelt, I offer this written testimony in support of HB0170/SB0079. The proposed SCMAGLEV project has raised significant concerns, particularly around the misallocation of Maryland's state resources which could otherwise improve existing transportation services. Transparency issues regarding the project's financial sustainability, erroneous environmental impact statements, and potential environmental degradation have been highlighted. Additionally, the project's energy inefficiency and unlikely congestion relief are at odds with Maryland's current \$3.3 billion DOT budget shortfall and essential public services. Overall, the project's purported benefits are overshadowed by its financial and ecological implications.

More specifically;

**1) State Resources Would Better Support Our Existing Rail Service.** Any state resources proposed to support the MAGLEV project would be better spent on sustaining and improving existing rail and local transit services. These services include High-speed Amtrak service, the MTA, MARC trains, and WMATA (metro) providing far greater benefits to Marylanders in terms of access and affordability. Much of the access and benefits not proposed to be supported by the MAGLEV project. Substantial public investments to sustain and improve these services will be required in the coming years. Funding for these services; funding for bicycle & pedestrian connections, and ways to move commuters to our transit hubs are the best place to put taxpayer resources.

**2) Incomplete Information and Transparency on Public Information.** The information presented to the public about the MAGLEV so far does not show operating and maintenance costs offsetting revenues. There are several significant unanswered questions remaining regarding the financial viability of the project. Further, while the project was touted as a private venture where no public funds were to be requested, it appears that public funding will be sought after. We feel that if the project is financially viable, then it should be supported by operating revenues and private investment, not needing public monies.

**3) The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Flawed.** The Federal Railroad Administration released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project in 2021. The City performed a thorough review of the project that uncovered a significant number of errors and omissions. An example of one such error is the project's ridership estimates and related

projections (including travel time savings, induced travel, and reliability benefits) are grossly over-inflated, leading to further inflation of estimated congestion relief and projected revenues.

**4) Anticipated Damage to the Environment and Natural Ecosystem.** The MAGLEV project would also destroy sensitive environmental resources and habitats. Including impacting rare, threatened and endangered species and eliminating vast swaths of tree canopy that are treasured by Marylanders. The project could impact nearly 89 acres of wetlands and up to 30 acres of Maryland Nontidal Wetlands of Special State Concern (NTWSSC). These wetlands have exceptional ecological or educational value of statewide significance. The impacts to the NTWSSC located in the Greenbelt Forest Preserve along Goddard Branch are of particular concern to Greenbelt.

**5. Maryland Department of Transportation \$3.3B Deficit.** This year the Maryland Department of Transportation is dealing with a \$3.3B budget shortfall. To solve this shortfall, the Department will cut roughly \$1 billion from its operating budget. Another \$2 billion will be cut from its capital budget. Local governments will see a \$400 million reduction - monies that are critical to local government providing safe roads and sidewalks for our residents and visitors. And while we recognize that the MAGLEV funding may be a few years off, the Transportation Secretary is quoted as saying “This is not a new problem for our state.” The state cannot afford to provide public funding for what has been touted as a private venture, to the detriment of state operations, road/infrastructure and critical local support.

**6. The Project Will Not Relieve Congestion.** Norman Marshall, President and founder of Smart Mobility, Inc., who assisted Greenbelt with its review, stated, “The supposed congestion relief for non-SCMAGLEV travelers will not materialize. Instead, construction of the SCMAGLEV will create a two-tier system with a fast ride for the affluent and negative consequences for everyone else.” The DEIS overestimates travel time savings and reliability benefits by a factor of five or more. Three-quarters of the purported economic benefits of SCMAGLEV are travel time and reliability benefits and these are overestimated by a factor of 15 or more. The other significant economic benefits calculations in the DEIS rest both on inflated ridership and on unreliable vehicle miles traveled (VMT) multipliers.

**7. The Project Is Not “Green” and Energy Friendly.** The project is not “green” nor energy efficient as suggested. It will increase energy consumption by the equivalent of approximately 88,900 homes per year during operations. It is unclear if the regional transmission organization will be able to meet this increased need or what the impacts on reliability and consumer prices may be. This energy demand concern is exacerbated by the fast growth in EV charging needs throughout the state putting additional demands on the electric grid. However, the use of EVs by our residents has a much greater impact on improving environmental quality and the quality of life of our resident and City.

**8. BWRR Withdrawal of Application for Water Quality Certification.** The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) issued a letter stating its intent to deny BWRR’s application for a water quality certification. MDE explains that it lacks sufficient information to determine whether the MAGLEV project will meet Maryland’s water quality standards and therefore intends to deny the certification. It mentions, among other things, uncertainty as to the final design of the project, missing information about anticipated discharges and their impacts,

and deficiencies in stormwater design and the Social and Economic Justification. BWRR then withdrew their application. In MDE's letter acknowledging BWRR's withdrawal, MDE strongly recommended that BWRR wait to reapply for a water quality certification until after federal review of the SCMaglev project under the National Environmental Policy Act resumes and there is more certainty about the final route.

In summary, State resources that could potentially be allocated to the MAGLEV project in the future would be better spent on improving existing rail and local transit services, providing support to Maryland roads and infrastructure and supporting local governments and the services that residents depend on. Maryland taxpayer resources should not be appropriated for a MAGLEV System that undermines the natural resources so many Marylanders are fighting trying to preserve.

On behalf of the City of Greenbelt, we urge you to support HB0170/SB0079.

Sincerely,

Mayor Emmett V. Jordan