



Committee: House Environment and Transportation Committee
Testimony on: HB-0170 – State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System
Organization: Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing
Submitting: Rhonda Kranz
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 22, 2024

Dear Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for accepting our written testimony in support of HB0170. Maryland Legislative Coalition Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 30 grassroots and environmental advocacy organizations focused on climate justice. The bill will bring much-needed protection of public funds by prohibiting the State and certain units and instrumentalities of the State from using any appropriation for a magnetic levitation transportation system in the State; and providing that the prohibition does not apply to certain expenditures for salaries.

Maryland has experienced significant cost overruns in large transportation projects. The Purple Line has encountered major financial problems with a cost overrun of \$1.4 billion. Excessive cost overruns in development of the Inter County Connector cost millions of federal taxpayers' dollars. It is essential that Maryland does not take responsibility for delays and contractual problems if the proposed SCMaglev project is approved. In fact, as the SCMaglev is a Private, rather than a Private-Public partnership, MD taxpayers should not be responsible for funding any part the proposed or future Maglev projects.

To date, no major public rail system in the world operates without government subsidy. Taxpayers have already covered the over five million federal and state dollars for the current SCMaglev environmental assessment processes (i.e., DEIS, environment certifications). At this juncture, the Federal Railroad Administration has run out of funding for the next step of developing an EIS and will need more federal dollars. Future projects would undeniably depend on a large amount of state and federal funds for certification and compliance.

We understand that Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail-(BWRR), is seeking additional funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and other grant sources to continue to tap into federal taxpayer funds. BWRR, a private company, repeatedly has stated in their arguments in opposition to this bill that, while they do not need state funds, they want them to be available just in case financial support is needed "later" in the project's implementation. Our concern is that *now* is their *later* because the current federal funds have been fully expended.

Maryland's transportation investments face persistent state funding difficulties and cost-cutting and carefully deliberated choices need to be made. Maryland should be focused on providing affordable and accessible transportation for all members of our communities. The SCMaglev would be built

with three stops, DC, BWI, and Baltimore, and no stops within the communities it would run through. Baltimore, Prince Georges, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore Counties would incur major financial and environmental costs of building the train, and most of the burden will be on already overburdened and environmental justice communities. SCMaglev's excessively expensive ridership cost would benefit only an exceedingly small fraction of the state's population.

Maryland is making great strides on adopting climate friendly policies, many targeted to be met by 2031. Analyses find that the SCMaglev would generate more greenhouse gases during construction than it is likely to save over several decades of operation. With a construction timeline of eight to ten years before ridership even begins, the SCMaglev would be significantly increasing, not decreasing Maryland's emissions, setting us back from achieving our emission reduction goals.

Why prohibit appropriations for all Maglev systems? There are multiple concerns regarding SCMaglev, including the loss of important ecological habitats, environmental justice and public health impacts, safety of the technology, and whether it would in fact lead to a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions. Most of these concerns, particularly environmental and health impacts are inherent in the Maglev technology rather than specific to the current proposal. Another important concern is that the technology is developed and maintained in Japan. Rather than benefiting Maryland, the investment in equipment and maintenance would benefit Japanese business resources and expertise.

Maglev trains are not compatible with the State's existing transportation systems. They require their own operating systems that would run underground and/or on elevated tracks that can be up to 150 feet in the air. And they take massive amounts of land to build and operate. The proposed SCMaglev project includes a rail maintenance yard larger than Disneyland that would be located on federal property.

Why would Maryland need a new rail system when we have existing transit with AMTRAC, MARC, and Bus Rapid Transit? The Federal Railroad Administration, through the Northeastern Corridor Future program has already developed a long-term vision and investment program with regional stakeholders. Billions of dollars have been committed and major upgrades to the existing Acela equipment that reach speeds comparable to Maglev trains. Marylanders deserve their taxpayer dollars to be used for commuter options that benefit all citizens; not gamble on still untested technology that would benefit only a small and wealthy minority.

Maryland residents should not have to bear the financial costs of any Maglev project which is not fully funded by the private developer, especially if the project runs into difficulties and escalating costs as we have seen in previous transportation projects as stated above. For the reasons given above, we urge a FAVORABLE vote for HB0170.

350MoCo

Adat Shalom Climate Action

Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church Environmental Justice Ministry

Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility

Climate Parents of Prince George's

Climate Reality Project

ClimateXChange – Rebuild Maryland Coalition

Coming Clean Network, Union of Concerned Scientists

DoTheMostGood Montgomery County
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Elders Climate Action
Fix Maryland Rail
Glen Echo Heights Mobilization
Greenbelt Climate Action Network
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