

January 17, 2024

SB0079

The Honorable Guy Guzzone,
Chair Budget and Taxation Committee
3 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman,
Chair Education, Health, and the
Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: **TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB0079—STATE FINANCE – PROHIBITED APPROPRIATIONS – MAGNETIC LEVITATION TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

Dear Chair Guzzone, Chair Feldman, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation and Education, Energy, and the Environment Committees:

My name is Ian Rainey, and I am the Senior Vice President of Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR). I appear before you today to convey our **strong opposition to SB0079**.

BWRR is a railroad franchised by the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) to operate a 311 mph Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMAGLEV) train between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. Once constructed, the train will take passengers between Baltimore and Washington in just 15 minutes, accounting for a stop at BWI Airport. Not only will the project result in “substantial economic and social benefits to Baltimore and the State of Maryland,” as stated by the Maryland PSC, but most notably, the project is not requesting any State appropriations.

SB0079 aims to prohibit any appropriations from being used by the State or certain units or instrumentalities of the State for a Magnetic Levitation system in Maryland. One of the main arguments behind this bill is that the Maryland taxpayer should never be “on the hook” for a project such as ours, further implying that State funds are better used elsewhere to improve and upgrade existing rail. We agree that the State should focus on improving state-run transportation projects, which is why we have never asked the legislature for financial support. This is especially crucial this year as Maryland faces a \$761 million budget shortfall and MDOT grapples with a \$3 billion+ shortfall over the next six years.

Additionally, our current rail infrastructure has already nearly met its physical limits. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) conducted by MDOT and the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) confirms that the BWRR SCMAGLEV would, in fact, alleviate pressure on current rail infrastructure and Maryland taxpayers. It states, “To the degree that trains in the corridor are expected to be at capacity between 2030 and 2045, these diversions [to SCMAGLEV] free up capacity for additional travelers without making public investment to add capacity.”

In other words, by alleviating stress on over-capacity systems, such as MARC and Amtrak, taxpayers will see savings through added transit capacity and reduced traffic -- without state appropriations. These savings can be reinvested in improving first- and last-mile transportation



systems throughout the state, providing lawmakers the opportunity to invest in the well-rounded transit future so many Marylanders wish to see.

Automobiles are the largest cause of pollution in Maryland and being stuck in traffic costs citizens both money and time. We need new world class transit systems to build our economy, create jobs, fight climate change, and provide workforce opportunity to our diverse population.

SB0079 would signal to Maryland citizens and to the world that the state is closed to innovative, future-oriented, safe solutions to our worsening transportation issues.

For these reasons, Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail **strongly opposes SB0079** and urges the committees to submit an **unfavorable report**. Thank you for the opportunity to appear.

Sincerely,

Ian Rainey
Senior Vice President