

Town of Bladensburg

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TAKISHA D. JAMES**

Letter of Testimony by Mayor Takisha James, Town of Bladensburg House Bill 0715 -- Prohibited Appropriations for SCMAGLEV Appropriations Committee - Bill Hearing

Please accept my written testimony on behalf of the Bladensburg Town Council and residents supporting House Bill 0715 for consideration by the Appropriations Committee Bill Hearing.

As elected leaders, it is our responsibility to carefully consider how our decisions will affect the economic and environmental sustainability of our communities not just today or tomorrow, but more importantly for future generations.

Please know we are not against the use of new and improved transportation technology and we certainly agree the existing transportation infrastructure is aging and struggling to meet the demands of the growing population. But there are more viable options to consider. The cost to build the MAGLEV rail system is estimated around \$15 billion, this is a \$420 million per mile cost for construction of a roughly 36 mile distance between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore.

Whereas, the cost to build a four lane highway would be approximately \$10 million per mile through a suburban or urban area, which is how most of the land between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore is classified. Given there is no guarantee the MAGLEV train will ever be profitable if built and with limited public funding available, we have a responsibility to consider the most cost effective and economically feasible alternatives to addressing our transportation needs.

We have been told the high speed rail system being used in Shanghai is an example of a successful model already in place. What is not being shared is the Shanghai MAGLEV rail system relies heavily on subsidies from the company that owns the Shanghai MAGLEV and it has been losing millions every year. Even if Maryland is able to secure private investment or lower the cost to finance the project, repayment will have to come from somewhere, either through taxpayer subsidies, higher fares, or both. There is no such thing as a free ride.

Furthermore, our constituents strongly oppose this project and have voiced their concerns this project will have on our community. There have been ambiguous claims the MAGLEV rail system will reduce traffic and congestion on our roads, but to-date, a ridership study has not been conducted to support this position.

It is estimated a one-way fare would be slightly higher than a \$46 adult Acela one-way business class fare between Washington and Baltimore. Very few commuters will be able to afford paying this fare; it is just not economically feasible.

It is obvious the MAGLEV train is not meant to meet the needs of the everyday commuter they propose it will benefit, but keep in mind, our residents will feel the impacts of the train going through our communities for decades. Is this the type of legacy we want to leave for future generations?

There have been promises of jobs being created, but as legislatures there is absolutely no way to guarantee these jobs will go to our residents. This is a false narrative being told to make the proposed MAGLEV rail system easier to sell to the public.

As of yet, the environmental impact study for this project has not been released, but nevertheless, we are being asked to support the proposed MAGLEV rail system without having all the information needed to make an informed decision. More importantly what is not being talked about is the environmental and social injustice this project will have on neighborhoods in the path of the train. How many Prince George's County residents will be displaced through eminent domain to make this project a reality?

Additionally, there is no way to know with 100% certainty the risks this infrastructure will have on the foundations of homes located along the proposed route, or on our local habitats and historic structures. It has also been tacitly inferred a proposed multi-level ventilation station in Bladensburg won't have any health impacts on our residents. Yet there is no supporting data to verify the ventilation system being proposed will not negatively affect the well-being of our community.

We implore you to pass HB 0715 prohibiting the State and certain units and instrumentalities of the State from using any appropriation for a magnetic levitation transportation system in the State; prohibiting a public or private entity that receives money from the State from authorizing a permit or giving any other form of approval for a magnetic levitation transportation system in the State; and prohibiting a proposal for a magnetic levitation transportation system from using a certain right-of-way or track owned or operated by certain railroad companies.

This proposed project has way too many unknown factors and the risks far outweigh the economic benefits the state hopes to gain from this technology, let me make this clear, the quality of life for Bladensburg residents is not for sale.

Thank you for this opportunity to present our concerns.

Respectfully submitted,
Mayor Takisha James