Title: **MCRT & CATS Supports Maryland General Assembly Senate Bill 188**

Speaker: Daniel E. Woomer
Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit (MCRT)
Citizens Against the SCMagLev (CATS)

Hearing: Senate Budget and Taxation Committee
West Miller Senate Building
11 Bladen Street - Room 3
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Date: Wednesday, January 27, 2021

Time: 1:00pm

Summary:

The Citizens Against the SCMagLev (CATS) and Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit (MCRT) join with Senator Pinsky to support this session's Senate Bill 188 – "prohibiting the State and certain units and instrumentalities of the State from using any appropriation for a magnetic levitation transportation system in the State . . . ." Building the SCMagLev train will destroy some of the last protected green areas on the east coast and bring unrepairable environmental harm to surrounding areas, potentially threatening the health of our residents, and likely require government subsidies to build, maintain, and operate the system. These funds would be better spent on high-priority infrastructure projects that benefit all Maryland's residents, not just the wealthy who can afford the cost to ride the train. While CATS and MCRT oppose the building of the SCMagLev, we strongly support the continued enhancements of existing transportation systems that benefit all Marylanders.

Testimony:

Good afternoon. My name is Daniel E. Woomer, I am a member of both the CATS and MCRT, and I am pleased to speak with you today in support of SB 188.

There are many reasons the CATS and MCRT are opposed to building the SCMagLev:

(1) The train will not serve all Marylanders, yet it will destroy our communities and green spaces and its emissions will damage human health.
(2) There are unanswered questions about the actual safety of the train itself.
(3) It will generate insufficient revenue requiring government subsidies.
(4) It will follow previous world experiences with such systems, many of which have failed or are being maintained with large government subsidies.
(5) The TNEM and BWRR have made many claims about jobs and revenues but have yet to share with the public their analyses supporting these claims.
(6) The need for far more high-value transportation infrastructure improvements outweigh wasting funds on building the SCMagLev.

(1) SCMagLev Does Not Serve Marylanders, Yet Destroys Our Communities and Green Spaces.

The SCMagLev project will result in:

- The destruction of swaths of homes, businesses, historic sights, and greenspaces through Prince George's County with the erection of the elevated sections of the SCMagLev.
- The destruction and/or disruption of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC), NASA's Optic Research Center, and the Patuxent Research Reserve (PRR), as well as the pollution of the local streams, wetlands, and the Patuxent River.
- The potential disruption of the Anne Arundel County aquifer.
- The potential release of toxins, carcinogens, and radon gas collected in the SCMagLev tunneled sections into our communities through their surface ventilation facilities.
- Concerns about our schools' structures, personnel, and students associated with the impact of a high-speed, oscillating magnetic field train running under them.
- Increased traffic with SCMagLev facilities and track maintenance equipment on I-95 and the BWI Parkway.
- With only one stop in Anne Arundel County and no stops in Prince George's County, virtually no benefit to the residents and businesses in our counties, yet the burden of the destruction.

(2) There Are Unanswered Questions About the Actual Safety of the Train Itself.

- Past proposals to build maglev systems in Florida, Pennsylvania, and Maryland using the German system were not approved for good reason.
- Despite certification by the German government that their maglev system was safe, on September 22, 2006, 70 percent of the passengers were killed and the rest injured in a maglev accident in Lathen, Germany.
- The Japanese government seeks to assure us of the safety of their SCMagLev, despite the fact that the number of passengers carried to date on their test track is only half the typical number carried by the Washington Metro (pre-COVID-19) in a single day. *Note*: Japanese success with their wheel-rail trains does not automatically transfer to maglev technology.
- Justifications for the ongoing building of their SCMagLev are being questioned in Japan. The planned 2027 date for starting the first operation of the Tokyo to Nagoya line is unlikely to be met. This would make the United States the first place where the safety of SCMagLev technology would be tested in high-frequency commercial operation.
- The Japanese SCMagLev has many unresolved safety issues that need to be addressed. Safety Rules of Particular Applicability (RPA) need to be developed by the Federal Railroad Administration before the project is authorized.
- The crashworthiness of the vehicles must be assessed for the safety of the passengers if something goes wrong. The SCMagLev should not evade the safety rules now required for Amtrak. Promoters of the SCMagLev argue that the computer systems will prevent a crash, but so did the German government before 70 percent of passengers that fateful day were killed in the Lathen maglev accident.

- The risk of the levitated SCMagLev train rising out of the guideway must be evaluated. What would happen should the train hit a small object that momentarily lifts the front end while travelling at over 300 miles-per-hour? Currently there are no physical restraints to prevent the train from rising out of the guideway.
- Below 93 miles per hour, the train will ride on retractable rubber tires. This raises many safety issues. If there is a power interruption, the rubber wheels may need to immediately support the train travelling at over 300 miles-per-hour before it comes to a stop.
- The dangers from the electromagnetic radiation need to be addressed. The Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) *Alternatives Report* (November 2018) stated that people underneath the guideway " . . . need to maintain a minimum distance of 20 feet below the magnets . . . ."

(3) SCMagLev Will Generate Insufficient Revenue Requiring Government Subsidies.

Having followed the SCMagLev project for several years, it is still difficult to see how this system will generate the revenues needed to operate and maintain itself without the need for government subsidies. We all have received mixed signals for the Northeast Maglev (TNEM) and BWRR leadership, at one time stating that all the funds needed for maintenance and operation (M&O) will be generated by ridership, and at another that any system like the one proposed requires private and public support, as in the use of tax dollars to provide financial support.

To date, no major public rail system in the world operates without government subsidy. Amtrak is one of the best, generating revenues that cover the majority of its annual M&O costs, and has shown improvement over the past decade, requiring a smaller percentage of M&O to be subsidized. While Amtrak openly provides its cost versus revenue analyses and projections, we have yet to see them from the TNEM and BWRR to justify their revenue statements. One of the primary analyses as part of the $27 million federal grant to study the feasibility of the system (a requirement for any business) is to determine if sufficient revenues can be generated to cover the M&O costs. Since the majority (approximately 80 percent) of the research to produce the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was funded by tax dollars, you as legislators and we as taxpayers have the right to know if the analyses on SCMagLev income and income sources versus costs for building, loan management, maintenance, and operation are financially sound. We all should have a clear picture of the level of subsidies needed to keep the SCMagLev system financially afloat before we make the decision to approve it being built. It is long past time that this information is made available to you and for our review.

SCMagLev will likely pull ridership from Amtrak, its rival and competitor in the high-speed train arena, which will require Amtrak subsidies to be increased. In effect, taxpayers, most of whom would not be able to afford a ticket to ride the SCMagLev, will be forced to subsidize two competing systems. Such funds will enrich the private SCMagLev investors, negatively impact existing transportation systems, and pull funding from other needed, more critical transportation infrastructure projects.

Let us remember our own prior experience in looking at a maglev system in Maryland. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) began to devote funding to the

development and evaluation of a Maglev system in FY2001. At that time, the FRA and MDOT commenced the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the project, as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The final EIS was never published because 2003 and 2004 state-enacted legislation prohibited the funding of the project as the result of the final report of the Task Force to Evaluate the Development and Construction of a Magnetic Levitation Transportation System. In its final report, issued in 2003, the task force noted that, among other challenges, a significant amount of funding would be required to implement a Maglev system in Maryland. It is very likely the SCMagLev will also require such taxpayer funds, and likely far more funding than the task force considered in its prior finding.

(4) SCMagLev Will Follow Previous World Experiences with Such Systems, Many of Which Have Failed or are Being Maintained with Large Government Subsidies.

I call your attention to a recent report by Ms. Carol Park, an analyst at the Center for Business and Economic Competitiveness at the Maryland Public Policy Institute entitled*:* "Lessons from Asia for the Northeast SCMagLev."[1]

To quote Ms. Park: "SCMagLev enthusiasts have been pushing the project despite warnings of significant risks, just like the supporters of the bullet train did in Asia. For instance, the South Korean government built the Seoul-Incheon line despite consistent warnings of inadequate demand. The project was politically, rather than commercially, driven as Korean officials wanted to present a futuristic version of Korea to the international community as part of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics." The line was closed in 2018 because 77 percent of seats were unoccupied.

Germany experimented with building a MagLev train. Following several years of development and building, with large and growing annual government subsidies, the lack of ridership, and a horrific crash that killed 70 percent of the passengers and injured the others on a system the Germans certified as safe, Germany abandoned the project.

For a current example of overpromise and underperformance, look no further than California's experience with its high-speed rail system, which has become a financial nightmare. With massive overruns, building delays, and homes, businesses, and private properties taken, there is still no working system. The governor finally "pulled the plug" and the project has been significantly downsized. However, destruction of farms, vineyards, and personal property has occurred with no value returned to the California community. The severely downsized system is still experiencing cost overruns and building delays.

Ms. Park states: "Supporters of SCMagLev dismiss these concerns. They argue that the success of bullet trains in Japan demonstrate that these hurdles can be overcome. That's exactly what officials in China, Taiwan and South Korea thought, only to discover that the

[1] Park, Carol. "Transportation Lessons from Asia for the Northeast Maglev." The Maryland Public Policy Institute. December 7, 2018. www.mdpolicy.org/research/detail/lessons-from-asia-for-the-northeast-maglev?fbclid=IwAR2C1sAfojicOFJ7J6jXCqvtGmKADrtVAopQpP7XRZnc38V25p8G5wWp2s4

situation in Japan is unique. Most of Japan's 128 million inhabitants live in a few densely populated cities. Many of those residents are rich enough to afford expensive train tickets."

Note: SCMagLev officials have repeatedly stated that ticket prices will be similar to Amtrak/Acela.

"Compared to Japan, the situation is the polar opposite in Baltimore, where many of the residents who depend on public transit are low-income workers. If these residents are to commute between Baltimore and D.C., they would need an option that is affordable and easily accessible from their homes." The SCMagLev is neither, whereas MARC provides a reliable and cost-effective transportation system, moving well over 8 million passengers into and out of Washington, D.C., annually.

(5) TNEM and BWRR Have Made Many Claims About Jobs and Revenues But Have Yet to Share the Analyses Supporting These Claims.

- The promoters of high-speed and maglev trains promise lots of jobs - But their job figures are often misleading or appear faulty. The underlying analyses, funded by a federal grant of public tax dollars, need to be made available for review.
- Many high-speed and maglev train projects across the world have cost far more than promised by the promoters. In some cases (e.g., California's high-speed train fiasco), there has been an increase of up to three times the original projected cost (to date and growing), requiring increasing amounts of government (i.e., tax dollar) subsidies. - Cost far more, need large tax-dollar subsidies.
- High-speed and maglev train projects across the world experienced building delays - Many have experienced protracted schedule overruns.
- BWRR says the SCMagLev will create between 75K and 100K jobs. Since 2017, we have asked to see the basis of this claim, the work breakdown projections, and information to substantiate their statements - We have not seen anything to substantiate their jobs projection.
- Jobs created to build the SCMagLev will be short term. Once the system is built between Baltimore and D.C., the jobs in Maryland will end. The construction jobs will then move north if BWRR gains approval to build to New York - Maryland will lose these jobs as the construction moves to Pennsylvania and New York, and many will need to find other jobs.
- If BARC, PRR, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Optics Centers are put out of businesses, all the career, high-paying jobs will be lost from Anne Arundel and Prince George's Counties and the state of Maryland - Net effect - Maryland will lose many career, high-paying jobs.
- The tax dollars needed for high-priority transportation infrastructure projects will likely be required to subsidize the building and operation of the SCMagLev. After the SCMagLev is built, the construction jobs are finished, then the subsidies will likely be needed to maintain the operation of the system. These tax dollars should be used to maintain, repair, or enhance existing bridges, roads, and tunnels used by the vast majority of drivers and riders to commute and travel, as well as by commerce (e.g., trucking and delivery) vehicles, which is the financial lifeblood of Maryland - Tax dollars are better spent to help all residents, not the wealthy SCMagLev system owners and riders.

- The SCMagLev will take ridership from Amtrak and Acela, requiring increased subsidies to maintain the existing east coast rail system - Tax dollars will be used to subsidize two competing train systems.
- BWRR states that large numbers of vehicles will be taken off the road – Where is the analysis to support this claim? With the annual growth of traffic in Maryland, whatever savings BWRR states will be made would likely be overcome by the annual pre-COVID-19 growth. And, again, SCMagLev ridership will likely come from Acela or air flights, not cars commuting to D.C.
- COVID-19 has created a new wrinkle for BWRR's SCMagLev and all mass transit ridership projections. Many agencies and support businesses have proven their knowledge workers can work remotely. The cost of office space in D.C. is very high, and agencies and businesses are already looking at downsizing their office footprint and invest the rent savings back into mission-related work – How does this changing reality affect BWRR's claims? Where is the analysis?
- It is unlikely that greenhouse gases and road congestion will be reduced with the SCMagLev. The operation of SCMagLev maintenance vehicles would add to the existing traffic congestion - SCMagLev will unlikely reduce greenhouse gases and more likely create an increase in road congestion.
- Tax dollars should be used for the infrastructure we all rely on and need. The construction jobs generated will be long-term, as there are miles and miles of roads, bridges, and tunnels that need maintenance, repair, and enhancement - More long-term construction jobs will be available in Maryland rebuilding our transportation infrastructure.

(6) The Need for Other Far More High-Value Transportation Infrastructure Improvements Outweigh Wasting Funds on Building the SCMagLev.

Supporters of the SCMagLev state that the existing 150-year-old system is out of date and employs obsolete technology. I rode MARC and Amtrak into D.C. for nearly 30 years. Not once was I on a train that employed a wood-fired steam engine. Amtrak and MARC employ modern equipment, running on an upgraded high-speed rail system. Both are purchasing and implementing new, proven, state-of-the-art equipment.

Amtrak and the FRA completed an expensive multi-year EIS and review of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Future (NEC) plan (2017).[2] One of the key findings in this report was that a new alignment was too expensive and not needed when the planned upgrades and rebuilding of the system was considered. With the FRA's approval of the *NEC Future* plan, Amtrak secured loans totaling $2.7 billion, and is actively engaged in upgrading rail, equipment, and stations all along the Northeast corridor.

Note: Maryland's own BWI Rail Station has been replaced with a larger, modern, new technology, and improved comfort building.

[2] U.S. Department of Transportation and Federal Railroad Administration. NEC Future: A Rail Investment Plan for the Northeast Corridor. Record of Decision. July 2017. https://www.fra.dot.gov/necfuture/pdfs/rod/rod.pdf.

Amtrak is building and testing the next generation of train equipment capable of speeds in the 200 miles-per-hour range. The train is being designed and built in the United States, by American unions and trades, not imported from overseas as with the SCMagLev. More information on Amtrak's *NEC Future* and the status of the second-generation Acela are readily available on the Internet.

Instead of wasting money to build a transportation system that will not serve Marylanders and take funds needed for transportation infrastructure, CATS, MCRT and a growing list of community, civic, and environmental organizations believe it would be far better to invest those funds into current Maryland transportation infrastructure.

For example, look around the room. Everything you see—the structure, paint, electrical, electronics, furniture, and clothes and shoes we are all wearing—was transported by commercial truck. Maryland's commerce requires a sound transportation infrastructure to operate efficiently. Such systems draw business to Maryland and improve the economic base of our state. How many Maryland bridges are rated C or lower and are in need of repair or replacement? Such work would be a far better use of Maryland's tax dollars and, for that matter, federal tax dollars, than investing in and subsidizing an unnecessary high-cost train for the elite, well-healed rider.

AND . . .
We have not addressed security concerns associated with having a 300-plus mile-an-hour train flying down an elevated section of track or through a tunnel. What catastrophic results would occur if someone is able to access the track and executes an attack? Who is going to maintain the security envelope and how many resources will the state and counties be required to provide? All of this would cost additional tax dollars, again better used elsewhere.

I agree with the *Lessons from Asia for the Northeast SCMagLev* report recommendation: "The Northeast Maglev project should be scrapped before it is too late. There are many transportation priorities that are worthier of attention."

There are two additional concerns to which I draw your attention:

(1) If built, the SCMagLev will potentially release toxins, carcinogens, and radon gas into our communities.

(2) If built, the SCMagLev will expose our school structures, personnel, and students to constant low-level vibration and oscillating magnetic fields as the train is running under them.

Concerns Explained:

(1) If built, the SCMagLev will potentially release toxins, carcinogens, and radon gas into our communities.

As described during the BWRR-Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) Open House (October 16, 2017) by the Louis Berger professional engineer, the ventilation facilities' primary purpose is to clear smoke in case there is a fire in the tunnel. Located every 3 to 4 miles apart along the

underground tunneled route, the ventilation units will force air into the tunnel on the side of the section filled with smoke as the next ventilation facility exhausts air from the tunnel. In other words, one ventilation facility will pressurize the tunnel ahead of the section with smoke while the alternate ventilation facility will depressurize the tunnel to exhaust the smoke into the atmosphere.

Our concern is that the source of a fire will likely be electrical. Such a fire consumes electrical insulation and lubricants. When burned, these fuel sources produce both toxic and carcinogen compounds that, according to the planned use of the ventilation system described, will exhaust these dangerous compounds into the atmosphere, exposing the surrounding communities to these unhealthy chemical compounds. Such carcinogen exposure released into the atmosphere can potentially create damaging respiratory effects, possibly leading to life-threatening scenarios for the residents living nearby the vents and inhaling these hazardous compounds.

Our question: What short-, mid-, and long-term health effect will this have on the affected community? If for nothing else, it will have a negative effect on property values. After all, who wants to raise their family next to a facility that may poison them at any time?

As you all know, Anne Arundel and Price George's Counties have naturally occurring radon gas. Radon gas is a known carcinogen, which is why homes and other buildings are tested across both counties. Infiltrating from the ground, this colorless and odorless gas finds its way into building basements through cracks and seams between the basement walls and concrete floor.

During the discussion with the professional engineer from Louis Berger hired to design the building of the SCMagLev, we asked about water infiltration, drainage, and pumped water removal, as the tunneling under Linthicum will likely intersect the aquifer. Also, there is the question about monitoring and venting naturally occurring gases that leak into the tunnel through the same openings through which ground water enters, as the tunnel will serve as a large collecting system for ground leaching gases as it transits Anne Arundel County and the southern section of Prince George's County 80 to 150 feet below the surface. When these ventilation facilities exhaust into the atmosphere, anyone near these facilities will also be exposed to any radon gas collected in the tunnel. As with all radioactive materials, the intensity and length of time of exposure determines the severity of the side effects. Therefore, any low-level exposure, whether to radiation over a short or long time period, will likely have negative effects on the human body that will result in health issues to some degree. Further, like long-term exposure to low-level radiation, long-term exposure to low levels of electromagnetic radiation may also have cumulative health effects on the human body and needs to be evaluated.

Our questions: What long-term cumulative health effect will radon gas and electromagnetic radiation exposure have on the affected community as radioactive radon gas is vented into the atmosphere through the ventilation facilities? What is the long-term health impact of exposure to low-level oscillating electromagnetic fields as the SCMagLev transit passes under our homes, businesses, and schools and their playgrounds?

(2) If built, the SCMagLev will expose our school structures, personnel, and students to constant low-level vibration and oscillating magnetic fields as the train running under them.

As the train passes underground below our schools, homes, and businesses, what effect will the resulting vibration have on the structures? As you know, masonry structures do not fare well with constant exposure to vibration. Given that most of our homes and businesses are built on concrete foundations and masonry walls, continuous exposure to even low-level vibrations will likely have a cumulative effect, to include cracking and then water penetration, negatively impacting the structural integrality of the building. Such cracks allow groundwater and rainwater runoff to enter basements. Besides damp and wet basements, mold growth becomes another potential human health issue.

In Summary:

The CATS and MCRT have provided a list of reasons why the SCMagLev should be stopped now before Maryland is leveraged into a position where it has no choice but to make use of our needed tax dollars to directly or indirectly fund the SCMagLev building, maintenance, operation, and security. Our tax dollars will be better spent to replace, repair, and enhance existing transportation infrastructure. The CATS and MCRT have pointed out the potential of venting toxins, carcinogens, and radioactive gas into our communities. The CATS and MCRT have noted the serious concerns we have about our health with exposure to radioactive gas and low-level electromagnetic fields and the cumulative health impact these would have on our residents.

And my concluding question:

Are you willing to expose our children to find out what will be the health effects?

Again, thank you for this opportunity to speak before you this afternoon, and provide written testimony and our white papers on reasons to oppose the SCMagLev to your Committee.

Attachments:

Attachment 1 (embedded): “Lessons from Asia for the Northeast SCMagLev” (two pages).

Short Informational MCRT-CATS Position Papers (attached):
(1) CATS-MCRT Rpt - SCMagLev Biological Impact - 20210111
(2) CATS-MCRT Rpt - SCMagLev Biological Impact (Part 2) - 20210111
(3) CATS-MCRT Rpt - Amtrak the Better Alternative - 20210111
(4) CATS-MCRT Rpt - The Next Generation of Acela - 20210111
(5) CATS-MCRT Rpt - SCMagLev Community Impact - 20210111
(6) CATS-MCRT Rpt - SCMagLev Safety - 20210111
(7) CATS-MCRT Rpt - SCMagLev Safety (Part 2) - 20210111

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Citizens Against the SCMagLev (CATS) is a confederation of scientists, engineers, experts, community organizations and citizens in support of transportation infrastructure improvements

that benefit our communities, state, and nation. CATS opposes the construction of an expensive transportation system serving a small minority of the wealthy at the cost of taxpayer funds far better used to maintain and improve the transportation infrastructure needed and used daily by all citizens, businesses, and commerce. For up-to-date information on the SCMagLev opposition, see our Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/groups/CitizensAgainstSCMaglev.

Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit (MCRT) evaluates transit projects for social equity, environmental justice, economic viability, and community accessibility. We believe that the Baltimore Washington (BW) SCMagLev must be stopped in order to implement future transit projects that meet our criteria of a much lower price and much less risk and impact to communities. Thus, we support the no-build option and are working to stop this project through the National Environmental Policy Act process. For more information about MCRT see our website at: www.mcrt-action.org.

Attachment #1

Report from the Center for Business and Economic Competitiveness at the Maryland Public Policy Institute

Lessons from Asia for the Northeast SCMagLev

Originally published in the *Daily Record*.
December 7, 2018

In China, a bullet train crash in the city of Wenzhou in 2011 killed 40 people. The crash was blamed on poor design and mismanagement. In Taiwan, the bullet train system rang up $1.5 billion in losses over seven years, requiring a $1 billion government bailout to date. In South Korea, a high-speed rail line connecting Seoul to Incheon closed in 2018 after just four years of service because 77 percent of seats were unoccupied.

Across the Pacific Ocean, supporters of "SCMagLev" in the United States are gearing up to create an American version of the Asian rail disasters. The Northeast Maglev is a proposed magnetic levitation train that would travel at 311 miles per hour, carrying passengers between Baltimore City and Washington, D.C. in 15 minutes. The Maglev team hopes to start construction on the ostensibly private project in 2020.

SCMagLev enthusiasts have been pushing the project despite warnings of significant risks, just like the supporters of the bullet train did in Asia. For instance, the South Korean government built the Seoul-Incheon line despite consistent warnings of inadequate demand. The project was politically, rather than commercially, driven: Korean officials wanted to present a futuristic version of Korea to the international community as part of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympics.

SCMagLev supporters in Maryland have similar non-business motives for backing the project. Baltimore has been experiencing a steady population decline over the years, and many supporters believe that connecting the city to economically vibrant D.C. could reverse that trend. This vision has blinded the advocates to serious concerns about the project.

First, though the project purports to be a private effort, high-speed train projects are generally magnets of questionable government subsidies. "We can't build our infrastructure 100 percent privately," said Wayne Rogers, the CEO of Northeast Maglev. Building the SCMagLev line from Baltimore to D.C. is estimated to cost between $12 billion to $15 billion (Others believe the cost will be far more). So far only $5 billion in private investment has been secured for the project, so taxpayers will be on the hook to finance the rest of the project, likely taking funds needed for other far more valuable national infrastructure projects.

Second, it's highly doubtful the SCMagLev will attract sufficient ridership to make it economically viable. According to SCMagLev officials, the service would target the "elite business travelers" and charge higher prices than Amtrak, which already provides regular rail service between the two cities, and is in the process of upgrading their infrastructure, equipment and stations to support faster trains on existing right-of-ways. Just as with the Seoul-Incheon line, there are also numerous bus companies that provide affordable trips along the Baltimore-D.C. route.

Finally, building the Northeast Maglev will inevitably disrupt the communities along the line because of noise and electromagnetic fields, destruction of homes and businesses during the building of the elevated portions of the line, as well as destruction of remaining green space between Baltimore and D.C., and the negative environmental impacts of tunneling, not to mention the hurtling trains. As the planned SCMagLev will only make three stops, the affected residents are unlikely to experience any commercial or economic development in their neighborhood. In short, residents along the route will pay the high price and receive little to no benefit from the SCMagLev.

Supporters of SCMagLev dismiss these concerns. They argue that the success of bullet trains in Japan demonstrate that these hurdles can be overcome. That's exactly what officials in China, Taiwan and South Korea thought, only to discover that the situation in Japan is unique. Most of Japan's 128 million inhabitants live in a few densely populated cities. Many of those residents are rich enough to afford expensive train tickets.

Compared to Japan, the situation is the polar opposite in Baltimore, where many of the residents who depend on public transit are low-income workers. If these residents are to commute between Baltimore and D.C., they would need an option that is affordable and easily accessible from their homes. The SCMagLev is neither. MARC provides that reliable and cost-effective transportation system, that last year moved over 8 million passengers into and out of D.C.

The Northeast Maglev project should be scrapped before it is too late. There are many transportation priorities that are worthier of attention.

In early 2018, Baltimore's Metro subway line closed for a month. According to the American Public Transportation Association, the closure was due to the Maryland Transit Administration's lack of expertise and poor communication. Meanwhile, the D.C. Metro system is a never-ending series of service disruptions, crumbling infrastructure and safety failures.

If Maryland wants to improve its transportation system, it should focus on ensuring that its existing projects are safe and managed properly. Whether this is done by restructuring the MTA or by privatizing some of its operations to incentivize better performance, it will not take billions of dollars to ensure that Maryland residents have reliable public transportation.

According to SCMagLev's Chair, Wayne Rogers, "Infrastructure is fundamentally a government responsibility, which has failed." He is right. Many governments across the ocean have failed by partnering with private companies to build trains that turned out to be costly, dangerous, and increasingly reliant on government support. We can avoid recreating the same high-speed catastrophe in North America by abandoning the Northeast Maglev now.

The author of the original article is Carol Park, a senior policy analyst in the Center for Business and Economic Competitiveness at the Maryland Public Policy Institute. She can be reached at cpark@mdpolicy.org.

Source: Park, Carol. "Transportation Lessons from Asia for the Northeast Maglev." December 7, 2018. The Maryland Public Policy Institute. www.mdpolicy.org/research/detail/lessons-from-asia-for-the-northeast-maglev?fbclid=IwAR2C1sAfojicOFJ7J6jXCqvtGmKADrtVAopQpP7XRZnc38V25p8G5wWp2s4.