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Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB704 - “Land Use – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System Siting (Maryland Stop the Maglev Act of 2021)”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 11, 2021

The Maryland Chapter of Sierra Club supports HB704. The bill would prohibit construction of a magnetic levitation transportation system (Maglev) within two miles of a protected property. The latter would include a national park, a forest preserve, other property owned by the federal government, a lot where a residence is located, or a waterfront park designed for flood mitigation, resource conservation, education, entertainment or recreation. The bill also would not allow condemnation of property for the construction of a Maglev within two miles of a protected property.

We are greatly concerned that Maglev’s draft environmental impact statement indicates the project would destroy hundreds of acres of the most ecologically important research, conservation, waterfront and forest areas in the MidAtlantic region, many of which are owned by the federal government. The project also would impact three rivers that feed into the Chesapeake Bay, would negatively affect environmental justice areas along the length of the Maglev project corridor in Maryland, and if built, would not be affordable for low and moderate income residents.

We strongly support state and federal funding for reliable and affordable public transit, and oppose any government funding for expensive, for-profit, privately-owned transportation projects. The Maglev sponsors have indicated they plan to seek federal money to help fund the construction of their system. That would put the project in direct competition for limited federal dollars needed for real mass transit in our state and others that serves the needs of residents of all incomes and helps build local and regional economies.

We also are concerned that Maglev ridership studies show a large portion of its riders would come from MARC, Amtrak, and Acela, thereby endangering the viability of those important train systems in the region.

In summary, we have great concerns with the proposed magnetic levitation transportation system and believe this bill, if passed, would require dramatic changes to how Maglev could be built in Maryland. We urge this committee to issue a favorable report on this bill.

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Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 75,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.