

February 9, 2022

SB 359

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

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO SB 359—STATE FINANCE – PROHIBITED
APPROPRIATIONS – MAGNETIC LEVITATION TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

Dear Chair Guzzone, Chair Pinsky, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation and Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committees:

I am the Chairman/CEO of Baltimore Washington Rapid Rail, LLC and appear today to convey our strong opposition to SB 359.

BWRR is a railroad franchised by the Maryland Public Service Commission to operate a 311 mph Super-Conducting Magnetic Levitation train between Washington and Baltimore. When constructed the train will take passengers between Baltimore and Washington in 15 minutes. Passengers landing at BWI would be able to reach downtown Baltimore in 5 minutes and downtown DC in 8 minutes. In granting the railroad franchise, after notice and public hearing, the Maryland PSC found that ***“the construction and operation of the SCMAGLEV between Baltimore and Washington, DC will result in substantial economic and social benefits to Baltimore and the State of Maryland and will be consistent with the State’s environmental laws and policies to reduce harmful emissions for cleaner air and address the causes of climate change and that awarding a franchise to facilitate in development of the SCMAGLEV was in the public convenience and necessity.”***

The SCMAGLEV project will bring significant benefits to the State of Maryland, including those in central Maryland where 70% of Maryland residents live. The project will create over 161,000 regional job years, result in a \$6.5 billion GDP increase in Maryland from construction (\$268 million annually from operations), improve BWI Airport and transform the lives of tens of millions of people. It is the equivalent of building an eight-lane highway, with the exception that our project will take people off the roads and reduce regional greenhouse gas emissions. The Project will divert millions of cars from overcrowded highways to public transit. Over seventy percent of the alignment is underground, with no need for residential takings. Floating on air at 311 mph the proposed project represents a huge environmental and economic opportunity for Maryland.

The project has been undergoing environmental and permitting review by over 30 federal, state and local agencies for 5.5 years. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement was released on January 15, 2021. This milestone culminated in the formal public comment period and public hearings, which were completed in April 2021. This was on the heels of over 200 public meetings, hearings and briefings over the last 8 years. We are committed to ensure **any issues**



identified within the DEIS, or raised during the public comment period, are addressed in the best way possible for communities and the environment.

SB 359 proposes to prohibit any appropriations from being used by the State or any unit or instrumentality of the State for a Magnetic Levitation system in the State.

No appropriations have been requested for this Project.

Passing a bill prohibiting appropriations not even requested, is not only bad public policy but sends a negative signal that the State of Maryland is not willing to pursue remedies to the issues of traffic congestion, poor air quality and climate change. Prior to COVID we had the worst congestion in the country and studies show that left unchecked it will continue to worsen.

Right now each Marylander spends 102 extra hours per year stuck in traffic, with congestion costing the economy \$4.6 billion per year and each individual over \$2000. I am sure that each of your constituents could use an extra \$2000 per year and 102 hours of time to put to better use. The State is and will be spending millions to combat climate change. It is imperative we join together to find and implement solutions, not try to prevent them.

We as citizens and, respectfully, you as elected officials should not profess to support actions to combat climate change, reduce congestion, and to improve the health and lives of our citizens, while simultaneously fighting any effort to do so.

This bill would signal that years of work by federal, state and local agencies and over \$100 million of investment by the private sector, is not supported, all before final decisions on financing and construction are made. In addition, millions of federal dollars, money that is earmarked only for Magnetic Levitation projects, not other things, have been awarded to the State of Maryland for the purpose of studying and implementing this technology. In fact, this money is already paying the salaries of many tax-paying Marylanders. Maryland won a federal national competition of over 14 states to host this project. It is the opportunity of not only a lifetime, but generations.

For these reasons Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail **strongly opposes SB 359** and urges the committee to submit an **unfavorable report**. Thank you for the opportunity to appear.

We strongly recommend that **SB 359** be provided a negative report.

Sincerely,

Wayne L. Rogers
Chairman/CEO