

Budget and Taxation Committee of the Senate

Testimony on: SB0359: State Finance - Prohibited Appropriations -
Magnetic Levitation Transportation System

Submitting: Susan Barnett

Position: Favorable

Hearing Date: 2.9.2022

To the Honorable Chair Guzzone and all members of the Taxation and Budget Committee:

I am writing in favor of SB0359 for the following reasons:

1. The State is correct in protecting its funds and reserving them for necessary future transportation and infrastructure needs.

- Given that the Maglev is projected to cost at least 16-20 billion dollars (and likely more) the state will not be able to cover such an expense and still maintain the essential maintenance and upgrades of transportation and infrastructure projects throughout its districts.
- Given that the Maglev is considered a “luxury” transit option it makes sense that no state funding be allocated for the high ticket priced and limited service this project will provide if it is ever completed.

2. The current and ongoing Climate Crisis is likely to change the scenarios under which we work, travel, and live significantly. We need to be attending ever more closely to the footprint of projects undertaken or funded by the state.

- Based on recent research, the construction of the SCMaglev will generate more greenhouse gases than it will save for likely several decades. We do not have decades to wait for such a “possibility”.
- Given that there has not been an analysis made of how we will need to adapt to climate change within the next decade alone, protecting the state from losing funding for needed transportation and infrastructure projects throughout the state makes complete sense.

3. The current pandemic has created an economic crisis and we do not yet know what the endpoint of this will be. In addition, the pandemic has revealed the resourcefulness of our various institutions. Traditional practices for every type of organization,

business, school, etc. have been challenged and shifted dramatically. Just as with this meeting of the Budget and Taxation Committee, we have found that we no longer need or must travel (in cars or on transit systems) to attend a meeting or to collect in ways previously thought to be necessary.

- Virtual meetings will likely replace many of the previously used in-person meetings. This will change the need for travel. The SCMaglev has not considered this change in its ridership projections. This factor will alter the future of all transit systems. Indeed, most transit systems are struggling to maintain basic service right now. Further, airlines are reporting that there are far fewer business travelers due to the ease of virtual meetings. This will apply to other forms of travel as well.
- The SCMaglev is considered a luxury service and as such will be in less demand given this shift away from in-person meetings. As such it is not deserving of state funding.

Thank you for your consideration of these points. In light of these crucial issues, I believe the state is correct to protect its transportation and infrastructure funding for necessary (not luxury) and usable projects. The State needs to be prepared to adapt quickly, practically and effectively to serve the needs of the whole state, not those of a few. I recommend a favorable report on SB0359.

Sincerely,

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