

HB326 - State Finance - Prohibited Appropriations - Magnetic Levitation Transportation System

House Environment and Transportation Committee

Thursday, February 17, 2022

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Committee,

Clean Water Action urges you to support HB326 in order to prevent state funds from being spent on magnetic levitation trains. We are concerned by the environmental costs of the proposed Baltimore-Washington SGMAGLEV proposal, and we view HB326 as a common-sense measure to safeguard Maryland taxpayers' money and preserve it for public transit with more benefits for the environment and the public.

Our concerns about the Baltimore-Washington SCMAGLEV proposal, based on its Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), include:

Harm to Public Transit.

The DEIS projects that about 30% of annual MARC riders on the Penn and Camden lines and over 90% of the Amtrak riders between Penn and Union Station would be diverted to MAGLEV if it were built. The DEIS says that

"While no plans to respond to these diversions have yet been developed, these significant forecasted trip diversions would likely require a lowering of MARC service levels to account for a decline in forecasted ridership demand as well as a likely decline in fare revenue. Forecasted changes in ridership demand and lower levels of service would also likely require modifications to MARC's long-range expansion plans and other capital investments." (page 4.2-10)

Meanwhile, MAGLEV tickets are expected to cost an average of \$60 for a one way fare - 7 times higher than a MARC fare. This would leave public transit riders unable to pay MAGLEV's incredibly high ticket prices with worse service and few options, when much cheaper investments in MARC and Amtrak would improve service and reduce transit times, equitably for everyone.

Increased Greenhouse Gasses.

The MAGLEV project is estimated to actually increase annual net transportation energy consumption, compared to the no-build (status quo) option, even when reduced vehicle emissions are taken into account. MAGLEV may be more efficient than personal automobile travel, but it is less efficient than our existing trains and buses, and:

"the anticipated decrease in energy expenditure from the diversion of auto, bus, and rail traffic to the SCMAGLEV Project is not expected to offset the increase in energy consumption from the SCMAGLEV system" (page 4.19-10).

Loss of Forests and Habitat.

The train would be built in the largely undeveloped land between Baltimore and Washington known as the "Green Wedge." The project would destroy up to 451 acres of forest, including up to 42 acres of the Greenbelt Forest Preserve (page ES-19). That's a high price to pay for a project that won't benefit the communities nearest to the impacts, not to mention the ecological loss in an area with few undeveloped lands left.

Costs to be borne by those who cannot use it.

Unlike our current trains and buses, the MAGLEV will have no stops in the communities that will be impacted by its construction by losing parks, green space, system venting, and staging. Meanwhile, 69.6% of people in the SCMAGLEV Project Affected Environment are minority, and 102 of the 124 census block groups within the Affected Environment meet one or more Environmental Justice thresholds (page 4.5-5,6). People living along the MAGLEV route will face all of the costs of the project, but receive no transit benefit, since there are no local stations along the route.

We urge you to report favorably on HB326 and ensure that state funds are not spent on MAGLEV technology, considering these environmental costs and the urgent needs of Maryland's existing public transit systems.

Thank you,

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