



Environment Committee

Committee: Budget & Taxation
Testimony on: SB50 – State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System
Organization: Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Submitting: Rhonda Kranz
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: January 25, 2023

Dear Mr. Chair and Committee Members:

Thank you for accepting our written testimony today in support of SB50. The Takoma Park Mobilization (TPM) is a grassroots organization based in Takoma Park, Montgomery County and focused on state and local climate change issues. The TPM Environment Committee urges you to vote favorably on HB50. The bill will bring much-needed protection of public funds by prohibiting the State and certain units and instrumentalities of the State from using any appropriation for a magnetic levitation transportation system in the State; and providing that the prohibition does not apply to certain expenditures for salaries; and generally relating to State appropriations for magnetic levitation transportation systems.

Maryland has experienced significant cost overruns in large transportation projects. The Purple Line has encountered major financial problems with a cost overrun of over \$1.4 billion, some of which will be borne by Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties. Excessive cost overruns in development of the Inter County Connector cost millions of federal tax payers' dollars. It is essential that Maryland does not take responsibility for delays and contractual problems if the proposed MAGLEV project is accepted. In fact, as the MAGLEV is a Private, rather than a Private-Public partnership, MD taxpayers should not be responsible for funding any part of the project.

There are still many questions about the safety and reliability of MAGLEV technology. Despite assurances from the Japanese on how well their system will work in the US, the construction of their SCMAGLEV train is way behind schedule and the short test section has had less riders since its inception than METRO typically has in one day. Maryland should not gamble on untested transportation technology that is far from proven to be safe or economical for our communities.

Taxpayers have already covered the over five million Federal dollars cost for the MAGLEV environmental assessment process (i.e., DEIS, EIS) and other aspects of the proposed project. Prince Georges and Baltimore Counties would incur major financial and environmental costs of building the train, and most of the burden will be on overburdened and environmental justice communities. There should be no further burden on Maryland taxpayers from this project.

Maryland's transportation investments should be focused on providing affordable and accessible transportation for all members of our communities. The MAGLEV's limited and excessively expensive ridership cost would benefit only an exceedingly small fraction of the state's population.

Maryland is making great strides on adopting climate friendly policies, many targeted to be met by 2030. Analysis of the completion of the project finds that the MAGLEV would generate more greenhouse gases during construction than it is likely to save over several decades in operation. With a timeline of eight to ten years before ridership even begins, the MAGLEV would be significantly increasing, not decreasing Maryland's emissions, setting us back from achieving our reduction goals.

Additionally, Takoma Park is uniquely located in Montgomery County on the Prince Georges County border. As such, Takoma City residents would be affected directly and indirectly by MAGLEV and its construction, traffic, and environmental impacts. Takoma Park residents should not have to bear the financial costs of a MAGLEV project which is not fully funded by the private developer, especially if the project runs into difficulties and escalating costs as we have seen in the projects mentioned above.

For these reasons we urge a favorable vote for SB50.