

February 22, 2023

Hon. Delegate Kumar P. Barve
Chair of the Environment and Transportation Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Position: Favorable HB 106: State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System

Dear Chair Barve:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 106. Please accept this testimony on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization advocating for walkable, bikeable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the Washington, DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

HB 106 would prohibit the State from using any appropriation for a magnetic levitation transportation system in the State. We support this bill because the proponents of the Maglev project claim that it does not require public subsidies. Thus, this bill ensures that the public will not be subjected to paying for costs associated with the planning of this private investor-driven project.

We have been strong supporters of major rail improvements in the Northeast corridor, but are convinced that the proposed Baltimore-Washington Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMAGLEV) project is the wrong technology and design for the Washington-Baltimore corridor and the NE Corridor as a whole. Instead of allowing public subsidies to be expended on Maglev, we urge the state to lead coordinated efforts on significant investments in both the Amtrak and commuter rail improvement programs.

The Maglev project would have a negative impact on racial and social equity. Construction would plow through majority Black Prince George's County, but the residents of Prince George's County would not be able to take advantage of the project, since the technology and design speed are such that there will only be stops in DC, at BWI Airport, and at Penn Station in Baltimore. Environmental Justice (EJ) communities would be disproportionately impacted, with 80 percent of impacted parcels located in EJ communities.

Furthermore, the high projected cost of a one-way ticket sends a signal that this project is for the wealthiest white-collar commuters, not those who will suffer from the damage wrought by the project or those who need more accessible, frequent, and affordable transit. A \$60 ticket for the SCMAGLEV would be more than six times an existing MARC commuter rail ticket for the same trip (\$9) or existing Amtrak Acela ticket (at minimum \$23).

We are also concerned about the project's negative effect on existing taxpayer investments in transit. The project is already diverting attention from repairing and improving our existing MARC and Amtrak infrastructure. If public funding is required for the Maglev, it could divert

hundreds of millions of dollars in addition to fare revenue lost due to potential reduced ridership on Amtrak and MARC. The Maglev is a potential public-private partnership, and recent experience with P3s in Maryland and other states suggests that public funding will be required.

Given that Maglev is a multi-billion dollar technology yet to be implemented anywhere in the U.S., this project could require significant public funding. The limited time savings is also not worth the cost and risk. The Acela Express between DC and Baltimore currently takes 30 minutes. While Maglev would cut time spent on the train in half, it doesn't account for time spent getting to the station. The average total trip would go from 90 minutes to 75 minutes, which is not worth the risk, nor the costs to equity and environmental quality.

Investing in the Maryland MARC and Amtrak NE Corridor expansion plans would more effectively serve the transit needs of our region and the NE Corridor. Upgrades to the existing rail system could also more easily be extended to other destinations like New York and Boston, than would be the case with Maglev which would need entirely new right-of-way through the very densely developed Northeast. Existing rail stations are located in more central and well-established transit hubs, like DC's Union Station.

A much more cost-effective solution would be to invest in improving our existing infrastructure and upgrade over time to high-speed rail standards. In conclusion, we urge you to pursue upgrades to the nation's existing rail infrastructure, including high-speed rail, in lieu of the SCMAGLEV.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cheryl Cort', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cheryl Cort

Policy Director