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February 21, 2023

## **HB0106: - Prohibited Appropriations - Magnetic Levitation Transportation System**

### **Position: Support HB0106**

The Friends of the Patuxent calls on the Committee to give a favorable report on HB0106 and move it to the full General Assembly for consideration. The bill would prohibit the State from using any appropriation for a MAGLEV system in the state of Maryland, except to fund a review of permits or other evaluations of a MAGLEV system.

The Friends of Patuxent, now in its thirty-second year, is a volunteer organization devoted to the conservation, restoration, and research of the Patuxent Research Refuge (PRR), a unit of the National Wildlife Refuge system and home to the U.S. Geological Survey's Eastern Ecological Science Center. The Center is a leading international institute studying ecological systems and wildlife species. The Refuge was established by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1936. Uniquely, it is the only refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System that is devoted to research. Most famously, the Science Center and Refuge brought back the whooping crane from the edge of extinction through a ground-breaking captive breeding program. Perhaps not as well known, Rachel Carson used pesticides research done at the Refuge as the scientific underpinning of Silent Spring.

Extensive forest, meadow, and wetland habitats on the Refuge are managed for biological diversity, for the protection and benefit of resident and migratory species, and to provide a unique outdoor laboratory for wildlife management related research.

We oppose the MAGLEV project for a number of reasons related to the unique status and function of the Research Refuge.

It will have far-reaching negative impacts, in some cases irreversible, on the ecological functions provided by the PRR. For example, threatened and endangered species live here. Extinction is forever. To undertake a massive construction project on and adjacent to the PRR is utterly contrary to efforts to protect these vulnerable plants and animals.

Research at the PRR often entails working with threatened species. Noise, forest fragmentation, electromagnetic radiation – these adverse variables are likely to upset long-standing research projects.

At 12,841 acres, the PRR is a haven for wildlife and humans throughout the busy Baltimore-Washington corridor. The MAGLEV project calls for a massive, 180-acre maintenance yard, which would include a portion of the PRR. The impacts would be severe, taking ecologically sensitive lands, impacting water resources, including wetlands, streams, and floodplains. The land is currently used for conservation education, in-season hunting, and includes a trail that leads to a fishing pond. Considering the limited outdoor experiences available for residents in this crowded corridor, PRR is an especially vital resource for the Marylanders and visitors from across the country and around the globe.

Finally, the Friends of Patuxent is opposed to this project on a bedrock principle. The PRR belongs to the American people. These lands are held in trust for current and future generations. Our taxpayer dollars have supported the refuge since its inception. No for-profit company should simply be given these lands in violation of the sacred trust that underpins our national network of public lands. The above-ground routing of the MAGLEV, the huge maintenance facility, and the other direct and indirect impacts of this project are all done at the expense of the American people.

We understand and appreciate the many other reasons that affected communities, including taxpayer, environmental, and religious groups as well as agricultural researchers and others who also oppose MAGLEV in its proposed alignments. These others will speak for themselves, but we find ourselves sympathetic to their opposition.

The people of Maryland and their representatives in Annapolis should support HB0106 and its total ban on spending Marylander's money in support of MAGLEV. Any public funds should instead be directed to improving and expanding the network of mass transit in the region.

Sincerely,

Mike Burke  
Advocacy Chair  
Friends of the Patuxent  
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