



Environment Committee

Committee: House Environment and Transportation Committee
Testimony on: HB-106 – State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System
Organization: Takoma Park Mobilization Environment Committee
Submitting: Rhonda Kranz
Position: Favorable
Hearing Date: February 23, 2022

Dear Mr. Chairman and Committee Members:

Thank you for accepting our written testimony today in support of HB106. 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 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.

Thank you for accepting our written testimony in support of HB106. Maryland Legislative Coalitions Climate Justice Wing is a statewide coalition of over 50 grassroots and environmental advocacy organizations focused on climate justice. 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.

Maryland has experienced significant cost overruns in large transportation projects. The Purple Line has encountered major financial problems with a cost overrun of \$1.4 billion. 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 SCMaglev project is accepted. In fact, as the SCMaglev is a Private, rather than a Private-Public partnership, MD taxpayers should not be responsible for funding any part of the project.

Taxpayers have already covered the over five million Federal dollars cost for the SCMaglev environmental assessment process (i.e., DEIS, EIS) and other aspects of the proposed project. Maglev would be built with three stops, DC, BWI, and Baltimore, with no stops along the corridor within the communities it would run through. 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.

Maryland's transportation investments should be focused on providing affordable and accessible transportation for all members of our communities. The SCMaglev'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 SCMaglev 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 SCMaglev would be significantly increasing, not decreasing Maryland's emissions, setting us back from achieving our reduction goals.

Why prohibit appropriations for all Maglev systems? There are multiple concerns regarding the proposed SCMaglev: loss of important ecological habitats; environmental justice, public health impacts, safety of the technology, and whether it would in fact lead to a decrease in greenhouse gas emissions, to name a few. Most of these concerns, particularly safety of the technology and health impacts are inherent in the Maglev technology rather than specific to the proposed SCMaglev project.

Maglev systems require their own operating systems that would run underground and/or on elevated tracks that can be up to 150 feet in the air. It is not compatible with the State's existing transportation systems. Maglev systems take massive amounts of land to build and operate. The proposed Maglev project includes a rail maintenance yard larger than Disneyland that would be located on federal property.

Maryland 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.

Additionally, Takoma Park is uniquely located in Montgomery County on the Prince Georges County border. As such, Takoma City residents would be affected directly 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 HB106.