

Town of Bladensburg

Council Members

Ward I

Trina Brown
Jocelyn Route



Mayor
Takisha James

Council Members

Ward I

Marilyn Blount
Carrol McBryde

February 23, 2023

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chairman
Environment & Transportation Committee
Room 251, House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Barve,

My name is Takisha James and I serve as Mayor of the Town of Bladensburg, located in Prince George's County, Maryland. I want to thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of House Bill 106, cross-filed in the Senate as SB 50, State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System. I am here today on behalf of the Town Council and our nearly 10,000 residents to ask for your support of HB 106 sponsored by Delegate Nicole Williams.

The Town of Bladensburg lies directly along the proposed route of the Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMaglev) system from Washington, DC to Baltimore. While my community has a number of concerns around safety, human and environmental impacts, long-term impacts on our historical buildings, which date back to the 1700's, as well as recently constructed buildings and homes, we understand this train may come to fruition. It is with this in mind that I ask you to strongly consider protecting Maryland taxpayers from the unknown financial risks that can arise with such a project like this. The project developer, Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail, has communicated publicly and repeatedly that this project will be privately funded and not rely on government funding. The truth is this project has already benefitted from taxpayer dollars with the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) award of \$27.8 million by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). With the passage of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), it is also likely they will seek and receive more government funding through possible paths created in the IIJA. To build public trust in the developer, it would be most helpful for them to also testify in support HB 106. This would be a strong demonstration of their integrity and would show taxpayers that we can trust them and give credence to their claim that we will never be expected to foot the bill for this project at any time in the future. I am asking you on behalf of our community to help ensure the project developer keeps their word by moving this bill forward during the current legislative session.

The strength of the American economy is in allowing the consumer market to dictate which businesses succeed or fail. Looking through the lens of history, there have been times when we have witnessed the unthinkable. In 2008, for example, the federal government had to bail out the

auto industry and Wall Street banks with billions of taxpayer dollars. The reality is that unimaginable situations can happen and the unexpected does occur.


The automobile and banking industries have had deep roots in the American economy for over 100 years and many of those years have been hugely profitable. To see these well-established industries proven vulnerable when crisis struck, should serve as a lesson to us. In learning from these examples, I have to question how a newly-introduced technology that has not yet experienced success in the U.S. market can stand on its own and guarantee profits in the future.

This bill does not delve into whether one is for or against the SCMaglev. For Maryland, it simply ensures our tax dollars will not be spent for any phase of this project. I believe it is the duty of elected officials to protect our residents from future financial hardship with a project like the SCMaglev. HB 106 will go a long way toward protecting residents of the Town of Bladensburg, Prince George's County, and the entire state of Maryland by ensuring taxpayers are not left with a financial deficit should the developer decide to walk away from it or be unable to continue funding it in the future.

I want to thank each member of the committee for the opportunity to speak today. I also want to applaud Delegate Williams for her leadership in seeking to codify protection for Maryland residents. Again, I ask the committee to please support HB 106.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Takisha D. James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T' and 'J'.

Takisha D. James
Mayor, Town of Bladensburg