

**Subject: Written Testimony in Favor of SB0079 – State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations –
Magnetic Levitation Transportation System (Cross-file HB0170)**

To: Chairman Guzzone, Vice Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee,

My name is Anatol Sucher. I am writing in support of SB0079, sponsored by Senator Alonzo Washington.

Description of Bill:

Senate Bill SB0079 would prohibit Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) from appropriating funds from the state of Maryland to build the proposed SCMaglev transportation system, “providing that the prohibition does not apply to certain expenditures for salaries” of state employees. This exception is in response to Northeast Maglev’s concerns that earlier versions of this bill had unintended consequences in that it would inadvertently tie their hands to work with the appropriate state personnel to acquire permits or other required approvals should the project go forward. By including this provision, the bill should be acceptable to BWRR and the Northeast Maglev.

There are numerous social, environmental, cultural and economic reasons why the costs of the proposed Maglev project greatly outweigh its benefits. The State is facing increased limitations in funding for transportation projects. Such projects must meet the needs of all Maryland residents. The SCMaglev will not relieve commuter traffic congestion. It is an overpriced, limited access train for the wealthy. It is a vanity project which will cause irreparable fiscal and environmental harm to the state.

BWRR and Northeast Maglev have stated they want to be able to access state funding “if” they need financial funding later in their project. As such projects always have cost overruns, and since federal funding for the project has been expended, this will lead to a chronic hemorrhaging of state funds if this legislation is not passed.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding must serve the greater good for all Maryland residents, not be wasted on a vanity project that will serve only the wealthy few.

Currently the NEPA process has been paused on this project. Significant work needs to be done to move this project to the next level. But the federal funding to allow this is not in place. Instead, state funding will be demanded to push SCMaglev through regulatory hurdles.

The Japanese government has offered to invest in the project, putting the State of Maryland at risk of having the Japanese government demand state funds for the project.

The BWRR thus far has not demonstrated the ability to meet the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE)’s requirements for protecting our watersheds and waterways. Construction of this project will significantly lower water quality in Tier II areas. BWRR is not able to mitigate the damage. Beaverdam Creek, the healthiest stream and sub-watershed in the Anacostia

Watershed will be irreparably imperiled as a result of SCMaglev. In addition, the ongoing use of the area for a train maintenance facility (using toxic substances) will be an ongoing threat and source of continued degradation.

Additional harm that this project would cause includes:

- Fragmentation of remaining forest leading to loss of species habitat and accelerating conditions for invasive species to flourish. The significance of forest fragmentation is grossly underestimated in the impact reports. The Patuxent Research Refuge as known today will be destroyed.
- Loss of biodiversity
- Disruption to Green Corridor - The area that covers Greenbelt Park, the Greenbelt Forest Preserve, Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, and Patuxent Research Refuge is the largest contiguous span of forest on the East Coast between Richmond, VA, and Boston, MA. Former senator Paul Sarbanes aptly referred to this area the "lungs of Maryland." It cannot be replaced!
- Loss of natural cooling, carbon storage and air pollution capture

SCMaglev will hinder, not help the state to face looming challenges due to the climate crisis. Based on recent research, the construction of the SCMaglev will generate more greenhouse gases than it will save for likely several decades. We do not have decades to wait for such a "benefit". In addition, the project will destroy hundreds of acres of wild green spaces including a forest preserve, wetlands and wildlife refuge all of which are needed for CO2 storage, clean air and water, and climate cooling

Senate Bill SB0079 will protect the state from losing funding for crucial transportation and infrastructure projects throughout the state.

In closing, I ask that SB0079 be given a favorable vote and moved out of committee.

Sincerely,
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