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February 21, 2024

**HB0170**

The Honorable Mark Korman  
Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
251 Taylor House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Regina T. Boyce  
Vice Chair, House Environment and Transportation Committee  
251 Taylor House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION TO HB0170 —STATE FINANCE – PROHIBITED APPROPRIATIONS – MAGNETIC LEVITATION TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

Dear Chair Korman, Chair T. Boyce, and Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committees:

My name is Bill Scott, and I am the President and COO of Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR). I appear before you today to convey our **strong opposition to HB0170**.

BWRR is a railroad franchised by the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) to operate a 311mph Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMAGLEV) train between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. Once constructed, the train will take passengers between Baltimore and Washington in about 15 minutes, accounting for a stop at BWI Airport. Not only will the project result in “substantial economic and social benefits to Baltimore and the State of Maryland,” as deemed by the Maryland PSC, but most notably, the project is not requesting any State appropriations.

HB0170 aims to prohibit any appropriations from being used by the State or certain units or instrumentalities of the State for a Magnetic Levitation system in Maryland. Passing a bill prohibiting appropriations that have not been requested is not only bad public policy, but also sends two clear messages to Maryland citizens:

1. That the region’s current rail transit system continues to be deeply misunderstood and dismissed.
2. That in a time of severe budget shortfalls, the Maryland State Legislature would rather spend time debating a bill that addresses a non-existent issue than tackle the very real, immediate concerns facing the State this year.

One of the main arguments behind this bill is that the Maryland taxpayer should never be “on the hook” for a project such as ours, further implying that State funds are better used elsewhere to improve and upgrade existing rail. We agree that the State should focus on improving state-run transportation projects, which is why we have never asked the legislature for financial



investment. This is especially crucial this year as Maryland faces a \$761 million budget shortfall and MDOT grapples with a \$3 billion+ shortfall over the next six years.

Additionally, Maryland's current rail infrastructure has already nearly met its physical limits, and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) conducted by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) confirms that the BWRR SCMAGLEV would, in fact, alleviate pressure on current rail infrastructure and Maryland taxpayers. It states, "To the degree that trains in the corridor are expected to be at capacity between 2030 and 2045, these diversions [to SCMAGLEV] free up capacity for additional travelers without making public investment to add capacity."

In other words, by alleviating stress on MARC and Amtrak, taxpayers will see savings through added transit capacity and reduced traffic -- without state appropriations. These savings can be reinvested in improving first- and last-mile transportation systems throughout the state, providing lawmakers the opportunity to invest in the well-rounded transit future so many Marylanders wish to see.

While the SCMAGLEV is not requesting State funding, passing a bill that prevents Maryland from pursuing remedies to resolve issues that plague its citizens is simply an effort that we cannot support.

HB0170 would signal to Maryland citizens and to the world that the state is closed to innovative, future-oriented, and true solutions to worsening issues.

For these reasons, Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail **strongly opposes HB0170** and urges the committee to submit an **unfavorable report**. Thank you for the opportunity to appear.

Sincerely,

Bill Scott  
President / COO