

My name is Kathy Bartolomeo, and I am writing in support of SB0055, sponsored by Senators A. Washington, Augustine, and Beidle.

The state's transportation funding is facing limitations and funding needs to be allocated toward urgent and practical projects – those that will benefit Maryland citizens – the taxpayers who pay for these projects. The transportation needs of the state and its residents are for effective, affordable, and accessible commuter options – not an overpriced, limited access, train for the wealthy.

BWRR and Northeast Maglev have stated they want to be able to access state funding “if” they need financial funding later in their project. Two points: 1) projects of this size always have cost overruns, and 2) they are currently facing loss of federal funding. These two points will lead BWRR and Northeast Maglev to be knocking on the proverbial “door” of the state Comptroller on a regular basis if this legislation is not passed.

BWRR is currently seeking funding from the infrastructure investment and Jobs Act funds and possibly other grant sources at the federal level. If provided they would use taxpayers' dollars for a project that will serve the wealthy. Their federal funding has been fully expended at this point. State funds should serve the greater good of Maryland residents.

My concern is that if this project were to ever “begin” it will run out of funding repeatedly, will be over budget continuously, will continuously ask the state for untenable amounts of funding, and the result will be that our financial resources and precious land will be seriously compromised for an unneeded project that will never be completed. And our land – a precious natural resource – will be forever damaged – for ABSOLUTELY NO BENEFIT TO ANYONE.

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.

BWRR will need investors. Indeed, the Japanese government has offered to invest in the project. This puts Maryland at risk of having the Japanese government demanding funds for this project. It would be very important to have legislation to impede this.

In addition, BWRR has not, thus far, been able to demonstrate to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) that the construction of this project will meet MDE's requirements for protecting our waterways – also a precious natural resource.

Much is on the line in this bill. Maryland's financial resources, our natural resources of land and water, and the integrity of our communities.

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 "possibility". 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.

Protecting the state from losing funding for needed transportation and infrastructure projects throughout the state is the best option.

I ask that SB0055 be given a favorable vote and moved out of committee.

Sincerely,
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