

January 27, 2025

Subject: Written Testimony in Favor of SB0055 – State Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System (Cross-file HB0400)

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

I am writing in support of SB0055, sponsored by Senators A. Washington, Augustine, and Beidle.

Senate Bill SB0055 would prohibit Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) from appropriating funds from the state of Maryland to build the proposed SCMaglev transportation system.

I support SB0055 because Maryland is facing severe budget constraints in general, and in transportation funding in particular. State funding needs to be allocated toward urgent and practical transportation projects that benefit all Maryland citizens and all the taxpayers who pay for these projects. Such projects need to be affordable and accessible to all, and address a wide range of needs across the state.

The SCMaglev will serve only the Baltimore-Washington corridor, will be accessible at only three stops, and ticket prices are projected to be expensive. Thus, the proposed project does not meet acceptable criteria of accessibility and affordability, and does not address the broader range of pressing transportation issues facing Maryland.

Given the state's budget issues and other more urgent transportation needs, any state funding for this project is very unwise, even if for provisional back-up funding in the future. Such projects always run the risk of untenable amounts of cost overruns that significantly strain the state's limited funding resources.

The SCMaglev project also presents major environmental issues. The projected route for the train will destroy hundreds of acres of wild green spaces – including large swaths of a forest preserve, wetlands, and a wildlife refuge – all of which are essential ecosystem services needed for CO² storage, climate cooling, and clean air and water. These green spaces make up a sizable part of an area known as the "lungs of the Chesapeake."

In addition, recent research indicates that, for likely several decades to come, construction of the SCMaglev will generate more greenhouse gases than it will save. Given the climate crisis, we cannot wait decades for what is only a projected greenhouse gas reduction.

BWRR also has yet 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.

For all these reasons, any appropriation of state funds for the SCMaglev project would be an unwise use of limited state funds.

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

Sincerely,

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