



## A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

### GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL

Emmett V. Jordan, *Mayor*

Kristen L.K. Weaver, *Mayor Pro Tem*

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### HB400\SB65 – Prohibited Appropriations - MAGLEV Transportation System SUPPORT

On behalf of the City of Greenbelt, I offer this written testimony in support of HB400\SB65.

The proposed SCMAGLEV project has raised significant concerns, particularly around the prudent use of Maryland's state resources which could otherwise improve existing transportation services. Transparency issues regarding the project's financial sustainability, erroneous environmental impact statements, and potential environmental degradation have been documented. Additionally, the project's energy inefficiency and unlikely congestion relief are at odds with Maryland's current budget shortfall of approximately \$2.7B which will impact essential public services. Overall, the project's purported benefits are overshadowed by its financial and ecological implications. More specifically:

- 1. Maryland Department of Transportation \$1.3B Deficit.** As of September 2024, the Maryland Department of Transportation is dealing with a \$1.3B budget shortfall. To solve this shortfall, the Department will cut roughly \$1 billion from its operating budget. Another \$2 billion will be cut from its capital budget and 8% cut from the budget for highway, transit, ports and airports agencies, along with the Motor Vehicle Administration. Local governments will see a \$400 million reduction - monies that are critical to local government providing safe roads and sidewalks for our residents and visitors. And while we recognize that the MAGLEV funding may be a few years off, the Transportation Secretary is quoted as saying "This is not a new problem for our state." The state cannot afford to provide public funding for what has been touted as a private venture, to the detriment of state operations, road/infrastructure and critical local support.
- 2. State Resources Would Better Support Existing Rail Service.** Any state resources that could be potentially allocated to support the MAGLEV project would be far better spent on sustaining and improving existing rail and local transit services. These services include High-speed Amtrak service, the MTA, MARC trains, and WMATA (metro) providing far greater benefits to Marylanders in terms of access and affordability. Much of the access and benefits not proposed



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3. to be supported by the MAGLEV project. Substantial public investments to sustain and improve these services will be required in the coming years. Funding for these services; funding for bicycle & pedestrian connections, and ways to move commuters to our transit hubs are the best place to put taxpayer resources.
4. **Incomplete Information and Transparency on Public Information.** The information presented to the public about the MAGLEV so far does not show operating and maintenance costs offsetting revenues. There are a number of significant unanswered questions remaining regarding the financial viability of the project. Further, while the project was touted as a private venture where no public funds were to be requested, it appears that public funding will be sought after. We feel that if the project is financially viable, then it should be supported operating revenues and private investment, not needing public monies.
5. **The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) Flawed.** The Federal Railroad Administration released a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the project in 2021. The City performed a thorough review of the project that uncovered a significant number of errors and omissions. An example of one such error is the project's ridership estimates and related projections (including travel time savings, induced travel, and reliability benefits) are grossly over-inflated, leading to further inflation of estimated congestion relief and projected revenues.
6. **Anticipated Damage to the Environment and Natural Ecosystem.** The MAGLEV project would also destroy sensitive environmental resources and habitats. Including impacting rare, threatened and endangered species and eliminating vast swaths of tree canopy that are treasured by Marylanders. The project could impact nearly 89 acres of wetlands and up to 30 acres of Maryland Nontidal Wetlands of Special State Concern (NTWSSC). These wetlands have exceptional ecological or educational value of statewide significance. The impacts to the NTWSSC located in the Greenbelt Forest Preserve along Goddard Branch are of particular concern to Greenbelt.
7. **The Project Will Not Relieve Congestion.** Norman Marshall, President and founder of Smart Mobility, Inc., who assisted Greenbelt with its review, stated, "The supposed congestion relief for non-SCMAGLEV travelers will not materialize. Instead, construction of the SCMAGLEV will create a two-tier system with a fast ride for the affluent and negative consequences for everyone else." The DEIS overestimates travel time savings and reliability benefits by a factor of five or more. Three-quarters of the purported economic benefits of SCMAGLEV are travel time and reliability benefits and these are overestimated by a factor of 15 or more. The other significant economic benefits calculations in the DEIS rest both on inflated ridership and on unreliable vehicle miles traveled (VMT) multipliers.
8. **The Project Is Not "Green" and Energy Friendly.** The project is not "green" nor energy efficient as suggested. It will increase energy consumption by the equivalent of approximately 88,900 homes



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per year during operations. It is unclear if the regional transmission organization will be able to meet this increased need or what the impacts on reliability and consumer prices may be. This energy demand concern is exacerbated by the fast growth in EV charging needs throughout the state putting additional demands on the electric grid. However, the use of EVs by our residents has a much greater impact on improving environmental quality and the quality of life of our resident and City.

In summary, State resources that could potentially be allocated to the MAGLEV project in the future would be better spent on improving existing rail and local transit services, providing support to Maryland roads and infrastructure and supporting local governments and the services that residents depend on. Maryland taxpayer resources should not be appropriated for a MAGLEV System that undermines the natural resources so many Marylanders are fighting trying to preserve.

On behalf of the City of Greenbelt, we urge you to support HB400\SB65

If you would like additional information and/or have any questions, please do not hesitate to me at [ejordan@greenbeltmd.gov](mailto:ejordan@greenbeltmd.gov) or contact Josué Salmerón, MBA, PMP, City Manager, at Direct: 240-542-2024  
Email: [jsalmeron@greenbeltmd.gov](mailto:jsalmeron@greenbeltmd.gov).

On behalf of the Greenbelt City Council, I respectfully submit this testimony. Thank you for your attention.

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