

February 12, 2025

Testimony in Favor of HB0400 – Railroad Companies - Condemnation Authority – Application

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Environment & Transportation Committee Members

My name is Robin Todd and I am the Conservation Chair of the Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS). We were founded in 1945 and now have about 2000 members organized in 15 chapters across the state. Our mission is to study, conserve and enjoy the wild birds which spend at least part of their lives in our state. We own 10 bird sanctuaries across the state, all of which are open to the public at no charge.

I strongly support HB0400 since it will prevent the inappropriate use of public funds for a private corporation to pursue the ill-advised and environmentally harmful Maglev project. It is ill-advised because it will be too expensive for most passengers and will have too few stops to be useful to local people.

Maglev will be environmentally harmful because it will destroy forest and wetland habitat that is vital for native and migratory birds. These lands are primarily publicly owned and are one of the few remaining areas of natural habitat remaining in the increasingly crowded Baltimore-Washington corridor.

Since the 1970's, North America has lost 3 billion birds, fully 29% of its total population¹. Maglev will only add to this toll. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources has designated certain Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN), including American Kestrel, Blue-winged Warbler, Eastern Meadowlark, Prairie Warbler, Red-headed Woodpecker, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, and Yellow-breasted Chat². At least 261 bird species have been recorded on PRR and 240 at BARC. All of the SGCN species noted above have been recorded at the Patuxent Research Refuge and/or Beltsville Agricultural research Center (BARC), and some breed there. For example, American Kestrel, a rapidly declining species, finds BARC one of its few strongholds, with a number of successful nesting pairs. Forest habitat will be fragmented, negatively impacting Forest Interior Dwelling Bird Species (FIDS), which are in serious decline due to forest fragmentation.

I ask the Committee to vote favorably on HB0400.

Sincerely,



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References cited on next page.

¹ Rosenberg, et al, Decline of the North American Avifauna, Science, vol 366, issue 6461, pp. 120-124, 4 October 2019, <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/366/6461/120>

² Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Maryland State Wildlife Action Plan 2015-2025, chapter 3, Maryland's Wildlife and Species of Greatest Conservation Need, pages 39-45, https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Documents/SWAP/SWAP_Chapter3.pdf