

The Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit (MCRT) asked the candidates running for governor, attorney general, and comptroller their position on building and operating the SCMaglev.



Maryland Coalition
for Responsible Transit

We thank the candidates who responded to MCRT’s five (5) questions. We present their responses for your information and consideration.

To jump to the office or candidate, click on the office title in the table below.

Office	Candidates Contacted	Candidates Responding
Governor	Rushern Baker (D) - withdrew Jon Baron (D) Dan Cox (R) Robin Ficker (R) Peter Franchot (D) Doug Gansler (D) Ralph Jaffee (D) Ashwani Jain (D) John King (D) Wes Moore (D) Tom Perez (D) Jerome Segal (D) Kelly Schultz (R) Joe Werner (R)	Rushern Baker (D) - withdrew Ashwani Jain (D) John King (D)
Attorney General	Anthony G. Brown (D) Catherine C. O’Malley (D) Michael Anthony Peroutka (R) Jim Shalleck (R)	Anthony Brown (D) Jim Shalleck (R)
Comptroller	Tim Adams (D) Brooke Elizabeth Lierman (D) Barry Glassman (R)	

Candidates for Governor Responses

Responding Candidates: Rushern Baker (D)—*withdrew candidacy*

Ashwani Jain (D)

John King (D)

Question #1:

Knowing the SCMaglev is a privately sponsored, very expensive, and risky train project, would you agree to the allocation of Maryland taxpayer funds to support it? In turn, what would you require of the SCMaglev project sponsors to protect the majority-minority communities affected by the project? What would you require of the sponsors to reduce the environmental impacts of the project?

Jain:

I do not support the MAGLEV project as it doesn't address environmental costs; it would be too expensive to use; and it would not even stop in Prince George's County (even though its residents would endure years of construction).

We must ensure that all legislative bills which could have an impact on our environment (for example, those that focus on transportation, infrastructure or housing), have environmental impact studies conducted before the Governor signs them into law. This requirement will ensure the public has advanced identification and disclosure of potential harms posed by the legislation on our surrounding environment. To ensure this requirement is adhered to, we must increase funding for more environmental-policy analysts in our state government.

King:

I oppose the SCMaglev project and would not agree to providing Maryland taxpayer funds to support it. The proposed route could damage ecologically sensitive areas like wetlands and streams. Additionally, it would disrupt neighborhoods during construction that would see little benefit from the finished project. Prince George's County would see disruption from construction but not get a single stop. The Maglev would also be so expensive as to be accessible only to those at the top of the income scale. Investing in the public transit projects described above (building the Red Line, completing the Purple Line, building the Southern Maryland Light Rail project, expanding the MARC west and increasing the frequency of MARC trains, and improving bus service) is a much better use of resources to advance the public good than the Maglev.

Question #2:

Have you been or are you being solicited for support of the proposed SCMaglev project by Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail or the Northeast Maglev? Have you accepted campaign donations? If so, do you plan to reveal this information to the public for full transparency?

Jain:

No - Since launching in January 2021, I have not only committed to rejecting donations from all developers, businesses, PACs and polluters, BUT am the only candidate who has also committed that every event I host is free and open to the public. Unlike other candidates, I don't charge residents to meet me. And with my mobile offices, I'm personally meeting voters in a different county each and every day of the week.

And with my Anti-Corruption measures proposed in the "Maryland Now Plan" - I will ban the Governor, Lt. Governor and agency heads from personally owning a business or stocks (retirement savings are exempt) while in office; ban the Governor, Lt. Governor and agency heads from serving on for-profit corporate boards while in office; and impose a 4-year lobbying ban for the Governor, Lt. Governor and agency heads after they leave their positions.

King:

I have not been solicited to support the Maglev.

Question #3:

Currently, 88 state legislators and 10 mayors are challenging the I-270/I-495 expansion Supplemental DEIS, partly based on its previous lack of adherence to both Maryland and federal greenhouse gas emission regulations designed to combat climate change. Reflecting on these actions, do you believe that the SCMaglev DEIS sufficiently addresses state and federal requirements for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, both during project construction and operation?

Jain:

It does not address requirements for a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. That's why I support a comprehensive infrastructure plan that reduces congestion, pollution, and provides greater security, accessibility and connectivity for all around our state. This will also connect people to jobs (thus fostering greater economic security) and connect businesses to their employees (thus helping our local economy).

My full plan (found here: <https://jainforgov.medium.com/transportation-c96c3f396c1>) goes into detail my plans to making public transit FREE for every resident; ensuring environmental impact studies for all transportation projects; expanding Metro (Red and Purple lines, in addition to the Southern Maryland Rapid Transit Project); expanding MARC Train services; expanding ridesharing; more designated bus lanes; smart growth and mixed-use development; and sustainably expanding the Bay Bridge (using the findings of the environmental impact studies that were conducted). We must also get to 100% clean energy by 2035. To get there - as detailed in my full Climate Change policy memo shared since last January 2021 (<https://jainforgov.medium.com/climate-change-f3a093f3b9bf>) - I would focus on everything from Climate Justice; stopping the subsidization of trash incinerators and paper mills; mandating Environmental Impact Studies; Protecting and Investing in the Bay (including increasing poultry farm inspections, investing in stormwater detention systems and assisting with oyster restoration); Investing in Clean Energy (solar, community solar programs for residents, hydro and wind); Improving our state's RPS; making public transit free; increasing access to public transportation projects; smart growth and mixed-use development; ban single-use plastic bags; ending state funding of synthetic turf on playgrounds; and improving composting throughout the state.

King:

No, I do not. The Maglev project would disrupt as much as 1,000 acres and would cut through woods and permanently alter wetlands. The proposed maintenance yard of 180 acres would impact one of the few protected green areas we have in the Baltimore-Washington region. Furthermore, there are other unintended environmental effects that are indirectly tied to the Maglev that we must consider. With predictions that the Maglev could significantly siphon off MARC ridership while still being largely too expensive for most riders, it will divert revenue from our existing transit systems, making those systems subject to fare increases and service cuts, and then even more out of reach to remaining riders. This will lead to even more dependence on cars and make transit a luxury only for people who can afford it, and will not decrease our carbon emissions as middle-class commuters are squeezed out of alternatives to driving a personal vehicle. Greenhouse gas emissions aside, we know this project will significantly disrupt conservation efforts, including potentially requiring rerouting the Patuxent River, and we must look at the whole environmental impact and not just carbon emissions.

Question #4:

The public has never obtained or had access to unredacted ridership reports or the job claims data referred to in the SCMaglev DEIS. Further, several DEIS commenting agencies, including the Maryland Department of the Environment, have suggested that a new post-Covid ridership study should be commissioned and released to the public. Have you seen substantiated evidence about these ridership and job claims? Would you support the commissioning of a new, fully transparent, and independently verifiable ridership study, as well as the release of concrete job claims data?

Jain:

Yes I would support fully transparent and independently verifiable studies. But the biggest commitment I can make is not waiting until after the election or budget process to include residents in the process. That's why - unlike other candidates, I'm fully accessible because 100% of our events are free; and I'm fully accountable because 100% of our campaign is run by residents and community leaders from every age, background and county.

King:

I have not seen evidence related to ridership and job claims for a Maglev project. I would support a new study that is fully transparent and does not redact important information like ridership numbers to the public. We see frequently that private-sector projects overpromise on job numbers and then vastly underperform once given approval. A Maglev project is no different and we need transparent reports and accurate predictions to evaluate the project.

Question #5:

Maryland residents who live on or near the proposed SCMaglev paths have numerous concerns about the potential negative impact of the project on the quality of life and value of residents' properties and their communities. What type of financial and legal assistance should the project sponsors (and perhaps ultimately the state) provide to those residents and communities impacted by the proposed SCMaglev project?

Jain:

Corporate-social responsibility is not a luxury but a necessity. Businesses (and contractors) do not live in an isolated bubble, but rather must care about the well-being of their employees and the community that surrounds and supports them. As such, we must be smart about which companies and contractors do business in our state. While I want to bring more businesses and jobs into Maryland, we must not do so by selling out our residents.

This means that we need to ensure that they are offering fair wages and benefits for their employees as well as consider levying impact fees to support schools and housing in the communities they will be impacting.

This means that we need to ensure we provide proper protections for workers: ensuring they have a right to organize, have access to quality and affordable healthcare, and are treated with dignity.

Likewise, we should not be begging these corporations and contractors to bring jobs at the tremendous cost to taxpayers. Instead, we should be prioritizing organic job growth in our communities.

King:

The project sponsors must be fully responsible for making residents financially whole for all impacted residents. This includes compensation for any decreases in property values, total clean-up of environmental contamination and even relocation expenses if that is necessary. Residents should not be footing any of the bill for negative impacts caused by the Maglev project. I also believe that state taxpayers should not be financially responsible for fixing SCMaglev's mess. While I think for the sake of making residents whole quickly the state should provide any financial and legal compensation SCMaglev would try to withhold, the state should also be aggressive in recouping the money and making sure SCMaglev pays back every single penny the state has to spend related to their project's impacts.

Candidates for Attorney General Responses

Responding Candidates: Anthony Brown (D)

Jim Shalleck (R)

Question #1:

Knowing the SCMaglev is a privately sponsored, very expensive, and risky train project, would you agree to the allocation of Maryland taxpayer funds to support it? In turn, what would you require of the SCMaglev project sponsors to protect the majority-minority communities affected by the project? What would you require of the sponsors to reduce the environmental impacts of the project?

Brown:

My number one concern regarding the SCMaglev project is minimizing the potential impacts of the project on our local majority-minority communities, should this project move forward. Given my concerns about this project and its unique nature, I led a letter on February 8, 2021, to the Federal Railroad Administration and the Maryland Department of Transportation requesting an extension of the public comment period required under federal law. Subsequently the comment period was extended an additional 32 days from the original 90 days.

While the DEIS does not identify a preferred alternative and the FRA has since paused their review of the project, I remain concerned about the potential impacts this project will have on the identified communities and cannot support this project unless the local community's concerns are addressed, tangible economic benefits to those communities are identified, and the environmental impacts of the project are well within the environmental standards set under federal and all applicable laws.

Shalleck:

I would not support taxpayer funds to support the SCMaglev project. Any disruptions, damage, and detrimental effect on majority-minority communities caused by this project would have to be compensated by the project both by financial renumeration and physical repair. The project would have to comply with the environmental standards set by the local communities affected by the project and the State Departments overseeing environmental compliance. Non-compliance would face substantial fines and reimbursement for remedial work.

Question #2:

Knowing the SCMaglev is a privately sponsored, very expensive, and risky train project, would you agree to the allocation of Maryland taxpayer funds to support it? In turn, what would you require of the SCMaglev project sponsors to protect the majority-minority communities affected by the project? What would you require of the sponsors to reduce the environmental impacts of the project?

Brown:

I have not accepted such campaign contributions in my campaign for Attorney General or as a Congressman, and I will disclose all campaign contributions, regardless of source, in compliance with Maryland and federal campaign finance laws.

As a member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, my staff and I have met with representatives of the proposed SCMaglev project, primarily for the purpose of addressing the issues raised by the community. I have participated in countless community meetings and forums on this issue, and I believe it is important to hear from all sides of the issue.

Shalleck:

I have not been solicited for support of this project. I have not received any campaign donations from the project or any of its supporters to my knowledge. If I did, I would reveal this information on my financial disclosures to the State Board of Elections which are available to the public.

Question #3:

Currently, 88 state legislators and 10 mayors are challenging the I-270/I-495 expansion Supplemental DEIS, partly based on its previous lack of adherence to both Maryland and federal greenhouse gas emission regulations designed to combat climate change. Reflecting on these actions, do you believe that the SCMaglev DEIS sufficiently addresses state and federal requirements for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, both during project construction and operation?

Brown:

The environmental review process as laid out by federal and state law are critical to ensuring transparency in large and potentially disruptive projects in local communities. A critical element to this review process is the public comment period, which allows concerned citizens to outline their concerns about projects like Maglev.

During the environmental review process for the Maglev project, more than 4,000 comments were received, many of which expressed serious concerns about potential impacts in local communities. Due to questions raised during this process, the Federal Railroad Administration decided to pause and more thoroughly review the project to ensure the project is on track to reach its stated objectives, one of which is greenhouse gas reduction.

I defer to the FRA on their decision to pause the review of the project to better understand the impacts, and I believe such a thorough review will lead to the best outcome for our local communities and our state as we strive to reach our climate goals.

Shalleck:

I would consult with Federal and State regulators to determine if requirements for greenhouse gas emissions are being adhered to. If not, and compliance was not being followed, I would pursue legal action to force compliance with severe sanctions.

Question #4:

The public has never obtained or had access to unredacted ridership reports or the job claims data referred to in the SCMaglev DEIS. Further, several DEIS commenting agencies, including the Maryland Department of the Environment, have suggested that a new post-Covid ridership study should be commissioned and released to the public. Have you seen substantiated evidence about these ridership and job claims? Would you support the commissioning of a new, fully transparent, and independently verifiable ridership study, as well as the release of concrete job claims data?

Shalleck:

Yes, I would support the commissioning of a new, transparent, and independently verifiable ridership study and the release of concrete job claims data. I have not seen evidence in these regards. The public has a right to know this data. Transparency is critical in the promotion of a massive project such as this. It has enormous effect on the environment, businesses, residential neighborhoods, and property values.

Brown:

My staff and I have only seen reports and data related to ridership and jobs claims that are readily available to the public. I support a full transparent and educated process with regards to this project. While I believe the United States is decades behind our peer countries in high-speed rail and I support investing in transit alternatives, it is

important that we are clear-eyed about our approach and educated on all the impacts, whether that be social, environmental, or economic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we move and work. I think it would be reasonable, considering the suggestion by the MD Department of Environment, to potentially look at the commissioning of a new study to understand how people are traveling around the region as we navigate the post-pandemic landscape.

Question #5:

Maryland residents who live on or near the proposed SCMaglev paths have numerous concerns about the potential negative impact of the project on the quality of life and value of residents' properties and their communities. What type of financial and legal assistance should the project sponsors (and perhaps ultimately the state) provide to those residents and communities impacted by the proposed SCMaglev project?

Brown:

Throughout my time in public office, I have been a proponent of greater investments in our infrastructure network that will reduce congestion, foster economic development, spur job creation, and reduce both fuel consumption and carbon emissions. While Maglev trains are one option, any transformative project along the Northeast Corridor must promote economic benefits and long-term growth in impacted communities, like Prince George's County.

The reality is that the United States is behind most countries around the world—Japan, China, France, Great Britain, and Spain—that successfully operate high-speed rail networks to the benefit of their communities. Consequently, it makes sense that we should strive to bring such technology to the United States. That said, I have conducted numerous town hall meetings where the issue of Maglev has been raised, and I believe it is critical we adopt any such project in a responsible manner that includes a transparent process with sufficient public input. Further, as the next Attorney General, I will only be able to support this project if it does not disrupt neighborhoods and brings tangible local benefits to our communities.

Shalleck:

Project sponsors should be required to maintain a fund for remediation of damages, harm to neighborhoods, the environment, and other detrimental effects that impact property values. This fund should be guaranteed by the State. Taxpayers should not be responsible for these costs.

Candidates for Comptroller Responses

The candidates for Maryland Comptroller while contacted by MCRT, did not respond to our inquiry.