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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401  
PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY DELEGATION

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CRYSTAL HYPOLITE  
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May 19, 2021

Secretary Gregory Slater  
Maryland Department of Transportation  
Maryland Transit Administration  
Harry R. Hughes Department of Transportation Building  
7201 Corporate Center Drive  
Hanover, Maryland 21076  
[secretary@mdot.state.md.us](mailto:secretary@mdot.state.md.us)

Mr. Amit Bose, Acting Administrator  
Federal Railroad Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590  
[Amit.Bose@dot.gov](mailto:Amit.Bose@dot.gov)

RE: NO BUILD Option for the Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMAGLEV) Project

Dear Secretary Slater and Acting Administrator Bose:

On behalf of the Prince George's County Delegation of the Maryland House of Delegates, in concurrence with County Executive Angela Alsobrooks, the Prince George's County Council, and the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Commission (MNCPPC), we support the "NO BUILD" option in the SCMAGLEV Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Prince George's County is the second largest jurisdiction in Maryland with nearly one million residents, and it will be the most negatively impacted by the proposed project. A large number of our constituents have expressed serious reservations and are on record opposing the SCMAGLEV. As a Delegation, our concerns include:

- The potential future cost to taxpayers, and vulnerability for State and County government if the project begins and then fails, is sold to another entity, or ends in bankruptcy;
- The SCMAGLEV, as proposed, will cut through Prince George's County, which will be the only county with above ground conduction, disrupting businesses, residents and taking land including private property and large tracts of open space and trees, causing serious environmental degradation—all without providing any benefit to our constituents;

- Passenger safety documentation and health impacts of electronic magnetic field technology, which have not been sufficiently studied or presented in the DEIS; and
- Lack of prioritization and inevitable displacement of local public transportation projects and funding.

### **Taxpayer Protections**

SCMAGLEV investors have previously accessed federal taxpayer dollars through the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to fund the Draft Environmental Impact Study (DEIS). Although it is touted by Baltimore Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) as an unprecedented private mass transportation project, that characterization is *not accurate*. Moving forward, BWRR is asking Prince Georgians to cede public lands to for-profit global corporations and private equity firms, with zero protections in place for taxpayers. An investment in this transportation project can yield substantial profits for financiers; however, there are no fiduciary protections in place to defend our County and our State from the need to appropriate land and funds should the project fail. If the project fails, the effects of environmental destruction and deforestation plus the unfinished infrastructure could linger for years.

The Purple Line was a public-private partnership (P3), with state involvement, input and oversight, but it ultimately required unanticipated taxpayer funding. As we have seen with the Purple Line and other P3 as well as publicly funded projects, private contractors realize the financial gains, while risk is absorbed entirely by taxpayers.

### **County Economic and Environmental Justice**

More than 22 local environmental groups currently oppose construction of SCMAGLEV and are on record supporting the NO BUILD option. Concerns broadly include impact on soil, groundwater, green space, wetlands, natural resources and the carbon footprint associated with the cement and rail building. Concerns about community and quality of life impacts are significant as well. Chief among them is that the rail line will be in close proximity to residential neighborhoods, public schools, parkland and other recreational facilities.

Construction will affect daily life and the health and wellbeing of residents for a minimum of seven (7) years. This massive project will negatively impact the peace and tranquility of those neighborhoods along the route with noise and vibration, truck traffic, dust, stormwater runoff, disruption to local businesses and more. The location and maintenance of the associated train maintenance facilities (TMF) facilities are unattractive and will be undesirable for *any* residential community. In short, Prince George's County will be subject to all of the negative impacts, without any benefits including the lack of stations where riders can board or disembark, the opportunity for local transit-oriented development, and the potential for permanent jobs once construction is completed.

### **Passenger Safety and Human Health**

There are weighty and legitimate, outstanding passenger safety concerns because there are currently no Rules of Particular Applicability (RPA) standards in place. Many of our constituents believe it would be illogical and dangerous in the extreme to authorize construction of *any* transportation system, especially a passenger system, without first determining the RPA rules that govern it. Also in question is whether the proposed system can meet current U.S. safety standards even for traditional rail; SCMAGLEV, of course, is not traditional rail, which complicates these concerns. **We believe strongly that the FRA should not rely on statements of foreign governments certifying the proposed system's safety.** We also are concerned this could pose national security issues regardless of location. However, it is not lost on us that SCMAGLEV would be in close proximity to National Security Agency headquarters. Finally, we have heard concerns from constituents around increased human exposure SCMAGLEV's electro-magnetic field technology.

### **Prioritize Local Public Transportation**

For our constituents, the SCMAGLEV project does not address any of the transportation priorities identified annually by Prince George's County during the Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) process. The CTP process evaluates and identifies the transportation needs of the county and its residents.

We recognize that a renewed interest and investment in our public transportation network is sorely needed. However, we contend that the top priority should be a focus on maintenance, timely repair, and improvement of the region's *existing* public transportation infrastructure, which is designed to serve the **local public transportation needs** of our community. The SCMAGLEV train does not address the needs of the local community or expand public transit opportunities for communities along any proposed route, and it does not integrate in any way existing county transportation infrastructure. The proposed estimates for cost and ridership have been submitted by the proponents and their consultants and do not reflect an objective evaluation for predictions of future economic viability.

### **Regional Planning/Northeast Corridor**

If a comprehensive, integrated infrastructure upgrade is to occur, we would advocate for local transportation improvements first. With the exorbitant costs associated with design and construction of the SCMAGLEV, and what we believe will be the inevitable need for federal subsidies for SCMAGLEV in the future, we think it is far wiser to invest in a comprehensive upgrade of the Northeast transportation corridor with combined public and private projects that will ensure the long-term viability of the most densely populated region of the country.

USDOT has already made significant investments to upgrade some of the most heavily used sections of the Northeast Corridor rail system, including separating passenger and freight rail for faster Acela service, and station improvements to New Carrollton in Prince George's County and Union Station in the District of Columbia. Working together as a region, we need to provide more options for the greatest number of users, with an emphasis on enhanced economic development throughout the region.

SCMAGLEV has no reasonable likelihood of expansion beyond the Baltimore-Washington corridor for years to come:

- The estimated cost of tickets is up to \$80 one way. This is not a fare that the average commuter can absorb.
- The project will not remove significant local commuter traffic or address traffic congestion from the local road network.
- The project is not a "green" project. The technology has a high-power consumption rate with a potentially high climate impact.
- Recent developments of high-speed rail (HSR) technology have reduced the advantage of MAGLEV technology at higher speeds, so that the differences in travel times are limited.
- HSR is cleaner, cheaper, and more compatible with existing rail networks.
- The construction damage will have adverse environmental impacts on our communities for years to come.

To quote USDOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg on March 25, 2021, "Now is the time...to clear the backlog and repair our highways, roads, bridges, maritime ports and airports; to enhance freight and passenger rail and to provide accessible public transit and mobility options for all." Let us begin today in emphasizing the "for all" in our transportation infrastructure goals.

The Government should meaningfully engage in a Northeast Corridor plan for high speed with coordinated inter-state approvals and design, not cede this responsibility to a private company with profit motives and no evidence that other states are willing to accept the proposal beyond the Baltimore stop.

We strongly urge your recommendation of the NO BUILD option.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erek L. Barron", with a long, sweeping underline.

Delegate Erek L. Barron  
Chair, Prince Georges County House Delegation