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MARYLAND COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE TRANSIT

MCRT FALL 2022 NEWSLETTER

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In This Issue

- [SCMaglev: Where Have We Been and Where are We Headed?](#)
- [What's Happening with the FRA Review?](#)
- [Ridership Data Update](#)
- [MCRT Supports WNA and Westport CEDC](#)
- [Konterra and the DEIS](#)
- [Another TNEM Blatant Subterfuge](#)
- [MCRT at Greenbelt Labor Day Festival](#)

You may have noticed the MCRT website was down for awhile. The problem was finally fixed and our website is back up and running. Be sure to stop by to catch up on the latest MCRT news at www.mcrt-action.org.

SCMaglev: Where Have We Been and Where are We Headed?

by Susan Barnett and Susan McCutchen

Magnetic levitation (maglev) trains that have been piloted in Japan and China since the 1960s seem to some like a dream come true. Maglev trains have been proposed, and even built, in various places around the world. Germany built one; however, it was shut down after a highly fatal accident and massive cost overruns. Other countries have considered maglev proposals, but, in general, the prohibitive costs and their inability to interconnect with existing train systems have led to those proposals being abandoned.

In Maryland, there have been three proposals for maglev trains since 2003. Two of the proposals were abandoned. The third, from Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) and The Northeast Maglev (TNEM), has received state and federal funding to move their proposed superconducting magnetic levitation (SCMaglev) train project from the scoping to the ongoing Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) phase. [Learn more.](#)

Current Trajectory

The SCMaglev train is proposed to run from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore, MD. It was the subject of a January 2021 National Environmental Policy Act DEIS. Local and county governments, state and federal agencies, and multiple organizations, along with hundreds of residents, spent the months prior to the May 24, 2021, comment deadline wading through the [DEIS's thousands of pages](#), including voluminous appendices, to determine how it might impact their locations and provide comments to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to express their support or opposition.

How Did We Get Here?

Early warning of the threat posed by the SCMaglev was sounded in 2016 by the Citizens Against the SCMaglev (CATS), an organization formed by Bowie citizens, which grew rapidly to include residents from across Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties. CATS helped stop the proposed path through Bowie and has continued the fight on behalf of the residents of several other proposed routes.

The Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit (MCRT) has emerged as a key player in orchestrating opposition to the project. Building on the work of CATS and joining with several of its longstanding volunteers, the nonprofit was formed in 2020 in response to the threat of the SCMaglev to multiple communities. In 2021, MCRT-CATS was able to harness the energy of dozens of volunteers who had subject matter knowledge and expertise in train safety, historical landmarks, agricultural and wildlife research, environmental science, environmental justice, mathematics, and much more. MCRT-CATS engineered a 395-page response to the SCMaglev DEIS that identified its [extensive shortcomings](#).

Keeping up the momentum of the grassroots opposition movement post-DEIS, the MCRT is making strides toward the next phase of the campaign to stop the SCMaglev project. Its leaders have been meeting with legislative aides to the Maryland federal delegation to (1) ensure they understand the multiple reasons to oppose this project, (2) make specific requests for gaining more FRA transparency, and (3) demand a more complete Supplemental DEIS.

Strategy/Action Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. If you are interested in attending, please contact MCRtaction@gmail.com.

What's Happening With the FRA Review?

The FRA's SCMaglev DEIS review process has been paused since August 25, 2021. The Army Corps of Engineers also announced a pause in the extensive water permitting procedure for the SCMaglev proposal in accordance with the FRA. Prior to this, the process was paused from September 2019 to May 2020.

Who Joins Us in Questioning this Project?

City and county councils, municipal governments, and government agencies have expressed their many concerns about and opposition to the proposal, including the Anne Arundel Office of the County Executive, Prince George's County Council, Prince George's Office of the County Executive, Maryland House of Delegates, City of Greenbelt, City of Baltimore Departments of Planning and Transportation, District of Columbia Office of Planning, District of Columbia Office of Energy and Environment, U.S. Department of the Interior, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Further, over 60 environmental organizations have expressed their opposition to the proposal.

Opposition Movement Grows

The number of voices opposed to the SCMaglev is growing and needs to stay strong in the face of powerful and well-heeled international proponents and their extensive lobbying and advertisement campaigns. The FRA and our elected officials at all levels of government must understand that the consequences and impacts on communities, counties, and cities are severe and that it is not a mass transit solution for our residents. While project developers and investors will profit from building the SCMaglev train system, only a small minority of our residents who can afford the cost of the tickets will benefit from its construction.

Want to know your elected official's or candidate's position on the SCMaglev? MCRT can help you out! [Ask them our questions](#) at rallies, on candidate nights, or [contact them](#) via phone or by email.

The MCRT Strategy Group has continued to meet periodically with Larry Liebesman, Esq., our attorney from the Chesapeake Legal Alliance, as well as other subject matter experts, to pursue our ongoing concerns about the SCMaglev project.

Chief among our efforts over the past several months was continuing our appeal to be able to "see" much more of the ridership data (a key rationale for the project) rather than what was provided in a severely redacted version that basically obscures the data. The redacted version had been released as part of an MCRT Freedom of Information Act request. Thanks to Mr. Liebesman's well-crafted appeal and persistent inquiries, the Department of Transportation finally agreed to review the redactions. As a result, a considerable amount of previously redacted data from the Lewis Berger ridership report was released on August 17, 2022. Our experts are currently analyzing the impact of data now available and what is still protected. [Read the decision](#) on our appeal and [contact us](#) for questions.

MCRT Joins Baltimore Westport Associations In Setting the Record Straight

In its September 8 press release, the South Baltimore 7 Coalition (SB7) falsely claimed to represent all its members as endorsing the SCMaglev train project. This inaccurate and misleading report emanated from the convening of a special board meeting by the SB7 chair to pressure community leaders to vote in favor of a letter supporting this transportation project. The vote was not unanimous, as three members voted in favor, two voted no, and one abstained.

TNEM announced SB7's claim in its September 15 e-mail marketing newsletter, thanking the SB7 communities for "throwing their collective weight behind the Northeast Maglev project," further spreading misleading information.

The Westport Neighborhood Association (WNA) and Westport Community Economic Development Corporation (Westport CEDC) are setting the record straight regarding the SB7. The MCRT joins the WNA and Westport CEDC in challenging the continued deceptive and unsupported claims made by the BWRR to promote building the SCMaglev. Read the MCRT [press release](#).

Konterra Research Report

Community discussions about town center development in [Konterra](#) have taken place over the past several months. At a May 2022 meeting, it became clear that the community and the developer were unaware that Konterra was specifically identified in the SCMaglev DEIS as a potential dump site for tunneling sludge. Researchers working with the MCRT compiled a [document detailing these DEIS references](#) and submitted it to Prince George's County



More TNEM “Blatant Subterfuge” The “Distraction” Distraction

The Northeast Maglev (TNEM) Facebook page says: Distracted driving is becoming more of an issue every day! The solution ... taking alternative modes of transportation! The SCMaglev is described as a perfect option for taking distracted drivers off the road. *Really?*

Behind the “Distraction”

According to the DEIS, the SCMaglev comes with its own serious distractions. A viaduct crossing over the BW Parkway presents hazards not only to drivers on that highway, but also on nearby roadways. As stated in the DEIS, the SCMaglev will produce “significant aerodynamic noise . . . and turbulence” (DEIS Section 4.17.2.2, page 4-17-8, and DEIS Section 4.17.4.2, page 4-17-12). Specifically:

1. Sudden noise onset when the SCMagLev crosses over at speed can startle/distract drivers and be the cause of accidents, potentially fatal.
 2. Debris falling from the viaduct onto the roadways (ice, struck wildlife, other debris) potentially hitting and damaging vehicles, again startling/distracting drivers and causing accidents.
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MCRT advocates (L-R) Kristin Fletcher, Bill Boone, and Pat Jackman at the Labor Day Festival. Not pictured are Kathy Bartolomeo, Susan McCutchen, and Susan Barnett who also volunteered their time. Photo credit to Kathy.

A Labor of Love – MCRT In Greenbelt

by Kristin Fletcher

On Saturday, September 3, several MCRT members provided an information table at the 68th Greenbelt Labor Day Festival Community Information Day in Greenbelt, MD. The festival is the largest and most well-attended event in the community, taking place over the course of the holiday weekend. Turnout was excellent at this year's event.

Sixty-five people came to our booth to find out the latest on the SCMaglev. Many were under the impression that this project was permanently paused. We assured them this is not the case, stressing the importance of contacting legislators both to ask questions to find their stances on the project and to express opposition. Head to the MCRT website to [download questions you can ask them](#). We shared with those who were not aware of the proposed project the long list of reasons why building and operating the SCMaglev is not a good idea. Our thanks to two members of the Greenbelt City Council who also dropped by--J Davis and Ric Gordon. We received several sign-ups for the MCRT email list and distributed our new **flyers** (available in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#) on the MCRT website). "Stop This Train" buttons continue to be a hit!

The Communications & Outreach Team needs more volunteers to help out at these events. If you can spare some time and like to talk to people about why we need to Stop This Train, please [email MCRT](#). Our next events are Saturday, **October 22** at [Bladensburg Waterfront Park](#) and Saturday, **October 29** at Lane Manor Splash Park in Adelphi, Md. Come out and see us and get a free button!

To request signs, fill out the form in the EMAIL MCRT button on the MCRT website Home page at www.mcrt-action.org. It is a \$5.00 donation per sign which comes with metal stakes to stand up in the ground.



8 Ways to Help and Learn More

1. Learn more about the concerns and impacts the SCMaglev will have on our communities at www.stophistrain.org and www.mcrt-action.org.
2. [Contact your elected officials](#) to express your opposition to building the SCMaglev.
3. Share this information with your family, friends, neighbors, and your community.
4. [Sign our petition](#) and share on social media: www.tinyurl.com/4rks5rk7.
5. Follow the [MCRT Facebook page](#) and join the [CATS Facebook group](#).
6. Invite MCRT to speak at your next community or homeowner association meeting - [email us](#) for more information or to ask questions.
7. Make a contribution to support the MCRT and CATS at www.mcrt-action.org - just click on the DONATE button! Thanks for your support!
8. Come to an outreach event to help inform the public on what they need to know. We have two coming up on **October 22** and **October 29!**

As always, if you want to help, come join our next Zoom meeting or help out at one of our events. [Email us](#) at and we'll add you to our email distribution list.



Invest in MARC and Amtrak, NOT the SCMaglev train! Look for more updates and commentary, including important developments in Baltimore and Amtrak's Penn Station, in our next issue!

The Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit (MCRT) evaluates transit projects for social equity, environmental impact, environmental justice, economic viability, and community accessibility. Visit our [website](#) to learn more.



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