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MARYLAND COALITION FOR RESPONSIBLE TRANSIT

MCRT SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

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MCRT Goes to Annapolis

by Susan McCutchen and Dan Woomer

The MCRT and Board members testified in support of two Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMaglev) bills during the 2023 Maryland legislative session.

- Senate Bill 50 and House Bill 0106 – Senate Finance – Prohibited Appropriations – Magnetic Levitation Transportation System

"FOR the purpose of prohibiting the State and certain units and instrumentalities of the State from using any appropriation for a magnetic levitation transportation system in the State; providing that the prohibition does

not apply to certain expenditures for salaries; and generally relating to State appropriations for magnetic levitation transportation systems."

On January 25, oral and written testimony was given by MCRT Board members **Susan McCutchen**, **Suzzie Schuyler**, and **Dan Woomer**, and by **Lisa Hodges**, Executive Director, Westport Community Economic Development Corporation, before the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee.

[Senate Bill 50 hearing recording @ min. 56:50.](#)

On February 23, oral and written testimony was given by **Bladensburg Mayor Takisha James** and **Greenbelt Mayor Emmett Jordan**, and by MCRT Board members **Kyle Hart**, **Susan McCutchen**, **Suzzie Schuyler**, and **Dan Woomer**, before the House Environment and Transportation Committee.

[House Bill 106 hearing video @ min. 34:00.](#)

Submit Your Opinions via MyMGA

To learn about this legislation and find out how to follow these and other bills and to become involved in the legislative process, [set up an account on My Maryland General Assembly](#) (MyMGA).

MCRT Sends Letters of Inquiry to the MDE, FRA, and MDOT

On December 15, 2022, the MCRT sent a letter about SCMaglev Beaverdam Creek Tier II water testing action within the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), questioning how it could be financially supported by Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) and still be objective. The purpose of a Tier II waterway review is to prevent degradation of high-quality waters due to permitted activities. We received a response on December 20 that the " ... MDE has developed a contract with an independent environmental economic consultant who will review the economic analysis provided in the SCMaglev Tier II Report ... Once the independent analysis is complete, the contract deliverable, a final report, will be available during the public review and comment." Beaverdam Creek, located on the Beltsville Agricultural Research

Center (BARC), is a tributary of the Anacostia River and Indian Creek, which runs through the City of Greenbelt. Note: SCMaglev is proposing a 200+acre train maintenance facility on the BARC.

On December 21, 2022, the MCRT sent a letter to the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) regarding the issue of segmenting the D.C. to Baltimore portion of BWRR's plan for the SCMaglev to go to Boston. We had received an ambiguous response to our question on the subject from BWRR's Ian Rainey at a November 14 engineering colloquium held at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt. We asked the FRA and MDOT: "Please clarify the FRA's expectations for a comprehensive NEPA evaluation of the full scope (D.C. to Boston) and, specifically, the segmentation of the project (DC to Baltimore) for the SCMaglev train project. Has FRA advanced this project to a Tier II analysis, as Mr. Rainey claimed?" On February 14, 2023, we were notified by the FRA that a response is being prepared.

Strategy/Action Meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. If you are interested in attending, please contact [please contact Kyle Hart at khart@npca.org](mailto:khart@npca.org).

New Leadership in Annapolis

by Susan McCutchen and Dan Woormer

New leadership has come to Annapolis. See below a list of key positions and appointees of particular interest as our transportation issues unfold.

Wes Moore, Governor: (410) 974-3901
e-mail: <http://governor.maryland.gov/contact-the-governors-office/>

Aruna Miller, Lieutenant Governor: (410) 974-2461
e-mail: lt.governor@maryland.gov

Susan C. Lee, Secretary of State: (410) 260-3894
e-mail: mdsos@sos.state.md.us

Helene T. Grady, Secretary of Budget and Management: (410) 260-7041
e-mail: helene.grady@maryland.gov

Kevin Anderson, Secretary of Commerce: 410) 767-6301
e-mail: kevin.anderson@maryland.gov

Russell J. Strickland, Secretary of Emergency Management: (410) 517-3601
e-mail: russell.strickland@maryland.gov

Serena Coleman McIlwain, Secretary of the Environment: (410) 537-3084
e-mail: mde.secretary@maryland.gov
McIlwain was Undersecretary, California Environmental Protection Agency.

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., Secretary of Health: (410) 767-4639
e-mail: laura.herrerascott@maryland.gov

Jacob R. Day, Acting Secretary of Housing and Community Development:
(301) 429-7452
e-mail: jake.day@maryland.gov
Day was a member of the Local Government Advisory Committee, Chesapeake Bay Program.

Portia Wu, Secretary of Labor: (410) 230-6020
e-mail: secretary.labor@maryland.gov

Josh Kurtz, Secretary of Natural Resources: (410) 260-8101
e-mail: josh.kurtz@maryland.gov
Kurtz served as the Maryland Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

Paul J. Wiedefeld, Acting Secretary of Transportation: (410) 865-1000
e-mail: secretary@mdot.state.md.us
Wiedefeld was the General Manager and Chief Executive Officer of the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

SCMaglev Ridership Numbers Inflated? Yes!

A blog post by **Owen Kelley**, Ph.D., points out that it is easy to show the bottom-line ridership forecast in the SCMaglev ridership study is two or three orders of magnitude too high. This brings into question the legality of the SCMaglev Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The FRA allowed a grossly too-high ridership forecast to form the basis of the DEIS. With due diligence or a simple sanity check on the SCMaglev ridership study, the FRA would have seen the ridership estimate was unreasonably high.

[Read Dr. Kelley's blog post here.](#)



More TNEM "Blatant Subterfuge" More Conflation

The Northeast Maglev (TNEM) stated in a recent Facebook post:

We're excited to see another country building new infrastructure for high-speed rail! It's time for the U.S. to get on board with true high-speed rail projects, like the #SCMAGLEV. Our future depends on it!" #MAGLEV #highspeedrail #train <https://zcu.io/cJ4Q> New high-speed train will cover Lisbon-Porto route in 1h 15 mins. The new railway line will also extend to Vigo, in Spain, to create an Iberian network.

Earlier today, Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa presented the project for a new high-speed railway line which will connect the country's main cities of Lisbon and Porto and even extend northward to the Spanish city of Vigo. The new line will be completed sometime after 2030 and when ready it will cut traveling time between Porto and Lisbon down to only 1 hour and 15 minutes...

So, what is the “**Blatant Subterfuge?**” The technology being used is NOT magnetic levitation, it's traditional steel wheel on steel track. Spain's new rail is using actual commercially PROVEN technology that can be seamlessly integrated into the existing rail system. The attempt to associate the SCMaglev with the high-speed train improvements worldwide that will serve everyone is disingenuous when the SCMaglev will primarily serve the elite who can afford the high-ticket cost.

Photo credit: A train swooshing through Lisbon's modern Gare do Oriente station, Source: Depositphotos



Investors, Time to Drop Your Support for the SCMaglev?

by Dan Woomer

As your finances are being eaten into by inflation at an all-time high with no sign of relenting. As costs continue to rise, especially labor and building materials. As the GDP shrinks. As you have watched stocks and investment constrictions of 30 percent and still deepening, with an economic recession looming. As you have seen the potential ridership pool shrinking as the migration out of Baltimore City continues. As you have seen growing and vocal opposition to building the project as more and more of the extensive environmental impacts and destruction are revealed.

Twelve years and counting. Investors, why do you want to pour more of your money into this?

As you have witnessed more communities coming together to oppose the building, especially environmental justice communities. As you have seen Maryland and national environmental organizations publicly state their

objection. As you see NASA, the Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, and other federal agencies express concerns about the damage this project will bring. As you see the Federal Railroad Administration is mired in a long and extended pause in approving the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. As you see the Army Corps of Engineers not moving forward with permitting. As you see Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Prince George's Counties, along with Baltimore City and Washington, D.C., going on the record stating their opposition. As you are witnessing cases being brought to the courts challenging the project, and the expensive and escalating costs these legal actions represent. As you see Amtrak, MARC, and VRE moving forward with improvements through federal infrastructure funding, shrinking any perceived benefit, while nothing related to your project has happened for years. To the investors who were sold the SCMaglev's "pig in a poke," I have one question: Are you willing to continue to use your funds to support this project, or has the time come to cut your losses and stop pouring your money into this ever-deepening financial hole?

Note: An abbreviated version of this article was published in the July 12, 2022, Reader Commentary section of the *Capital Gazette*.

In What Universe Does the SCMaglev Make Sense?

by Lisa Hodges and Victoria Reynolds

Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) SCMaglev project sponsors and supporters live in an alternate universe, operating in a dimension where the focus on their special interest in jobs and lucrative contracts eclipses making a fundamental case for this transportation megaproject, one supported with solid analysis and data, in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). They overlook the expense, environmental impact, and irreversible negative aspects of the project's construction and its poorly planned elements, including equity and environmental justice deficiencies and technology safety concerns.

A critical deficiency in the transportation analysis is the failure of project sponsors to release an objective unredacted study to substantiate grandiose claims that ridership of the train will be so high as to make a substantial impact

by removing a significant number of vehicles from the roads. This projection, based on the breakdown of specific locations or the associated number of riders, is key to assess the validity of claims that the revenues needed to offset loan and operational costs and taxes will be generated.

With no stops between Baltimore and Washington, D.C., except for BWI airport, this is not a local commuter solution for those who live outside Baltimore and D.C. The DEIS states that the average one-way ticket cost between Baltimore and D.C. would be \$60, which is over \$28,000 a year. The cost to ride the train each weekday would be exorbitant. Even at a discounted cost of \$35 one way, the weekly expense would be over \$16,000 a year, which is far beyond the means of most households.

Baltimore City has an urgent need to upgrade and integrate multimodal transit options throughout the city and surrounding communities to reduce travel time and create flexible, reliable transit options to get residents to work and school. The SCMaglev will do nothing to address these needs. December 2018 analyses from the Maryland Public Policy Institute raise serious questions about which Baltimore residents have the high level of income needed to use the SCMaglev rather than MARC or bus services.

SCMaglev project sponsors and supporters live in an alternate universe ... operating in a dimension where the focus on their special interest in jobs and lucrative contracts eclipses making a fundamental case for this transportation megaproject ...

The business community and unions are being fed unproven talking points by BWRR regarding jobs and they are unquestioningly eating it up. Do they realize that the unverifiable job numbers BWRR uses in its promotional marketing have dramatically changed and that the DEIS contained no verifiable reports to substantiate their claims? BWRR initially claimed 74,000 job-years (one job for one year) would be created, rising to between 161,000 and 195,000 job-years in the DEIS. Yet the projected cost has barely changed. How is this possible?

The job description classification information and associated hours per task

have not been made available for independent assessment and evaluation or public review and comment. BWRR declares that these jobs are targeted for people of color and promises specialized job training programs, including through memoranda of understanding with designated community organizations—notably without specific recruitment and development plans and a breakdown of associated costs. When questioned by members of the Westport Community Economic Development Corporation, BWRR failed to commit any dollar amount to community workforce training and recruitment.

As the supporters plan for construction contracts and union jobs in their own universe, we support the "no action" "no build" alternative in ours to "STOP THIS TRAIN." We **recommend** upgrading MARC and Amtrak, along with other transit options that could improve community transportation capabilities and provide solutions that will build on existing infrastructure, unlike the SCMaglev.

Lisa Hodges is Executive Director of the Westport Community Economic Development Corporation and Victoria Reynolds is Past President of the Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit.



StopThisTrain.org

We Have “Stop The Maglev Train” Signs!

To request signs, use the email link found on the MCRT website Home page at <http://www.mcrt-action.org/>. They are \$5.00/sign.

Ways to Help and Learn More

1. Learn more about the concerns and impacts the SCMaglev will have on our communities at www.stopthistrain.org and www.mcrt-action.org.
2. [Sign our petition](#) and share on social media: www.tinyurl.com/4rks5rkZ.
3. Follow the [MCRT Facebook page](#) and join the [CATS Facebook group](#).
4. Make a contribution to support the MCRT and CATS at www.mcrt-action.org - just click on the DONATE button! Thanks for your support!

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.

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Patricia Jackman, Susan McCutchen, and Dan Woomer.

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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