

Baltimore-Washington Superconducting Maglev Project: Background, Questions, and Concerns

Description of SCMaglev

A new form of high speed transportation is being considered between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Maryland. This system is called an SCMaglev (super conducting magnetic levitation) train. The six proposed routes of the train go through Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties. This sheet provides information about what the SCMaglev is, potential effects for citizens of the Counties, and the future plans for this project.

The Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR, a private Maryland-based company), states the SGMaglev is a train system in which super-conducting magnets located on the trains and on the coils that are installed in the walls of the guideway levitate and pull the train through the u-shaped guideways at speeds exceeding 300 miles per hour.¹ The proposed routes are mostly above ground on raised guideways that can be 15 feet in the air. A complete description is available at the official website at <http://bwmaglev.info/>.

History of the Baltimore-Washington SCMaglev

The Maglev Development Project was established in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) conducted a nation-wide competition for states to receive grants to study and evaluate the potential for a maglev project. The first site-specific Draft Environmental Impact Study (EIS) was conducted in 2003 with German technology. The project was suspended without a final EIS being issued.

The BWRR is working with its affiliates The Northeast Maglev (TNEM) and Central Japan Railway Company (JR Central). The current process began Fall 2015, when the Maryland project secured the first round of federal funding in the amount of \$27.8 million to assess the feasibility of the SCMaglev using the technology of JR Central. The Notice of Intent to prepare an EIS was published on November 25, 2016. The public notification and commenting period ended on January 9, 2017. Public feedback is accepted throughout the entire EIS process. Open house meetings were held in Washington, D.C. and Maryland April 3-8. In May 2017, the SCMaglev project released the [Scoping Report](#).² Recently, the SCMaglev representatives presented at the Bowie City Council meeting on July 10, 2017 and September 5, 2017. Mr. David Henley, project director for the BWRR, made a statement that a decision about whether or not the project will proceed will be made by February of 2019. If approved, design and construction will begin in late 2019. Community meetings have been held in which representatives from the MTA., local, and county representatives declared they will not support this project.

Proposed Routes

An example of the potential impact for a community is Bowie. Four of the six proposed routes come through Bowie – the Orange, Red, Green, and Yellow (Figure 1: Proposed routes through Bowie). Routes are above ground on raised tracks, except where noted by the dashed sections (dashed lines represent underground sections). The Orange and Red routes follow the Amtrak tracks and diverge north of Bowie State University. The Yellow route follows along the WB&A Trail along with parts of the Green route. **There are no stops between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore Washington Airport.**

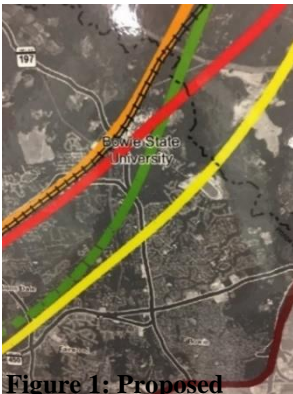


Figure 1: Proposed routes through Bowie

The BWRR has stated that the map they presented to the public is a generalization of where the proposed routes may be, and that the route selected will not be more than 100 feet in width. BWRR has promised to release new proposed route information with a higher level of detail in October 2017. Once that information is available, the new proposed routes will be digitized and the analysis will be run against the refined proposed routes to demonstrate the effect the proposed route(s) will have on the local communities. By one estimate 1,306 properties in Prince George's County is impacted by this 100 foot wide path on just the Yellow route. While another 1,254 properties would be affected in Anne Arundel County for the same route. The total is 2,560 properties along the Yellow route.

These routes have the potential to affect the following towns: Beltsville, Berwyn Heights, Bladensburg, Bowie, Brentwood, Brooklyn Park, Capitol Heights, Cheverly, College Park, Edmonston, Fairmont Heights, Ferndale, Fort Meade, Glenarden, Glen Burnie, Glenn Dale, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, Hanover, Harmans, Jessup, Kentland, Landover, Lanham, Laurel, Linthicum, Linthicum Heights, Maryland City, Mount Rainier, Odenton, Riverdale, Seabrook, Severn, and Springdale.

¹ <http://baltimorewashingtonscmaglevproject.com/index.php/overview/what-is-scmaglev>

² <http://baltimorewashingtonscmaglevproject.com/index.php/overview/background>

Unknown Effects for Prince George's and Anne Arundel Counties

These routes, and the SCMaglev project as a whole, will have many effects on the communities they are proposed to go through. Many questions are being raised at this time. Most do not have answers. The issues that do not have firm answers include the impact to

- The environment and wildlife
- Noise levels along route
- Health impacts of magnets
- The WB&A trail
- Communities along the routes including the use of eminent domain and falling property values
- Agriculture
- Historic properties along the route
- Businesses, the tax base, and economics of the local communities (such as loss of revenue)
- Ridership for other forms of transportation such as the MARC train

Currently, the only fully functioning commercial maglev train system in the world is in China. The Japanese system, even though it is taking passengers, is still *experimental*. Germany has suspended their *experimental* system because of a fatal accident in 2006. This accident was caused by the train colliding with a maintenance vehicle that was on the route. Debris was thrown approximately 300 yards (3 football fields) from the crash site and 23 people were killed. The train was only going about 120 miles per hour – less than half the speed of the 300+ miles per hour of the proposed SCMaglev. Other maglev systems that have been proposed or built around the world have either failed at the proposal stage or have failed financially after being built (Old Dominion University, Virginia).

Moving Forward

This project is a *single sourced* project by the Japanese company JR Central (Central Japan Railway Company) as a showcase of Japanese technology. BWRR is planning for additional meetings. In addition, there are many community-led meetings being scheduled. The current proposed schedule states that construction on this project is to start in late 2019. A series of upcoming open houses are being held from October 14, 2017 at Bowie State University (10 a.m. - 1 p.m.) through October 25, 2017. Refinements to the proposed alternative route alignments may be announced at the meeting. For meeting information see <http://bwmaglev.info/index.php/public-involvement/upcoming-meetings>.

Funding and Alternate Transportation Options

With alternate methods of expanding the public transportation in the area such as expanding Metro and MARC, and even developing high speed rail as part of the current infrastructure, SCMaglev is not in the region's best interest. These methods of increasing public transportation access come at a much lower cost than the SCMaglev. Even if the project is funded partially by the Japanese company, JR Central, it is in the form of a low interest loan. The remaining funding for building will come from other sources such as transportation funds, grants, and loans from other sources meaning the riders and tax payers will be paying the bills. After the system is built, the SCMaglev will need to be maintained and that burden will fall squarely on the riders and tax payers.

Get Involved

We encourage you to share your opinions and questions with your representatives at all levels as well as the SCMaglev project. In addition, the Citizens Against SCMaglev is meeting on the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Kenhill Center in Bowie (2614 Kenhill Drive, Room 101). Meeting dates can be found at www.stophistrain.org.

Stay informed about the Citizens Against SCMaglev and the maglev project status

- Subscribe to receive information through maglev-coalition@googlegroups.com
- Follow updates at the website www.stophistrain.org
- Join FaceBook: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/CitizensAgainstSCMaglev>
- Contact your county, state and federal representatives
 - US Senator Chris Van Hollen
 - US Senator Ben Cardin
 - Congressman Steny Hoyer
 - Governor Larry Hogan
 - Your State Senator
 - Your State Delegate
 - Town Mayor
 - Town Council
 - County Council
 - County Executive

You can also contact the SCMaglev project directly to register your comments:

Mail:

SCMAGLEV Project, c/o Suhair Al Khatib
Maryland Transit Administration
6 Saint Paul Street, Baltimore, MD 21202

Email:

info@BaltimoreWashingtonSCMaglevProject.com

Info: <http://www.bwmaglev.info/> or

<http://baltimorewashingtonscmaglevproject.com>