

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 three proposed routes of the train go through Prince George’s and Anne Arundel Counties. This document provides information about what the SCMaglev is, potential effects for citizens of the Counties, and the future plans for this project.

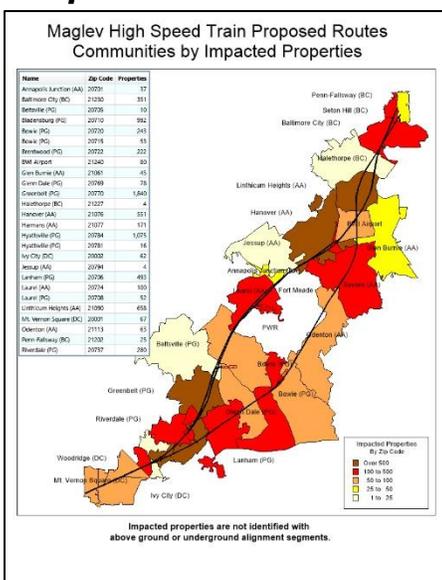
Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR, a private Maryland-based company), states the SGMaglev is a train system in which super-conducting magnets located on the trains and on the coils that are installed in the walls of the guideway levitate and pull the train through the u-shaped guideways at speeds exceeding 300 miles per hour.¹ The proposed route alternatives 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) on this single sourced project. The current process began Fall 2015, when the Maryland Department of Transportation 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 for scoping 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 A series of additional open houses were held October 14-25, 2017 to announce further refinements to the proposed alternative routes, reducing them from six to three. When Mr. David Henley, project director for BWRR, presented at a Bowie City Council Meeting on July 10, 2017, he stated 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.

Proposed Routes



Currently, there are 3 proposed route alternatives; only one will be chosen and built. Two of the proposed routes generally follow the Baltimore-Washington Parkway and the third closely parallels the Amtrak rail line. Routes are a mix of above ground, raised guideways, and below ground tunnels. **There are no stops between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore Washington Airport.** The proposed alignments run through Washington, D.C., Prince George’s County, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore County and Baltimore City.

The new proposed routes have been analyzed by Citizens Against SCMaglev. By one estimate for Prince George’s and Anne Arundel Counties 846 properties will be impacted by this 100 foot wide path on just the orange route. Another 4109 properties would be affected by the purple and blue route. The total for these counties is approximately 5,000 properties not including DC or Baltimore County. Figure 1 shows the routes and the number of properties impacted by the project.

These routes have the potential to affect the following towns in Anne Arundel County: Annapolis Junction, Hanover, Harmans, Jessup, Laurel, Linthicum, Linthicum Heights, Odenton, Pasadena, and Severn. These routes have the potential to affect the following towns in Prince George’s County: Beltsville, Bladensburg, Bowie, Brentwood, Glenn Dale, Greenbelt, Hyattsville, Lanham, and Riverdale.

Figure 1: Proposed routes from Washington, DC to Baltimore with property impact

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

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

Unknown Effects for the Four Affected 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
- Economic/ridership data that demonstrates commercial viability
- 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

A Preliminary Alternatives Screening Report, incorporating comments received at October 2017 open houses will be released in Fall 2017. A final Alternatives Report is expected in Winter/Spring 2018. The current proposed schedule states that construction on this project is to start in late 2019. Maryland DOT will be hosting additional public meetings.

<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 NextGen Acela, which is already in development as well as as expanding Metro and MARC, 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. The project is funded partially by the Japanese company, JR Central, in the form of a low interest loan. The remaining construction funding comes from sources such as transportation funds, grants, and other loans meaning the riders and tax payers will pay 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 meets on the second Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the Kenhill Center in Bowie (2614 Kenhill Drive, Room 101). Stay informed:

- 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 federal, state, county, and town representatives
 - US Senator Chris Van Hollen
 - US Senator Ben Cardin
 - US Representatives
 - Governor Larry Hogan
 - Your State Senator
 - Your State Delegate
 - County Executive
 - County Council
 - Town Mayor
 - Town Council

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://baltimorewashingtongmaglevproject.com>