

## From the Desk of Denise Hamler

October 21, 2023

Maryland Department of the Environment  
Attn: Danielle A. Spendiff  
Chief, Regulatory & Customer Service Division  
Water and Science Administration  
1800 Washington Boulevard  
Baltimore, MD 21230

Dear Danielle A. Spendiff,

RE: Maryland Department of the Environment Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) Clean Water Act, Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) for building of the Baltimore-Washington Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMaglev) train. Deadline: November 2, 2023.

My name is Denise Hamler and I live in Cottage City, MD and I work on environmental and social justice issues in our Prince George's County communities.

When the Port Towns (Cottage City, Colmar Manor, Edmonston, and Bladensburg) residents learned that the high speed train, SCMaglev route would go directly under our homes and the Anacostia River we educated ourselves and the effects on our lives, health and our environment.

We discovered that we would not benefit but would suffer if it was built:

- 70% of the path of train affects minority populations and there are no stops in Prince George's County.
- The potential impact along the route is extreme, resulting in loss of property value, dangerous emissions, exposure to electromagnetic radiation, pollution of streams and waterways, and storm water runoff.
- In my neighborhood the train would go under Colmar Manor and the original Prince George's County landfill, that was capped in the late 1950s. This site just feet from our homes and ¼ mile from Washington DC cannot be developed due to methane and potential environmental and human contamination. Instead it is used as ballfields for our children. For example when the new Port Towns Elementary school was to be built the site did not test well and the site was abandoned.
- 11 Prince George's County neighborhoods, towns & eight designated parks will be affected along the proposed route -- Over 451 acres of critical forests will be destroyed

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WATER AND SCIENCE ADMIN.  
REGULATORY SERVICES COORD.

- All residential properties would experience noise and vibrational impacts when completed.
- While under constructions, hundreds of diesel and gasoline powered trucks would travel over our roads and through our neighborhoods carrying sludge and contaminants. The air quality to our residents will be highly compromised.
- The train would also tunnel under the Anacostia River at Historic Bladensburg Waterfront Park.

In our Port Towns Communities, we have two CSX and Marc Train tracks located directly adjacent to our homes and businesses. These high speed freight trains carrying toxins run upto five times an hour – 24 hours a day, every day.

Several weeks ago one of these trains derailed in Hyattsville and 17 train cars were thrown from the tracks. It was extremely fortunate that it happened at 1:30 am and was hauling plastic pellets and not toxic tanker cars. We escaped disaster this time.

The research shows that the safety and crashworthiness of this new MAGLEV technology is in serious question.

It is unlikely that building and operating of this train will reduce greenhouse gases despite repeated claims. It will not remove commuter traffic from the roads because there are no stops between Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, and it is not designed to directly serve local communities.

- A little known fact -- the SCMaglev will use up to five times more energy than a high-speed, steel-wheeled train.

What we need are upgrades and enhancements to Amtrak, CSX rails, MARC and VRE -- which is a much better investment and will undoubtly cost far fewer tax dollars and offer more ridership and more safety to our residents.

The bottom line is that building this will have an extreme destructive impact on our environment. We ask that the MDE not grant Water Quality Certification to BWRR based on the environmental issues and because the project is on a long pause with the Federal Railroad Administration.

Respectfully,

  
Denise Hamler

3714 37<sup>th</sup> Ave., Cottage City, MD 20722

Attachment: Background Documentation

CC: Cottage City Commissioner Chair Wanda Wheatley  
Cottage City Commissioner Ann Young  
Colmar Manor Mayor Monica Casanas  
Bladensburg Mayor Takisha James  
MCRT Board member Dan Woomer

**RE: Maryland Department of the Environment Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) Clean Water Act, Section 401 Water Quality Certification (WQC) for building of the Baltimore-Washington Superconducting Magnetic Levitation (SCMaglev) Train.**

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) has a critical decision to make on whether the Baltimore-Washington Rapid Rail (BWRR) water quality certification (WQC) application and related reports provide sufficient and well documented research, sufficiently justifies the purpose and need, and provides the level of evidence needed to substantiate the economic value to warrant degrading our state's waterways to build and operate the SCMaglev.

**BWRR Claims Greenhouse Gas Reduction**

The Federal Railroad Administration states the operation of the SCMaglev would significantly increase greenhouse gas emissions. But BWRR claims "the reduction of overall regional Vehicle Miles Travelled from the Project as compared to the No Build Option will likely result in a regional GHG emissions reduction on a regional scale." (DEIS Chapter 4.19.) In reality, the building and operation of the SCMaglev will increase greenhouse gas levels in the region for several reasons.

(1) The ridership projections stated by BWRR of 11 to 12 million passengers per year are upwards of ten times the more likely ridership number of one million or less. So, the number of vehicle miles saved by riding the SCMaglev is roughly one-tenth of the numbers BWRR projects. Thus, the greenhouse gas emission reduction would also be around one tenth the amount BWRR is projecting.

(2) Research from Japan found the SCMaglev can use up to five times the energy compared with high-speed rail. Currently Maryland consumes 60% more energy than it produces. 73% of our electricity comes from nuclear and natural gas. And since 2015 nearly all of the new generating capacity has been natural gas-fired or solar-powered. With the amount of electricity needed to operate the SCMaglev greenhouse gas emissions will also increase. (Aoki, Hidekazu, and Kawamiya, Nobuo. Cited in Harding, Robin. "Japan's new maglev train line runs headlong into critics." Financial Times. October 17, 2017. [www.ft.com/content/5d4e600a-9e12-11e7-8b50-0b9f565a23e1](http://www.ft.com/content/5d4e600a-9e12-11e7-8b50-0b9f565a23e1). Aoki, Hidekazu, and Kawamiya, Nobuo. Cited in Davies, Ross. "Magnetic pull: China and Japan battle it out for maglev train supremacy." Railway Technology. Last Updated May 29, 2020. [www.railway-technology.com/features/maglev-train/](http://www.railway-technology.com/features/maglev-train/). U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration. "Maryland State Profile and Energy Estimates

(3) During construction, there will be significant (huge) increases in greenhouse gas emissions from construction equipment. For example, to build the Fresh Air/Emergency Egress (FA//EE) Shafts launch and retrieval sites, BWRR estimates 530 dump truck trips 24-hours per day for 12 months, and 1,055 work related trips and 525 worker vehicle trips per day. For tunnel boring, the estimate is 1,650 to 2,175 dump truck trips 24-hours per day for between 13.5 and 28 months. Numbers for the constructions of Viaducts, Train Maintenance Facility, substations, and passenger stations have similar numbers.

Consider the diesel and gas engine pollution, from thousands of pieces of construction equipment, released into our environment for the years needed to build the SCMaglev.

In conclusion, BWRR's Water Quality Certification(WQC) application and related reports are flawed and do not demonstrate the level of specificity and accuracy required by the Maryland Department of the Environment to grant the certification. Specifically regarding stormwater treatment the applicant uses 20 year old aquatic data, and only report on Beaverdam Creek and Beverdam Creek II and not other impacted Tier II waters. Details regarding reforestation and stormwater mitigations are vague and lack comprehensive descriptions.

The request is to not grant WQC for the SCMaglev project based on these facts.

Also noted is that the project has been on a long-pause with the Federal Railroad Administration and has yet to be defined succinctly by the choice of a selected route through a supplemental or a final draft environmental impact statement that must be vetted by the public.

The Maryland Coalition for Responsible Transit (MCRT) and others find the better alternative for high-speed, reliable ground-based train service between Baltimore and Washington, D.C. is to continue the enhancement and upgrade of Amtrak and MARC.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'RJ' or similar, located at the bottom left of the page.