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United States Senate

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August 6, 2021

The Honorable Alonzo T. Washington
Maryland State Delegate
House Office Building, Room 131
6 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Delegate Washington:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the bipartisan infrastructure bill that the Senate is considering.

As we work to beat this pandemic and build a stronger and more inclusive economy, we must seize this opportunity to generate more good-paying jobs, tackle the climate crisis, and ensure that every American has a chance for a bright future. While we already provided emergency relief to our families, small businesses, and workers in the American Rescue Plan, this Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal is the first major step to ensuring that we are not just building back, but building back better.

I was proud to secure key elements in this plan to support Maryland directly – including provisions I authored to re-unite communities that had been split apart by 1960s federal transportation projects like the Highway to Nowhere in West Baltimore. We also secured \$238 million in funding for the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program, reauthorized the \$150 million annual federal contribution for WMATA through 2030, and included provisions I wrote to better protect our frontline transit workers. We also succeeded in including a provision to keep federal funding for the Baltimore Red Line metro project alive, despite the Governor’s decision to pull the plug on this crucial investment. In addition, as I highlighted with Secretary Buttigieg in Baltimore last week, this deal provides a \$17 billion investment in ports across the country. The Port of Baltimore is a key asset to our state and a powerful engine for jobs throughout the Baltimore area. Finally, even before the pandemic began, I was working to connect every student, household, and business with high-speed internet and expand the use of clean energy – and those investments in this bill will help keep Marylanders at the cutting edge of the global economy.

Specifically, you will be pleased to know that the bipartisan infrastructure bill does not change federal law or eligibility for federal funding for Maglev and it does not provide any direct or indirect funding for the Maglev project in Maryland.

- Page 763 of the bill includes funding eligibility for “electromagnetic guideways in an enclosure in a very low-pressure environment,” which is a reference to hyperloop technology that operates in a low-pressure enclosed space. This provision does not change the existing eligibility for maglev technology under the Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements program.

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- On page 75, the bill mentions magnetic levitation and hyperloop when it adds “planning and construction of projects that facilitate intermodal connections between emerging transportation technologies” to the Surface Transportation Block Grant Program. This does not change the existing eligibility for maglev technology in that program. The Surface Transportation Block Grant Program is a very flexible program that is used by states and local governments and under current law, it could only be used on maglev technologies if the State prioritizes them over other uses of the Block Grant, including highways, bridges, tunnels, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and traditional transit projects.
- Additionally, Page 853 of the bill allows the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) to make regulations governing railroad-related noise, including noise from “magnetic levitation systems and other new technologies.” After the closure of the noise regulation office at the Environmental Protection Agency, this provision ensures continued regulation to limit noise by transferring responsibility to the FRA. This provision also does not in any way impact the Maryland Maglev project.

I have serious concerns about the ongoing project in Maryland and I continue to press for more information and time for public comment on the project, including by successfully pushing for an extended public comment period on the Environmental Impact Statement. Public input is essential on this matter and all issues before the local, state, and federal government. That is critical to our democracy.

Again, thank you for your attention to this important issue, and please do not hesitate to reach out whenever I may be of service.

Sincerely,



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator