



Press Release

Maryland Transit Administration

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Alternative Screening Process Complete for Baltimore-Washington Maglev Project *Amtrak parallel alignment retained for further study; Two other alternatives dropped from further study*

(Baltimore, MD – June 7, 2002) Following a review of three alternative alignments for the Baltimore-Washington Magnetic Levitation (Maglev) Project, the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) is recommending the Amtrak parallel alignment be retained for detailed study in the Environmental Impact Statement as the “build” alternative. A “no-build” alternative will also be included. Under the recommendation, the I-95 parallel and the Baltimore-Washington Parkway parallel alignments will not be studied further. This recommendation, based on environmental and engineering analysis, public and agency comments, is subject to concurrence from various federal and natural resource and regulatory agencies.

In addition, options were considered for the project north of BWI Airport for the Linthicum area. The MTA is recommending that only the alignments along West Nursery Road and MD 295 be studied further. Alignments closer to residences in Linthicum will not be studied further.

Maglev uses non-contact electromagnetic energy to lift, guide and propel the vehicle forward at speeds up to 240 miles per hour. The MTA has been studying three alternative alignments for Maglev in a 40-mile corridor from Baltimore to Washington with an intermediate station at BWI Airport under a national Maglev deployment program. The three alternative alignments underwent a screening process to determine which alternatives to retain for further study.

The screening process determined that the I-95 parallel alignment had unacceptable community impacts and significant engineering challenges. The dislocation and disruption impacts of this alternative on residences, businesses and minority and low-income communities is significant. It was also determined that the Baltimore-Washington Parkway parallel alternative has significant impacts on parkland, known historic sites, wetlands and rare and endangered species.

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The Amtrak parallel is a feasible and constructable alternative that satisfies the purpose and need of the project at this time. Fewer environmental impacts are identified with this alignment than exist with the two alignments recommended for elimination from further study.

The decision follows public meetings held through the region by the MTA. Almost 1,000 comments were received by the time the public comment period ended on May 17.

“Our job was to get as much information as possible into the public’s hands,” said Diane H. Ratcliff, Environmental Manager for the project. “The comments we received were thorough, comprehensive and assisted us in reaching this recommendation for the project. We thank those who participated in providing the MTA with their comments.”

The next phase of the study is to undertake detailed examination of the Amtrak parallel and “no- build” alternatives. The “no-build” alternative is always carried forward into the next phase of analysis, and includes only the projects that are part of adopted long-range transportation plans for the corridor. The findings of these studies will be published in a Draft Environmental Impact Statement and submitted to the Federal Railroad Administration this fall.

In-depth evaluation of the environmental, historical and socioeconomic features along the Amtrak parallel alternative alignment will be conducted. This evaluation will use both field analysis and existing geographic information systems databases. Special studies will be conducted to look at sensitive design areas such as heavily developed areas and key natural resource areas. Throughout the preparation of the DEIS, the MTA will work closely with the communities, business, and environmental agencies to determine project features.

The Baltimore-Washington corridor is one of two being considered by the FRA for construction of the nation’s first Maglev project. In spring 2003, the FRA is scheduled to select a single project for construction. In addition to the alternatives analysis process, the MTA is coordinating other activities and studies, including preparation of passenger projections and revenue forecasts; estimates of capital and operating costs; identification of benefits; and preparation of a public/private partnership plan for planning, design, construction, financing and operation of the project.

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