



January 25, 2021

Statement from Director Andrew Trueblood on the Baltimore-Washington Super Conducting Maglev Project DEIS

The District of Columbia Office of Planning (OP) has been an active participant in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process for the Baltimore-Washington Super Conducting Magnetic Levitation Project (SCMAGLEV) since its inception. On January 15, 2021, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released a [Draft Environmental Impact Statement \(DEIS\)](#) for public comments with a deadline of April 22, 2021. OP recommends that District stakeholders undertake a detailed review of the DEIS to ensure that a Preferred Alternative identified in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) meets the long-term needs of the District. In support of stakeholders who intend to review and submit comments, OP is issuing this statement to highlight principles we will be using in our review of the DEIS.

The SCMAGLEV will have significant impacts on the District. The proposed station in Mount Vernon Square and alignment underneath New York Avenue would change the urban environment and have substantial construction and long-term operational implications on nearby properties. The connection between Downtown DC and Baltimore, with a possible extension to New York City, has the potential to considerably impact the District's housing and office markets, its economy, nearby neighborhoods, as well as local and regional transportation networks.

OP will be reviewing the DEIS with specific interest in how the guiding principles in our [October 1, 2018 letter](#), written in response to FRA's August 31, 2018 Project Draft Alternatives Report (PDAR), were integrated. These principles include:

1. Ensure continued and enhanced quality of life for those who live, work, and visit areas affected by the SCMAGLEV Project.
2. Ensure effective integration of the SCMAGLEV Project—including station areas, ancillary facilities, and above-ground guideways—with immediate sites, adjacent neighborhoods, and citywide context.
3. Prioritize intermodal systems effectiveness and efficiency.

The October 1, 2018 letter also notes that the PDAR inappropriately eliminated all station area options within the District except for Mount Vernon Square for analysis in the DEIS. OP notes that the premature elimination of the station options in NoMa prevents DEIS commenters from comparing reasonable alternatives and considering tradeoffs before a specific alternative is chosen.

OP also requested that the DEIS document the full analysis of the Affected Environment, Environmental Consequences, Land Use, Consistency with Local Plans, Reasonably Foreseeable Future Projects, and Cumulative Impacts and provided detailed technical comments for incorporation into DEIS analyses of impacts.

OP will be reviewing the DEIS to ensure that all the above were considered and incorporated and will provide comments to FRA by April 22, 2021.

We encourage the broad range of stakeholders who could be impacted by this project including residents, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioners, Councilmembers, nearby businesses, and business improvement districts to review the DEIS to ensure there are not lasting negative consequences on Mount Vernon Square and the District. A comment form and more information on how to submit written comments can be found at www.bwmaglev.info.

Attachment:

[October 1, 2018 Non-Concurrence Letter from the Office of Planning to the Federal Railroad Administration on the Baltimore-Washington Superconducting Magnetic Levitation Train System Project Draft Alternatives Report, Dated August 31, 2018](#)