

## The Daily Transcript

### OPINION & COMMENT

*First Amendment: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.*

#### Letters to the Transcript

#### Contrary to what Ford details, maglev would quietly alleviate traffic problems in Southern California

I was amazed to read the description about maglev in the "Airport options are limited" May 19 opinion piece written by John Ford (Source Code: 20050519tza). It is obvious that Mr. Ford has failed to research the true state of affairs involving magnetic levitation trains as a tool to help with the San Diego airport congestion challenge. Although the concept of maglev has been around since 1914, both the Germans and Japanese have had maglev test tracks operating for more than 30 years.

I recently returned from a trip to Shanghai, China, where I rode on the first commercial maglev that runs about 20 miles between the Pudong Airport and the outskirts of Shanghai. Also in attendance were several members of the San Diego County Regional Airport Authority and SANDAG, who incidentally observed the maglev train passing at speeds close to 300 mph. All that could be heard was a very short 'whoosh' as the vehicle passed. Mr. Ford was further mistaken — maglev vehicles do not create the sound of a jet liner on take-off. As a matter of fact, maglev vehicles produce no noise, as they have no engines or moving parts. At high speed (300 mph+), the only sound made by maglev is aerodynamic, and it is quieter at 300 mph than the San Diego trolley traveling at 30 mph. It is quieter inside a maglev at 300 mph than in your auto at 40 mph.

Mr. Ford's cost estimates to build a maglev are also incorrect. Maglev can be built for about the same cost as a high-speed rail particularly when one considers that maglev can climb a 10 percent grade compared to a high-speed rail that can only climb at the maximum rate of 3 percent. This avoids the need for long switchbacks going up a mountain and very

expensive railroad tunnels. The price per mile of maglev or a high-speed rail is dependent on the terrain. There is currently a maglev being designed to run from Las Vegas to Primm, Nev., at the state line, which is eventually planned to connect to Anaheim. On flat open terrain, the cost to develop a maglev system is the same as a high-speed rail system, which is about \$30 million per mile. If it were to be elevated and put in a freeway corridor to run through city centers, the cost has been estimated to go as high as \$127 million per mile. Incidentally, that is less than the cost per mile of the new trolley extension from Qualcomm Stadium to San Diego State University.

Maglev is the safest and most efficient form of high-speed transportation available today — 20 times safer than air, 140 times safer than rail, and 700 times safer than the automobile. It uses half the energy of a high-speed rail system (maglev even generates a portion of the electricity it consumes) and has only one-third the operating and maintenance costs but

travels twice as fast. It is environmentally friendly — no emissions, low noise, low energy, little land consumption.

Maglev can be instrumental in helping to alleviate highway traffic and airport congestion in Southern California; if planned properly, it can become the first mass-transit project that would not require government operation subsidies. The California Regional maglev project that is currently being proposed contains three essential components that will insure its economic viability. The proposed system will originate at the 10th Avenue Marine terminal on an elevated guideway in the right-of-way of Interstate 5 connecting to Lindbergh Field, with a stop in Oceanside at the terminus of the Sprinter light rail project. It will then proceed to John Wayne Airport, Long Beach Airport and LAX, and connect to a different maglev project being developed in the Los Angeles region, running from LAX with a stop at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles. It will con-

tinue on to the Ontario Airport, which has the capacity to handle an additional 25 million or 30 million passengers per year. Security and luggage check-in will occur at each maglev station as passengers board secured sections of the train and disembark in secured areas at each of the connected airports. This should reduce airport check-in times. Travel times between San Diego and Los Angeles will be approximately 30 minutes. Rental cars that require only the insertion of a credit card in a slot in the dashboard to verify a valid driver's license and energize the vehicle will help travelers get to their final destination. This is what the transportation engineers call a seamless multimodal transportation infrastructure. This is the only viable solution to the gridlock, which will undoubtedly increase as the population expands. We will be able to create a transportation system that finally will eliminate the need to subsidize 60 to 70 percent of the operating cost of our mass-transit systems, in addition to saving 50 million gallons of gasoline per year.

I am not proposing this as a solution to the airport relocation, but it will provide help in an already difficult situation.

Because of maglev, we can reduce freeway traffic and airport check-in time without relying on government subsidies, and we can connect city centers and Southern California airports with a high-speed, safe, low-cost and environmentally friendly multimodal transportation system.

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Source Code: 20050527tza