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Transrapid line in Shanghai

China plans extension to Hangzhou

With passenger numbers rising daily, one hundred percent reliability and availability, absolute safety - six months after the official start of the world's first commercial maglev service, the Shanghai-based operator, SMTDC, can take positive stock of developments. Now the maglev route is planned to be extended by 170 kilometers (105 miles) to Hangzhou.



Looking to write the next chapter of the Transrapid success story in Munich: (from left to right) Dr. Josef Zeiselmaier, CEO of the Bayerische Magnetbahnvorbereitungsgesellschaft, Hans-Jürgen Petersen, Managing Director of Transrapid International, Commander Wu Xiangming, Dr. Michael Kerkloh, Chairman of the Management Board of Flughafen München GmbH.

Speaking to German journalists, Commander Wu Xiangming, responsible for the 30-kilometer (19-mile) long Transrapid line between Pudong International Airport and Long Yang Road Station in Shanghai's financial district, is full of praise for the high-tech maglev system from Germany. There have been no problems since services began; the Transrapid is absolutely safe and environmentally compatible. Wu, who is now head of China's "National Research and Development Center for Maglev Transportation Technology", reported that the high-speed maglev link in Shanghai has already notched up 1.1 million kilometers (684,000 miles) and carried some 1.8 million passengers. Scheduled services are due to expand considerably by the end of the year. At present, personnel shortages at the operator, SMTDC, mean that the Transrapid is only running between 8:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. daily.

Wu called the airport link a "demonstration route", which should show that the "fast, energy-saving, environmentally-friendly transportation system" is suitable for deployment in other parts of China. Experience gained during the preceding half year of operations has demonstrated that this is indeed the case. As a result, an "extension from Shanghai to Hangzhou is being actively promoted". Wu emphasized that the new line would have to be in service no later than 2010, when Shanghai hosts the World Expo, as the plan also involved a link to the Exposition site. However, negotiations are still ongoing.

Having built the guideway for the Shanghai airport link entirely on their own and filed twenty new patents in the process, the Chinese are demanding a much higher level of Chinese involvement in the construction of the 170-kilometer-long route to Hangzhou. In Wu's opinion, this could lead to cost reductions. The necessary developments in maglev technology in Germany should therefore reflect this goal. Key components will, however, continue to come from Germany. Wu actively supports joint German-Chinese efforts at government and industrial levels to optimize the Transrapid technology and improve the competitiveness of the maglev system in the world market. With this in mind, Wu urged that the construction of the Munich airport link start as soon as possible. "In China, no one really understands why the country that developed the Transrapid has delayed for so long in deploying this economical and environmentally-friendly technology," said Wu. The know-how gained during the construction, commissioning, and operation of the Shanghai system could be used for the Munich project.