

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Maglev's myth

*Thursday, November 12, 2009*

It's argued that a multibillion-dollar, taxpayer-fleeing Pittsburgh maglev line would make the region the epicenter for this technology across the country. Except the country needs maglev as much as it needs more debt.

In remarks last week to state lawmakers, Randal O'Toole of the Cato Institute explained why expensive high-speed magnetic-levitation trains are beyond the realm of reasonable implementation.

Just ask China.

The 19-mile maglev line from Pudong Airport to downtown Shanghai rarely sees more than one out of four seats filled, says Mr. O'Toole, an expert in transportation issues. Which explains why China opted for less costly conventional high-speed trains between Shanghai and Beijing.

A \$5 billion-plus proposed line between Pittsburgh International Airport and Greensburg wouldn't fare better.

Even an optimistic projection of 28,000 round-trip passengers daily is a fraction of Pittsburgh travelers, O'Toole said. Moreover, research shows rail service to U.S. airports typically carries only 2 percent to 15 percent of air travelers, he said.

And because maglev uses vastly more energy than conventional high-speed trains, it produces that much more pollution, according to the Center for Clean Air Policy.

Economically and environmentally, Pennsylvania can't afford to be taken for maglev's ride.

Images and text copyright © 2009 by The Tribune-Review Publishing Co.  
Reproduction or reuse prohibited without written consent from Trib Total Media