

A Continental vision for Maglev

Flying is the only viable option these days for travelling over the sea, but do we really need to fly between cities in our own country? Maybe there is another solution, but the investment is vast.

The vision expressed here applies most readily to the European Union, the United States and Canada, Russia to some extent Australia and the Far East. Anywhere in fact which is seeing an increase in short haul flights over land.

As far as climate change is concerned there is not much that can be done about intercontinental and transatlantic flying. Unless we are to regress economically, such flights will have to continue for the foreseeable future. But recent years have seen a huge increase in short haul flights. It has become the way to get around in North America because of the distances involved. It is also increasing rapidly in Europe both for holiday purposes and business. This is a major contributing factor to the emissions of CO² and is set to grow. Unless we can curtail the short haul market, a huge and growing factor in global warming will continue to exacerbate the demise of our planet. There is no Planet B!



What is the alternative to short haul air travel? One answer could be Maglev. The vision is for a continental Maglev network, independent of the current rail systems but of course interfacing with it. The idea would be to run at high speed between strategic cities, those that people might currently fly between, but with the advantage of being city centre to city centre eliminating airport transfer and check-in times and thus compensating for the actual slower land speed of the Maglev over

aircraft. On current short haul distances, people would use such a service because their total travel time would be quicker. Having said that, Maglev needs to be developed further with the switching problem solved and an aim of achieving 500 mph (800 kph) to make such a system more viable in terms of competing with air travel. The Maglev trains would have few stops but run straight from one key centre to another. For shorter distances conventional high speed rail would continue.

As for the UK, this might mean that the channel tunnel is given over to the Maglev network or even a new tunnel created. From London, the first stops would be at least Newcastle, then Edinburgh. On the other side, Birmingham, Manchester then Glasgow. The aim is to replace short haul flights, not conventional rail or even HS2 (which a Maglev network would probably supersede anyway).

A network of such Maglev routes, spanning Europe and into Russia, a network linking major centres across the USA, linking the centres of eastern Australia and running west through Adelaide to Perth, India and China too could use this system and in the further future again, spanning Africa and South America - you can see that this is a huge long term investment, running into billions and not in our lifetimes but this is an area where Europe can lead the way into a cleaner and greener future. The reward might be the planet itself.