

Parliamentary Evening on the Transrapid project for Munich on November, 8th, 2007 in Berlin:

“Start of construction is now within reach”

The Transrapid maglev line linking Munich's main railway station and its international airport is the best solution to a pressing transportation problem and an effective contribution to protecting the environment and climate. What's more, it is economically advantageous and makes sense in terms of local industrial policy. This was the general tone during the Parliamentary Evening session of the Transrapid discussion group held in the offices of the Bavarian Representation in Berlin. Emilia Müller, Bavarian Minister of Economic Affairs, Infrastructure, Transport and Technology, called the Transrapid the "most environmentally compatible link to the airport". The "whispering train", she added, that connects two major transportation hubs would be an active contribution to environmental and climate protection because it would persuade car drivers to switch from road to rail when traveling to and from the airport. Dr. Otto Wiesheu, member of the managing board of Deutsche Bahn AG (German Rail), confirmed this emphatically: "This is only possible with the Transrapid." He then went on to say that another reason why German Rail had supported the Munich Transrapid project from the very beginning was because it could be operated economically. In contrast, he continued, an express commuter rail system as propagated by Transrapid opponents could not be because, in spite of the somewhat lower initial investment costs, operation of such a system would be ultimately more expensive. The Transrapid, he said, would carry more passengers than such an express commuter rail system and would therefore quickly show a profit. Matthias von Randow, head of the policy department of the Federal Ministry of Railways, pointed out that public sector would have to fork out around 1.55 billion euros for a commuter rail system, whereas it would have to provide financing amounting to 1.61 billion euros for the Munich Transrapid Project.

However, for the national economy, the Transrapid project would also be of considerable economic benefit, which Minister Müller expressed in figures: "For each euro we invest, we'll get 2.50 euros back". The Bavarian Minister of Transport described the project as an investment in Germany's future which would enhance the attraction of Europe as a whole and would sharpen Germany's profile as a high-tech location.

In view of the pledges made by the German federal government and the Free State of Bavaria to participate in the project with 925 million and 490 million euros, respectively, Hans Eichel, chairman of the Transrapid parliamentary discussion group, was pleased to announce that, "we have taken a great step forwards but have not yet reached our goal." Eichel, former federal Minister of Finance, criticized, however, that the innovative rail system would be subjected to "special stipulations and less favorable financial conditions" than a conventional transportation project.

Nevertheless, the Bavarian Minister of Transport, Emilia Müller, was optimistic: The "start of construction is now within reach."

In the opinion of Fred B. Irwin, President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Germany, the Transrapid project would then improve the chances of this magnetic levitation system being exported to the USA. It was his view that the United States needed the Transrapid "as quickly as possible". A number of routes had already been eyed up for maglev service. Irwin added that, "without a reference application in Germany, export to America simply will not be conceivable." He therefore called on the Germans to finally stand firm behind the leading technology offered by the Transrapid.