“Mature, safe, reliable”

In the Chinese media, the head of the Shanghai Transrapid Project, Commander WU Xiangming, paints a positive picture of the implementation of the world’s first revenue maglev line. He also comments on reports of alleged problems.

After a construction period of less than two years and the ensuing commissioning and test phase, the world’s first revenue maglev system received its final acceptance from the customer and entered scheduled service just a few weeks ago in Shanghai. Since commissioning, the Transrapid has carried more than 800,000 passengers on the 30 kilometer (19 mile) line between the Long Yang Road Station and Pudong International Airport, covering a total distance of more than 770,000 kilometers (478,000 miles).

Now, WU Xiangming, Commander in Chief of the Shanghai Transrapid project center, has for the first time made public statements about their experience with this new transit system “made in Germany”. In the “Wenhui Daily” and “Jiefang Daily”, two of the People’s Republic’s most important daily newspapers, he described the Transrapid technology as “mature, safe, and reliable”. At no time have there been any problems adversely affecting operation, stressed Commander WU. “Of all the transit systems in the world, none is safer than the Transrapid.”

Economically, too, the maglev system can compete with any other rail-based system, he emphasized. For example, the cost of the Transrapid link between Shanghai’s new business center Lujiazui and Asia’s most modern airport was only half that of a metro. Although unexpected problems did occur during implementation of this completely new project, the overall costs did not exceed the normal budgetary limits.

Commander WU also contradicted media reports concerning settling of the Transrapid guideway erected by the Chinese. Settling is to be expected with the soft subsoil conditions in Shanghai. That is why all of the 2,550 guideway beams are supported by more than 10,000 bearings, each of which can be adjusted in three dimensions. They will enable readjustment of the guideway again in the event of settling. According to Commander WU, that has only been necessary on one support since the construction work commenced: “Settling of the overall guideway structure is completely under control.”
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“Making a mountain out of a molehill” is just as apt a description of reports of alleged cable fires. During the commissioning phase a fire broke out only at one point on the outer surface of a cable, which had no effect on the operation of the Transrapid. Commander WU described the Transrapid Project in Shanghai as an example of successful cooperation between Germany and China. The result is now there for all the world to see.

After successful implementation of the Shanghai Project, WU has now been entrusted with heading the new “National Maglev Transportation Engineering and Development Center” (NMTDC). The center, which counts the Beijing Ministry of Science and Technology (Most) among its backers, is in charge of preparing the deployment of further Transrapid systems in China.

On request we will supply English translations of the full articles.