

# TECH TRENDS

## 1992

### Techno-train system may rail its way to U.S.

Eugene may be closer to Portland than you think. Try 20 minutes.

Traveling between the two cities on a regular basis can cause wear and tear on commuters and the environment. A new technology has been proposed that could change all that, making it possible for commuters to reach Portland from Eugene in a mere 20 minutes — via mass transit.

Currently, European and Japanese travelers enjoy the benefits of high speed railroads. With speeds that exceed 125 miles per hour, these trains carry people as fast as airplanes, if not faster. France's TGV (Train a Grande Vitesse) is one of the more successful examples of

this technology.

Associate Professor John Baldwin, acting head of the planning, public policy and management department, experienced the comforts of a high speed train while in Japan. "The surface of the coffee would barely shake," he said. "The trains are magnificent. They carry a lot of people center-city to center-city; it's cheaper than airfare, fun, and safer."

Wait. There's more. A Maglev (magnetic levitation) train, yet another technological traveling machine, uses the force of repulsion between positive and negative magnets embedded in the track and in the train. As a result, the train is suspended inches above the

track, ensuring a smooth, sleek ride.

Presently, there are few Maglev trains in existence worldwide, and their speeds and travel distances are limited. The health implications of this system are also being studied because of the strong electromagnetic field created.

And now there's news for us. There has been talk of building the same systems in the United States. Federal money has been allocated so that studies can conclude whether high-speed rail and/or Maglev trains would be suitable for American travelers.

The question now is whether it is feasible to build such systems in the Northwest. "Maglev

is not in our definite future, except as an airport mover," said Ed Immel, state rail planner for the Oregon Department of Transportation.

Realistically, a train between Eugene and Portland will not be built before high-speed trains between major cities are in use. Right now, the Northeast corridor and the Los Angeles/San Francisco routes are the best bets for high-speed rail systems, according to a Department of Transportation study.

The study also concluded that the Portland-Seattle corridor doesn't appear in a table of the 33 largest inter-city air travel markets.

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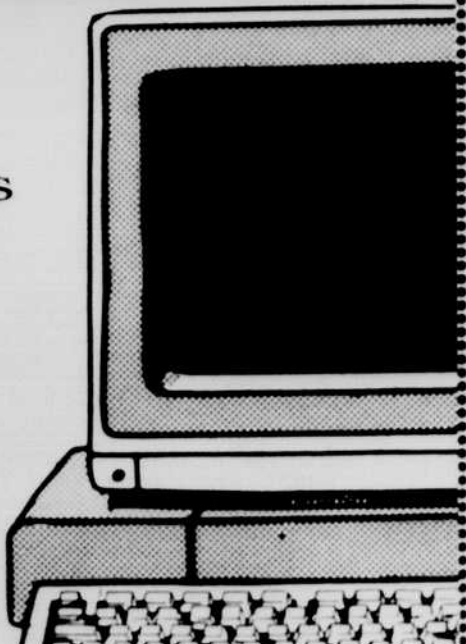
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