

## Swiss maglev pioneer, BHEL in talks for Indian journey

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*Maglev A view of Shanghai Maglev Transrapid*

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In an email reply to DNA, Aida von Schulman, Managing Director (business development) of SwissRapide said, "We are now in the process of establishing a partnership with BHEL, within the intent to approach the Ministry of Railways to start the feasibility study for an airport to city centre link project in Kolkata, Chennai or Hyderabad."

Incidentally, both SwissRapide and BHEL are among the six firms that answered the Railway ministry's call for Expressions of Interest for maglev-based Ultra High-Speed Rail Systems in September this year.

SwissRapide is currently building the 135-km high-speed line linking Bern, Zurich and Zurich International Airport using maglev technology, with line speeds planned at over 550 km/h. The start of commercial operations of the SwissRapide Express is planned for the end of 2017. It is also working on an ultra high-speed line between capital cities of Finland and Estonia, Helsinki and Tallinn respectively, christened FinEst Link.

BHEL is an old hand in the field of railway power systems and has built several of the country's train motors and locomotives. According to Schulman, the calling card for the maglev system could be reduced costs – compared to other forms of conventional high-speed rail systems, commonly called as bullet trains – in the longer run.

"Since SwissRapide Ultra-Highspeed Maglev Rail is generally twice as fast point-to-point than conventional high-speed rail, for most service levels, our maglev rail then only requires single track construction, thus reducing the cost of maglev up to 30 per cent lower than conventional high-speed rail. Also, since our maglev rail is twice as fast as conventional rail, only half as many trains are required, which also reduces the overall costs," Schulman said in her email reply.

The firm plans to introduce the same kind of technology that powers the 30-km Shanghai Maglev Transrapid, which has been tested to 505 km/h but uses 430 km/h as its cruising speed. It has travelled over 30 million kilometres, since its commissioning in January 2004.