# Disney's Magnetic Attraction

Initial funding finally comes through for a long-awaited high-speed train from Anaheim to Las Vegas. But will it ever leave the station?

by Paul Smalera

By some measures, magnetic-levitation trains are a near ideal form of transportation. They travel as fast as 360 miles per hour with zero pollution. But they're staggeringly expensive to build—a 19-mile line in Shanghai, which ferries passengers to and from the airport, cost $1.2 billion. This summer, a U.S. firm called American Magline Group received federal research money to study a potential maglev link between Las Vegas and Disneyland, in Anaheim, California, and California's government is also looking into a similar commuter network for greater Los Angeles. The plan for both initiatives is to fund construction costs—as much as $20 billion—with private-public partnerships; Vegas casino operators and Disney have already pledged support for their rail line. Money aside, the projects could take a decade to complete.

## Train Versus Plane

Jets can cruise faster, but the maglev is the speediest form of transit on the ground.

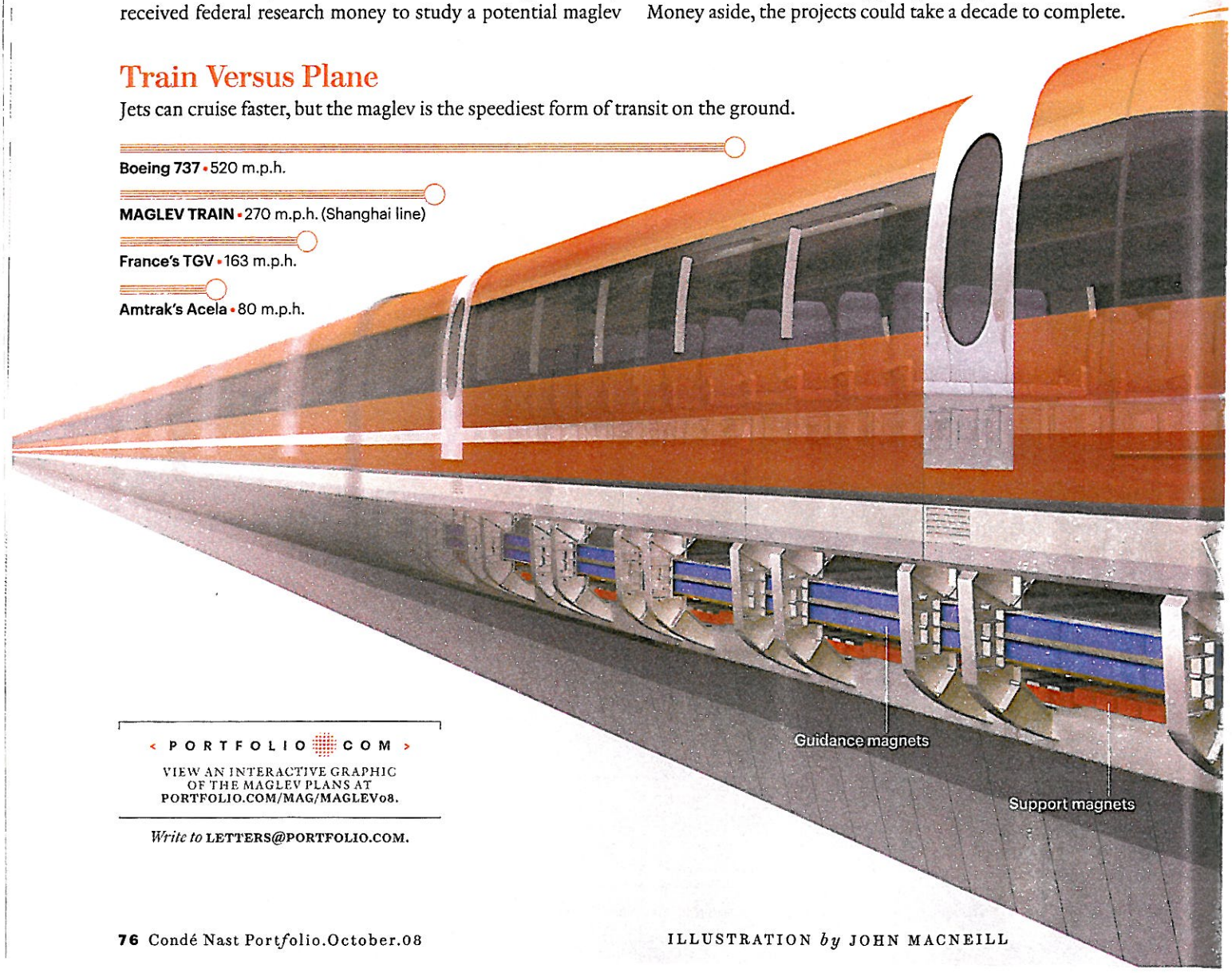


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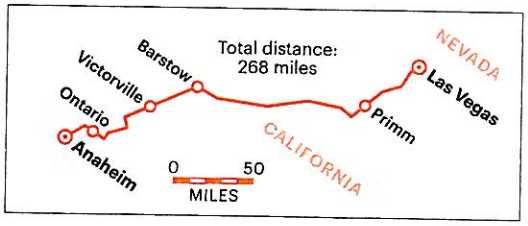
ILLUSTRATION *by* JOHN MACNEILL

## Train in Vain?

The $45 million federal research grant will study the environmental impact of the proposed line—including how much any needed property rights-of-way would cost. One option is to lay the tracks parallel to an existing rail line that now connects the two cities; Amtrak suspended that service in 1997 because of a lack of passengers.

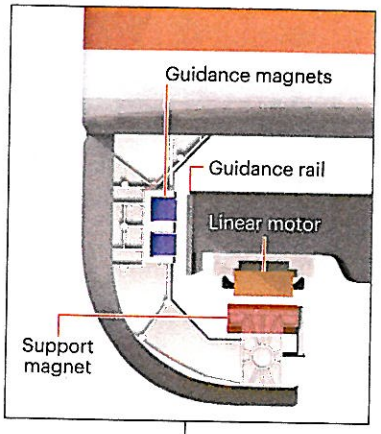
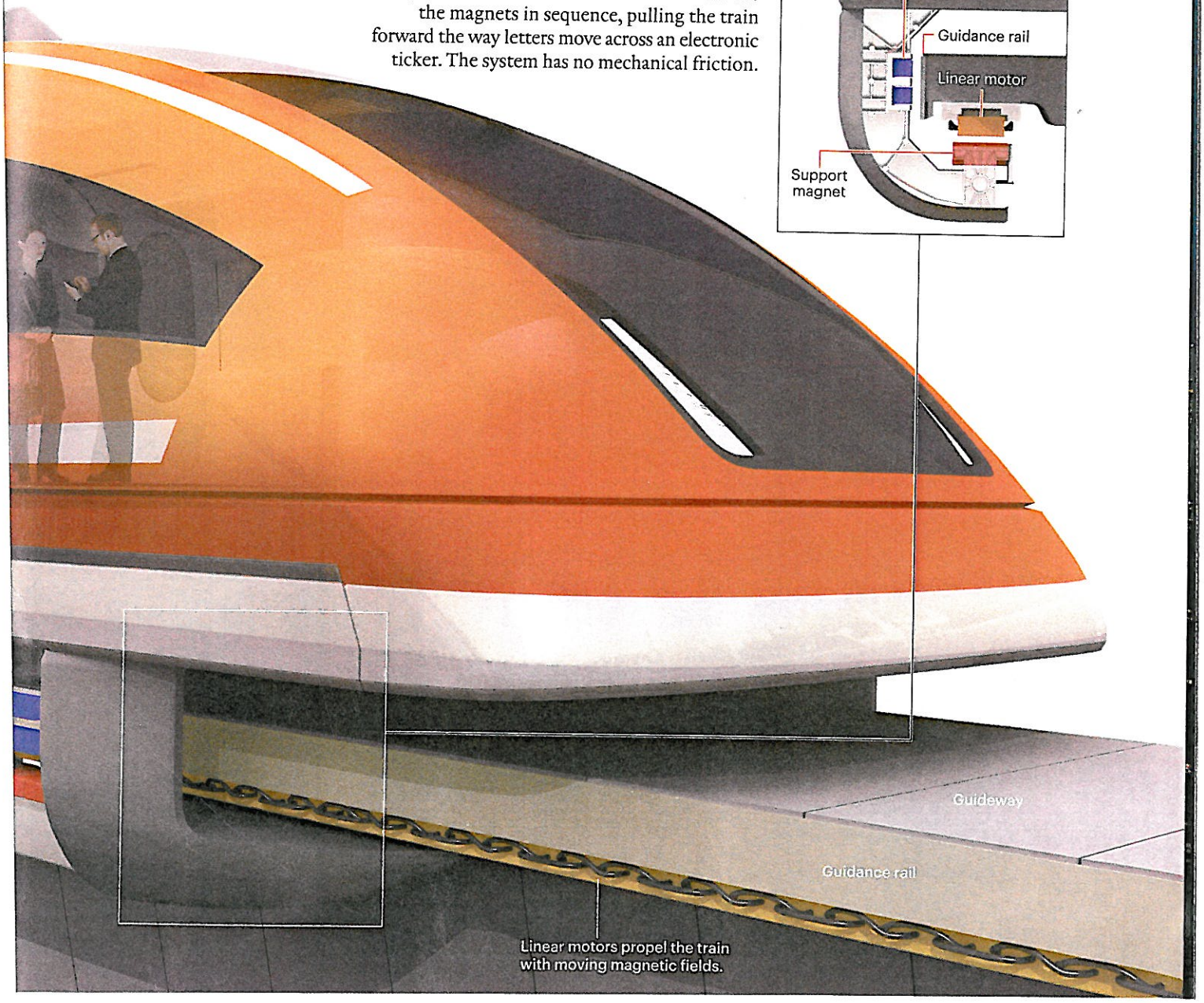



**TOTAL TRAVEL TIME BY PLANE: 3 hrs. 23 mins.**

Anaheim — Taxi to John Wayne Airport: 35 mins. — At airport: 1 hr. minimum — Flight: 1 hr. 8 mins. — At baggage claim: 30 mins. — Taxi to hotel: 10 mins. — Las Vegas

**TOTAL TRAVEL TIME BY TRAIN: 2 hrs. 5 mins.**

Anaheim — Taxi to station: 10 mins. — At station: 15 mins. — Maglev train: 1 hr. 30 mins. — Taxi to hotel: 10 mins. — Las Vegas

## Magnetic Fields

The trains and track beds contain electromagnets that, when energized, lift the cars. Synchronized linear motors in the tracks fire the magnets in sequence, pulling the train forward the way letters move across an electronic ticker. The system has no mechanical friction.