

Connecticut Monorails: An Idea That Keeps Coming ... and Going ... and Coming ... and Going

Author : Darienite.com Staff

Categories : [Opinion](#), [Transportation](#)

Tagged as : [Cameron on Monorails 2023](#), [Cameron on Transportation](#), [Cameron on Transportation 2023](#), [Jim Cameron's Transportation Column](#), [Jim Cameron's Transportation Column 2023](#), [Maglevs](#), [Monorails](#), [Talking Transportation](#), [Talking Transportation 2023](#)

Date : March 5, 2023

What is this fascination that people have with monorails? I can't tell you how often people suggest them as "the answer" to our state's clogged roads.

The History of Monorail Proposals in the Nutmeg State

"Why don't we build a monorail down the middle of The Merritt Parkway?," asked an architect at a recent meeting. To my astonishment, such an idea was once studied!

As lore has it, back in the mid-1980's local tech giant Sikorsky was asked by the Connecticut Department of Transportation if a monorail could be built, and a plan was submitted.

Sure, such a system could be built, they concluded, but where would you put the stations and the necessary parking?

Since hearing of this white-whale of a tale, shared by Merritt Parkway Conservancy Executive Director Wes Haynes, I have been on a relentless search for details of the proposal, but I've come up empty.

Sikorsky has no record of the plan. CDOT said "Huh?" Digging through the archives of the Stamford Advocate I found articles from 1985 discussing the idea: a \$700 million monorail down the median of the Merritt Parkway from Greenwich to Trumbull as an alternative to Bridgeport developer Francis D'Addario's idea of widening the parkway to eight lanes — or double-decking I-95.

Motorists were surveyed and CDOT apparently spent \$250,000 for a study.

The amazing research librarians at the State Library dug through their dusty files and came up with a CDOT report from 1987 pooh-poohing the idea, not only on grounds of impracticality but because it would compete with existing rail service. Heavens no!

In 1998 a monorail was once proposed for Hartford, connecting downtown to Rentschler Field in East Hartford. It was to cost only \$33 million and the cost was supposedly to be paid by the Feds. It never happened. The idea was revived again in 2006 when the Adriaen's Landing convention complex was opened, but again, nothing.

A pseudo-monorail "People Mover" system was built at Hartford's Bradley Airport in 1976 connecting the remote parking to the main terminal, all of seven-tenths of a mile away.

The fixed-guideway system, with cars designed by Ford Motor Company, cost \$4 million but never operated because the \$250,000 annual operating cost was deemed impractical. In 1984 it was dismantled, though you can still see one of the original cars at the Connecticut Trolley Museum in East Windsor.

Getting Real About Monorails

Whatever your fantasies are about space-age travel by monorail, let me dispel your dreams with some facts.

Monorails are not fast. [The Disneyworld monorail](#), built by a Japanese company, has a top speed of 55 mph but usually just averages 40 mph. Even on a bad day Metro-North can better that.

The 3.9 mile long [Las Vegas monorail](#) does about 50 mph shuttling losers from casino to casino.

Monorails are expensive. The Vegas system, opened in 2004, [cost \\$654 million](#). That's why existing monorails like Disney's have never been extended.

Monorails are not Maglevs. Don't confuse the single-track, rubber-tired monorails with the magnetic-levitation technology [in use in Shanghai](#) and being tested for passenger trains [in Japan](#). The Shanghai maglev can travel over 250 mph, the Japanese test trains have hit 374 mph.

No, monorails are not in Connecticut's future and are not the answer to our woes.

Jim Cameron has been a Darien resident for more than 25 years. He is the founder of the [Commuter Action Group](#), sits on the [Merritt Parkway Conservancy](#) board and also serves on the Darien RTM and as program director for Darien TV79. You can reach him at CommuterActionGroup@gmail.com.