

PUBLIC CONSULTATION QUESTIONS TO THE STAKEHOLDERS

Please send your replies by 31 March 2005

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Answers from The European Freight & Logistics Leaders Forum (F&L)

Which are the major axes?

1. What are the main transport axes, including motorways of the sea, connecting the European Union to the neighbouring countries or broader regions today?

- Connection with North Africa: Tanger – Algeciras – Cordoba – Madrid – Zaragoza – Barcelona – Perpignan – Toulouse – Limoges – Paris – Köln (conventional route from Perpignan to Köln through Lyon is always an alternative, but usually congested)

This axe links the high potential growth region of the the Maghreb with its most important export market, the European Union. We propose the development of a rail axe with priority for freight, considering there would be already a high speed rail line for passenger traffic: Algeciras – Cordoba – Madrid – Barcelona – Perpignan – Lyon – Paris.

- Connection with North East Europe: Berlin – Warszawa – Minsk – Moskva – Niznij Novgorod

Dresden – Wroclaw – Kattowice – Kiev – Moskva is an alternative route. Russian wide gauge already starts at Kattowice region. So axle-gauge changeover could happen within the EU to avoid the bottleneck at the border to the Ukraine

Forward looking, the possible connection of this Axis with trans-shipment possibility to the Siberian ports and mainland China would reduce the current transit-times by ship and thus offer an alternative between sea-freight and airfreight. With the current volume growth coming out of China this alternative could be well frequented.

- Connection with South East Europe – Turkey: Dresden – Praha – Bratislava/Wien – Budapest – Arad – Sofija (1) – Istanbul (1) – Bucuresti (2) – Constanta (2)

This axe is one of the best ways of linking central Europe with the Balkans region and the Middle East through Turkey (potential future EU member).

- Connection between Central Europe and Middle East by Sea: Hamburg - Munich - Venice/Koper, that offers a multimodal transportation involving the dual use of rail and sea to access high potential markets such as Egypt, Lybia, Israel, etc. from Central Europe. It can also be used to serve the Balkans region.

There's no substantial change expected as to the split of the land transportation mode which is already rail dominated due to the persistent restrictions inherent to the Alps crossing. This proposal basically combine two modes of transportation deemed environment friendly, substantial public acceptance is nevertheless expected as to its realization.

- Connection between Central Europe and Mediterranean Ports: La Spezia – Melzo (MI) – Hamburg, or Gioia Tauro – Melzo (MI) – Hamburg.

There are companies specialized in providing intermodal links over the Alps, connecting Milan (Melzo Hub) to all main destinations in Central and Northern Europe.

This axe, passing through Melzo Inland Terminal, direct from two main Italian Ports as La Spezia and Gioia Tauro, is in line with the development of traffic from North Africa through South-Italy to North-Europe.

The proposed corridors are well connected between them through the existing infrastructures in Germany. These axes are shown in the following map:



To complete these corridors there would also be interesting to consider the links between Germany and the UK through the Channel Tunnel, and between Germany and the Scandinavian countries. Additional links to major European ports would also be important.

2. What will these axes be with a time horizon of 2020?

It is quite clear that the trade pattern will be progressively changing with the extension of the EEC. Some of the trades done with the Iberian peninsula will switch to Eastern European countries. This will take a certain time because of the necessity to have a local market to build up factories in these countries. At the same time factories of the western European countries will not close as long as there is an important local market for their products. But the influence of the extension will increase the traffic to and from these new countries. For that reason the east-west corridors will take more and more traffic.

The links with the ports on the west coast will have to be improved in building new infrastructures like the Betuwe line from Rotterdam and an efficient dedicated railway network throughout Europe will be essential for long distance traffics.

3. What is the balance between the different transport modes?

It is quite clear that for a sustainable development it will not be possible to rely only on road transport. Railfreight has a role to play but it has to overcome quite a lot of handicaps:

- Competing with passengers for the most efficient use of infrastructures because the freight train optimum speed is largely different from the passenger train speed
- Crossing borders smoothly without any disruption which will need technical interoperability, more costly locomotives to accept the various type of electricity and a political will to overcome the difficulties resulting from various safety rules in the European countries which lead to have national trained drivers nearly in a monopolistic position.
- Changing the commercial pattern whereby cooperation between historical railway undertakings is still a major target. Introduction of new entrants on a larger scale will be a real challenge before competition enhance the efficiency of historical railway undertakings.

At the same time motorways of the sea have the advantage of an already available infrastructures because the sea is ready and the ports are usually quite quick to develop if the traffic requires new terminals. The only problem is that European Cabotage needs also connections with road or rail in rather congested areas. This can be overcome by creating new rail infrastructure like the Betuwe line or by operating differently in congested areas.

As regards inland water transport there is capacity available but the network is inefficient in certain regions of Europe. The development of new waterways able to accept large barges is tremendously costly and rather difficult to insert in the environment and it takes also a very long period to be accepted and achieved.

4. What are the current traffic volumes, both passenger and freight, on the proposed axes?

The capacity of new axes dedicated to freight is huge. The problem will be the concentration of traffic to have an economic use of this new infrastructure. A favourable factor is the use of geographical bottlenecks which naturally concentrate the traffic. Then it is necessary to fix the price at a very attractive level justified by an important volume of traffic. This action is necessary to change the usual pattern of transport of the shippers. The use of such an axes must rely on a very high level of reliability which can be reached with new entrants or multinational dedicated teams of historical railway undertakings. The most difficult problem to resolve is the migration scheme and it will be necessary to use a rolling motorway technique at the beginning which has the advantage to maintain the commercial direct relationship between the road hauliers and the shippers, and to enable to have an easy road concentration of traffic on terminals served by the new axes.

If that is achieved then the market share could climb quite rapidly up to % of the potential traffic which is the long distance (>500km) on the corridor where this axe is situated.

5. What is the amount and share of international traffic to/from the Union or between the neighbouring regions?
6. How will these traffic volumes develop by 2020?
7. Are there particularly environmentally sensitive areas that must be taken into account when identifying major axes?

All the areas in the Alps valleys are environmentally sensitive and are equally regions of traffic concentration. This allows to study these regions in priority. But at the same time very road congested regions, like around major ports or around major cities are also very sensitive and connexions to these areas from the axis must be also studied in priority.

Which investments and how?

1. Which are the most pressing congestion, traffic safety or geographical bottlenecks on the major axes that could justify investments?

The most pressing congestion is situated around big cities because of the pollution impact following road congestion. At the same time these congestion are also resented by big number of citizens in these areas and this will help to make the necessary works more acceptable. The bottlenecks will have to be dealt soon after but, as we all know, there are other ways of operating (same speed for all type of traffics in bottlenecks) that can enhance the capacity with consequences on the average passenger train speed which is sometimes temporarily acceptable.

2. What kind of improvements (rehabilitation, new construction) to the infrastructure would be needed to remove the bottlenecks?

After making the necessary adjustment of the method of operating the network, infrastructure works will be necessary. Generally around big cities it will be new infrastructure because it is very difficult to maintain a reasonable level of quality of service during the works. For example the bottleneck of Lyon associates all the major reasons to be removed as there are environmental risks, pollution due to congestion and a difficulty to find solutions on existing tracks. In other places it might be possible to develop a strategy based on small investments like a parallel track to speed up the insertion in the main flow of rail traffic or some non-level crossings to enhance the fluidity of the traffic.

Of course the introduction of ERTMS where it will be justified (main european corridors) will enhance the available capacity, but as everybody knows all the locomotives will not be equipped immediately with the new control command system.

3. What is the time horizon for the realisation of such a project?

New infrastructure in urban zones may take years to be achieved so it will be necessary to modify present ways of operating to sustain the development before they are achieved. If it is not the case then the traffic will move to road increasing the congestion and putting an

unbearable pressure on the public authorities to build new roads and motorways which generally are interesting for large number of voters!! So it is clearly” time to decide”.

4. What would the economic, environmental and safety benefits of such project be? Dedicated freight lines or new by-passes or non-levelled crossings are increasing the efficiency, reducing the costs , allowing to sell the rail transport at lower prices with a higher service level. All these factors will attract a larger market share to the railways and have a direct impact on economy and environment. If the use of a new dedicated network for freight is at a high level the price could be very low compared to the road and the impact be significant on congestion and pollution. These actions will not be sufficient because distribution in the cities will remain a road activity. It is important to dedicate a lot of effort to find new solutions to bring the freight silently in dedicated platforms inside the cities and to organize the distribution by electric or non polluting and silent vehicles.

5. Are there alternative technical or modal options to remove or alleviate the bottleneck?

Bottlenecks cannot be removed by reducing the traffic because it would hurt the economic development. Using inland waterways and short-sea shipping are alternatives that have to be used simultaneously to alleviate some long distance traffics crossing the congested areas.

6. How can the project best be financed? What could be the role for private sector involvement and user charges?

Financing new railway lines should be possible if the operations are dramatically more efficient than today. This may only be achieved if the last miles (roughly 60) will have to be performed on existing railway lines to reach intermodal terminals before the cargo is distributed around. On these last miles the traffic will be mixed with other categories of traffics and it will be essential to define a specific type of priority for the trains connected to the new railway network.

If it is the case then I am confident that the efficiency of the overall rail trip will be such that the financing could be largely private if guaranties are given not to introduce competing services or lines financed on public funds and if the priorities are also guaranteed on long periods.

With respect to specific actions we have identified the following:

- New facilities to allow changing tracks to access former Soviet Union network.
- Rail circumvallations of the big cities.
- Modification of stations and railway shunting lines to allow trains of 1,000m long.
- Improvements in the interconnection tunnel between Port Bou and Cerbere, allowing an important increase in capacity.

- Axle-gauge changeover point at Cerbere-Port Bou has to be completed by bridge cranes and container spreaders for railcar containers being able to use various equipment.
- Current Alps crossing capacity bottleneck will be solved with sizeable investments towards infrastructure improvement.
- The current bottleneck in Melzo will be solved increasing capacity in its Inland Terminal. An important investment plan for the next 5 years is already in place. This development of Melzo capacity, through new rail tracks and new lifting equipments for containers handling, will improve Rail Transport Service, moving volumes from Truck to Rail service.

How to ensure seamless and efficient use of the axes?

The national railway authorities power of disposition should be restricted to making the tracks and railroad system available. Traction power should be put on the market by a supranational institution.

Special customs agreements between EU and non-EU countries for more flexible administration at the borders.