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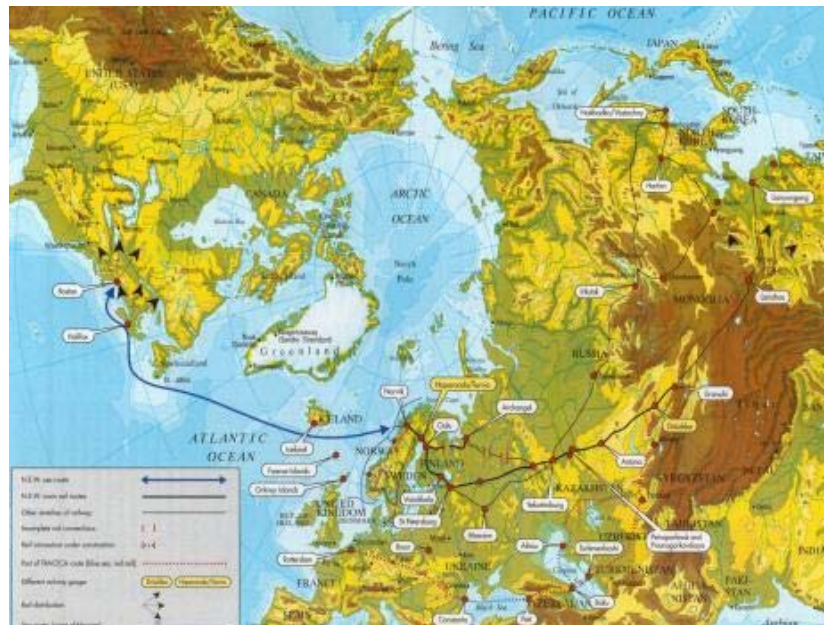
Bodø, 30. March 2005

Public consultation on the extension of the major trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions - Comments from Nordland County Council

In connection with the public consultation on the extension of major trans-European transport axes, the County Council of Nordland wishes to draw attention to two ongoing projects that may be of great importance to secure future sustainable transport by taking care of the rapidly growing cargo flow between Russia/Far East and Europe / North America. The main idea of these projects is to relieve further congestion on central European road and rail networks by leading these flows to less trafficked rail and sea corridors in the northern part of Europe.

The North East West Transport Corridor - N.E.W.

A project has been going on for several years with the objective to develop an inter-modal transport corridor between Central China / Russia and the east coast of USA. The land bridge starts in China and runs through Kazakhstan, Russia, Finland and Sweden ending up in the port of Narvik in Norway where it connects to a sea link to USA.



The project is lead by The International Union of Railways (UIC), Paris. Partners are the Swedish, Finnish and Norwegian National Railway Administrations, the Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communication, Nordland County Council, Massport (USA), Port of Narvik and Futurum Narvik.

The International Railway Union states:

“An important criterion for the development of the route is that an operational N.E.W. corridor is the best alternative for east-west transports within as well as to/from the northern parts of Scandinavia. By utilising less congested ports on the North American East Coast (Boston) and in Northern Norway (Narvik) in addition to the eastbound railway system in Northern Scandinavia and Russia, the N.E.W. corridor aims to be a supplement to existing east-west routes. N.E.W. could also be seen as a main East-West transport route serving the industries in the northern region of Scandinavia.”



The intermodal port of Narvik is the only port in Northern Scandinavia that has access to a direct east-west railway link. A few kilometres after crossing of the Swedish/Finnish border the railway link splits (in Oulu) in two separate directions/market areas: Archangel in Russia (east of Oulu) and the main route to central Asia/Asia through the border-crossing station south in Finland (Vainikkala).

The main route follows the Russian railway network, crossing the Northern Corridor in Kazakhstan and then into western China. The main route could also follow the Russian railway all the way to Eastern Russia (Nakhoda, Vostochny, Vladivostok, etc) where there are connections to North-East China, Japan and Korea.”

As result of the rapidly growing trade between China and other far Eastern countries and central / Western Europe and USA / Canada, we already see a heavy growth in cargo flows between these countries. The expected future growth in Russian economy, and hence increased cargo flow to and from Russia, combined with easier access to the Russian railway system for cargo to and from the Far East is expected to result in very large new cargo volumes in a east-west direction. In this perspective the rail corridors through Central Europe will probably experience further congestion problems at the

same time as there may be imposed restrictions on sea transport to and from the Baltic Sea due to safety and environmental reasons.

On this background the N.E.W.-corridor represents an alternative solution where all the intercontinental transports between the Far East and North America as well as much of the transport to and from Western Europe will find a routing avoiding the most heavily congested corridors through Central Europe and the Baltic Sea.

The project is now in a very important phase, as a 6 months trial run is being planned together with more comprehensive analysis of the potential and bottlenecks for this corridor. A systematic answer to the specified questions given has therefore been difficult to give at this moment, but we hope to get the opportunity to come back to this at a later stage.

We also refer to further information about this corridor given as comments from the regions Norrbotten and Västerbotten in Sweden and from the Norwegian Ministry of Transport.

The Northern Maritime Corridor

The Northern Maritime Corridor (NMC) is an Interreg IIB project covering the Northern Periphery and North Sea areas with associated partners in Northwest Russia. 20 regions in 9 countries participate in the project. The project promotes and develops short sea shipping, considering also the environmental and safety aspects. The connections we are involved in developing are between the European Union and neighbouring countries and regions.

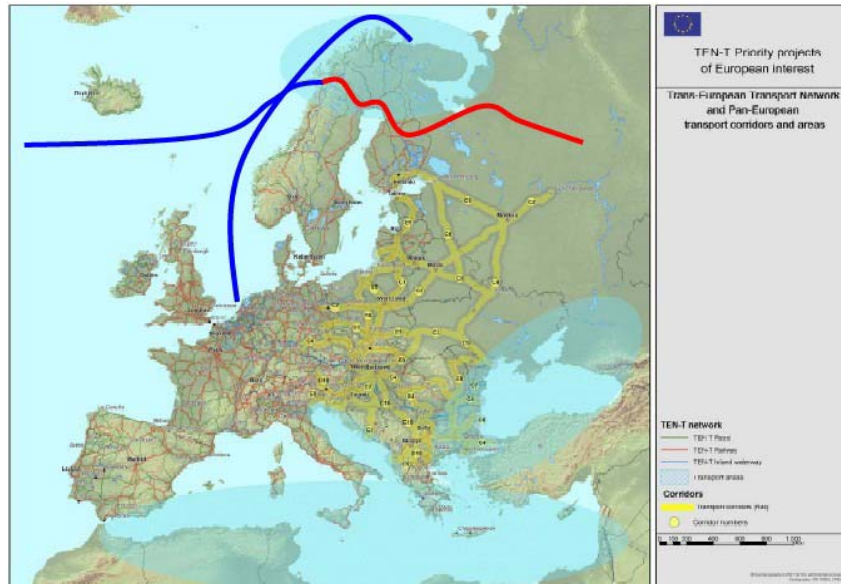


The Northern Maritime Corridor constitutes exactly an axis that fit very well into the envisaged axes that connect the European Union with neighbouring countries. The NMC project has suggested this corridor to become the “Motorway of the Northern Seas”, fitting into the European Union’s concept of motorways of the sea. The NMC project has had meetings with the Unit for Motorways of the Sea & Intermodality within DG TREN, and discussed how the NMC can better link itself to the TEN-T and motorways of the sea.

For more detailed information on this corridor, we refer to separate comments from the project “Northern Maritime Corridor”, and from the comment from the Norwegian Ministry of Transport.

Conclusion

The two mentioned corridors represent an alternative route for future large intercontinental cargo flows through Central Europe as well as between Russia / Far East and Western Europe. The map below visualises how the Northern Maritime Corridor and the N.E.W. Corridor could function together in order to take care of these flows.



With reference to the European transport policy stated in the White Book "Time to Decide", and the Lisbon agenda, Nordland County Council has on this background a clear view that these projects should be given status as future major trans-European transport axes. Having been active both politically and financially in the initial phase of these projects, Nordland County Council with partners look forward to future cooperation with the Commission and our neighbouring regions and countries in realising these corridors.

Bodø, 30. March 2005

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