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Public consultation on the report of the High Level Group on the report of the High Level Group on the extension of the main trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions and the way forward – response from Nordland County Council.

The Commission has opened a public consultation on the report of the High Level Group on the extension of the main trans-European transport axes to the neighbouring countries and regions. Nordland County Council is pleased to see that a northern axis is identified among the five major transnational axes to connect the EU with its neighbours. We believe this transport corridor will be of great importance to secure future sustainable transport of the rapidly growing cargo flow between the Far East and Europe. Another important aspect of the northern axis is that it is the shortest transport corridor between east and west and there should be less congestion problems than in the more populated areas, thus the environmental impact is considerable. An extension of the Motorways of the Seas to the Barents is another important part of the intermodal transport chain in the north. These two transport corridors are also important for making a successful development in The High North with its resource potential and management challenges. In the following we will draw attention to these two transport corridors.

The North East West Transport Corridor (N.E.W.)

The North East West Transport Corridor (N.E.W.) is a well known project to the European Commission to develop an intermodal transport corridor between China and the east coast of USA. Nordland County Council wishes to draw attention to new progress and the maturity of this project. In June 2005 a business company, NEW Corridor AS was established. The purpose of the company is to commercialize and realize the transport concept. Owners of the company is The International Union of Railways (UIC) Paris, and Nordland County Council. Beside, in connection with the N.E.W. Corridor, Narvik municipality, Nordland County Council and the Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs in Norway are currently in a process to arrange and finance the development of the infrastructure in Narvik harbour .

The HLG report says about the northern axis that “A connection to the Barents region linking Norway through Sweden and Finland with Russia is also foreseen.” Nordland County Council would like to emphasize that such a connection should be given priority as we expect a rapid

growth in the cargo flow between the Far East and Europe. There are already concrete plans to make a “trial-run” of a train with cargo from China to Narvik in the course of 2006. We expect that an operational N.E.W. corridor would stimulate the trade between China and other far Eastern countries and Europe and the USA.

The Northern Maritime Corridor

The Northern Maritime Corridor constitutes an axis that fit very well into the envisaged axes that connect the European Union with neighbouring countries. The importance of extending this Motorway of the Northern Seas to the Barents region and Russia is described in a separate response to the European Commission from the NMC II project. Nordland County Council strongly supports an extension of this motorway.

Conclusion

Nordland County Council believes that an operational N.E.W. corridor is the best alternative for East-West transport within as well as to/from the northern parts of Europe and Russia. The N.E.W.corridor and the Northern Maritime Corridor together are increasingly important transport corridors which make the immense resources of the north available to Europe and globally. Nordland County Council with partners is looking forward to future cooperation with the European Commission and our neighbouring regions and countries in realising these transport corridors.

Regards

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