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Directorate General for Energy and
Transport
Unit B2 – Trans-European Network policies
1049 Brussels
Belgium

**Public consultation on the report:
“Networks for peace and development –Extension of the major trans-European transport
axes to the Neighbouring countries and regions”**

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The County Councils of Västerbotten and Norrbotten are pleased to see that the High Level Group has recognized the importance of a trans-national transport corridor Narvik – Haparanda – Vartius – S:t Petersburg which connects the northernmost EU with its neighbours and thus has given the transport corridor status as part of the prioritised Northern axis. This trans-national transport corridor will avoid the most heavily congested corridors through Central Europe and will provide fast and cheap access to new growing markets.

The other axis of special interest is the Motorway of the Seas linking the Gulf of Bothnia, Baltic, Atlantic, Mediterranean and the Black Seas. Further work with the motorways of the sea will relieve congestions on Central European road and rail networks by leading freight flows to less congested rail and sea corridors.

In the context of the Northern Dimension, improvements of the trans-national transport corridors become essential. The partnership and cooperation agreement between Russia and EU aims at the eventual establishment of a common trade area. In this perspective these axis becomes crucial.

Further development of the northern axis Narvik – Haparanda – Vartius – S:t Petersburg will also open up possibilities for the industry in the north of the Nordic countries. It is therefore gratifying that the map over the five major trans-European transport axes includes this corridor, that also is a part of Barents link. Through the industrial co-operation in the Barents region the need for more effective freight transports in an east-west direction has been brought forward as a major interest.

In a global perspective this northern trans-national transport corridor is part of the project North East West Transport Corridor (N.E.W) which aims at developing an global intermodal transport corridor between Central China/ Russia and the east coast of USA, with the possibilities of a shorter, faster, cheaper and more secure transport solution between the continents than traditional transports. This gives EU the opportunity to develop trade in this global transport corridor.

This part of the Northern axis needs to be transformed into concrete projects. Suggested measures that need to be prioritised are traffic management systems, gauge change systems, simplifying customs and visa procedures for freight transport and tests of infrastructure and vehicles.

The County Councils of Västerbotten and Norrbotten are pleased to see that the High Level Group has recognized the importance of a trans-national transport corridor Narvik – Haparanda – Vartius – S:t Petersburg and the Motorway of the Seas in the Gulf of Bothnia.

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