

Opinion

Date 7 September 2010

Our reference RSK 587-2010

European Commission
MOVE-TEN-T-Policy-
revision@ec.europa.eu

Consultation on future strategies for the transeuropean transport network, TEN-T**Matter concerned**

The Västra Götaland Regional Executive Board submits the following comments on the above-mentioned working document. The matter has been prepared by the region and municipalities of Västra Götaland in consultation.

Our views**Västra Götaland**

Västra Götaland is the leading transport and industrial region of Sweden, with a commerce and industry that to a very great extent act on a global market. This implies large flows of goods into and out of the region, to and from both the rest of Sweden and Europe and the world beyond. Gothenburg and Västra Götaland are, moreover, a main node for traffic movements between the whole of Sweden and the rest of the world and are thus of vital importance to Sweden's national economy. Considerable Scandinavian flows pass through Gothenburg. The global alignment of industry means that transport volumes and routes change in response to economic fluctuations and market developments. It is therefore particularly important to Sweden for Gothenburg and Västra Götaland to be a part of the main European transport systems.

General strategies and policies

We think, just as the Commission proposed, that TEN-T needs to be more sharply focused on network solutions. We support the concept of a general more comprehensive network and a core network. The Nordic Triangle is an excellent example of network thinking. The project links up with the national infrastructure systems of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland and with the new link to the Continent that has been decided on – the Fehmarn Belt link. It is of the utmost importance that the European transport corridors are completed across the national borders. The Nordic Triangle can from a Swedish point of view be further developed by improved

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intermodality with connections to important airports and ports. It is urgent for the Nordic Triangle and other important, formerly prioritized, projects to be implemented.

The choice of main nodes, and the routes and design of the network, ought especially to be based on the principles that carbon dioxide emissions from the transport sector should be reduced, that accessibility for freight and passenger traffic should be increased and that traffic safety should be improved. We would emphasize that reducing emissions of gases that affect the climate is a matter of urgency. In concrete terms the principles ought for example to mean: using intermodal transport possibilities by sea and rail, concentrating on important pathways and developing green corridors, and removing critical bottlenecks that put a brake on development of the internal market.

TEN-T-planning method

In the course of consultation the question arises of whether the criteria described for the design of the core network are appropriate and practical and how TEN-T can contribute to the strategic goals of the Europe 2020 agenda. The chief characteristic of a main node ought to be that it plays a critical part in traffic between EU countries and between the EU and third countries, including those on other continents. To enhance the competitiveness of EU industry it is important for the designation of the main nodes that determine the routes of the core network to be based on both freight and passenger transport conditions. Gothenburg satisfies these requirements in that the Port of Gothenburg is Scandinavia's largest logistical centre, with a hinterland that extends over large parts of both Scandinavia and the Baltic region.

No less than 65 per cent of Swedish container traffic is handled by the Port of Gothenburg, which is the only one in Sweden with direct transoceanic traffic. The Port of Gothenburg has built up a Railport system with scheduled goods services to 26 destinations in Sweden and Norway. About half of the containers that go by land to and from the port are carried by rail. In 2009, 51,000 tonnes of CO₂ was saved by transferring this traffic from road to rail. The Port of Gothenburg has the potential for further development as a point of entry for transport to the countries around the Baltic.

For it to be possible to achieve the EU's climate targets and reduce congestion and road accidents, it is important for major hubs to be placed as close to the market as possible. There is also a need for a readiness to deal with changes in transport flows, such as shifts between sea and land transport, that may arise as a result of the Sulphur Directive. The hubs need to be supported by high-class road and rail connections in an efficient intermodal system. It is therefore natural for a hub such as the Port of Gothenburg to be designated a main node in TEN-T and also for the road

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(E20) and the railway (Hamnbanan/Docks Line and Västra stambanan/Western Main Line) between Gothenburg, which is both Scandinavia's most important goods transport node and also Sweden's second largest city, and Stockholm to be included in the TEN-T core network. The Oslo – Gothenburg – Copenhagen corridor has a population of over 8 million and considerable goods and passenger transport flows. The north-south connections between these cities are important in order to link the Scandinavian countries and to strengthen the connection between Scandinavia and the Continent.

Freight and passenger traffic share the railway, Västra stambanan, between Gothenburg and Stockholm. There is inadequate capacity for long periods of the day, with frequent delays in consequence. There are plans to relieve Västra stambanan and the airlines by building a high-speed railway, Götalandsbanan/The Götaland Line, running the 500 km between Gothenburg and Stockholm. Götalandsbanan is intended to form part of the Europe corridor, which is a planned high-speed railway between Sweden and the Continent. Götalandsbanan is an important step in the investment in an intermodal and sustainable transport system where rail is also given a more prominent position in international travel. The Commission asks for suggestions as to how TEN-T can become more future-oriented. Götalandsbanan is a good example of a transport solution that meets future requirements and ought thus to be included as a new link in TEN-T.

Financing

The Västra Götaland Region considers that a major part of the cost of TEN-T ought to be met from EU funds. Our view is that the EU should give priority to resources permitting a greater investment in TEN-T. This would improve the prospects of having the priority projects implemented.

The regional executive board

Gert-Inge Andersson
Chair of the Regional Executive Committee

Johan Assarsson
Regional Chief Executive