



More money needed for TEN-T projects

The European Parliament is "not satisfied with the progress of the European transport policy", according to a report adopted by the Parliament's Transport Committee on 8 May 2007 and revealed by EurActiv.com web portal. The report calls on the Commission to table proposals on possible new and alternative ways of financing the Trans-European Transport Networks (TEN-T) and emphasises the need to continue shifting transport demand towards modes with a lesser environmental impact, such as rail, bus and coach, maritime transport or inland waterways.

The total budget for TEN-T is only €8 billion for the 2007-2013 period – far from the €225 billion needed to complete the 30 priority projects. Therefore, the Committee advised that key priority projects such as ERTMS (European Rail Traffic Management System), Galileo (the European satellite positioning system) and Marco Polo (environmental performance of freight transport) should be selected for their financial feasibility.

(Source: EurActiv.com, <http://www.euractiv.com/en/transport/>)

DB to move into Euro-Asian rail transport

The German state-owned rail operator Deutsche Bahn (DB) signed a letter of intent with the Chinese rail ministry and the Russian operator RZD aimed at shifting the growing freight traffic between China and Europe onto rail. DB chairman & CEO Hartmut Mehdorn was quoted by the RZD-Partner information agency as saying that, within just a few years, trains would run directly from Beijing to Berlin.

Elsewhere, DB and CRCTC, a subsidiary of the Chinese Railway Ministry will hold 8% and 34% respectively, of the shares in a consortium that would develop combined rail and road freight transport in China. The financial investor New World from Hong Kong (22%), CIMC - the leading international company for container equipment (10%), the Chinese financial investor Hancai (10%), the French shipping company CMA/CGM (8%) and the Israeli company ZIM (8%) will be other members of the consortium. Investments of €1.2 billion would see 18 combined rail and road transport terminals built over the next five years.

(Source: RZD-Partner, <http://www.rzd-partner.com/>)

Betuwe railway line launched

The freight-dedicated Betuwelijn connecting the port of Rotterdam with Germany was officially opened by Queen Beatrix on 16 June 2007. Two days later, an empty goods train left the Zwijndrecht freight depot heading to Hungary to pick up a consignment of grain, Dutch News reported.

The 160-km freight-only Betuwelijn is a double-track rail line that cost €4.6 billion. It is a key part of the Trans European Network's (TEN) Trans European Freight Rail Network (TEFRN), which aims to allow freight trains free access across the entire EU without having to stop at borders or make way for passenger trains. Marketed as an alternative to the increasingly congested road network encircling Europe's biggest box hub, it will also handle break bulk cargoes, iron ore and coal as well as containers.

By the end of this year, 50 trains are expected to run weekly on this the route, rising to 150 a day in five years, says Keyrail, the management company jointly owned by the ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam. Betuwe line has a maximum capacity of 240 trains daily in each direction.

(Source: Dutch News, <http://www.dutchnews.nl/news/>)

Railway development project in Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan intends to invest US\$1 billion in railway modernisation in a three-year infrastructure development programme, according to APA news agency. Azerbaijan State Railway Company (ADDY) officer Gurban Nazirov said that the World Bank would part-finance the project seeking railway modernization, a new legal framework for increased competitiveness and efficiency. A 502-km speed passenger line linking Baku with the Georgian border is also envisaged.

(Source: APA, <http://en.apa.az/>)

Railion expansion

Railion Schweiz will be the fifth company in the international Railion Group, along with those in Denmark, Germany, Italy and The Netherlands, after changing its name from Brunner Rail Way Services (BRS), the Swiss rail transport company taken over by Railion earlier this year. Dr Klaus Kremper, CEO of the Railion Group, announced that Railion Schweiz will concentrate on the single wagon traffic in Switzerland, particularly in the Basel region and will cooperate with the Swiss company BLS Cargo.

Deutsche Bahn (DB), the parent company of Railion Group, could spend up to €400 million to acquire the majority shareholding in the British freight rail operator English, Welsh and Scottish Railways (EWS). The sale would allow DB to expand its freight business not only into Britain, but also in France, through the French subsidiary Euro Cargo Rail of EWS, which has already a licence and safety certificate to operate in this neighbouring country.

(Source: Railion Deutschland AG, <http://www.railion.com>)

Macedonian Railways restructured

Macedonian transport minister Mile Janakieski was quoted by Railway Market as saying that the state-owned Macedonian Railways will be divided into a company in charge of railway infrastructure and another one for transport, effective from 1 July 2007.

The government of FYR Macedonia teamed up with the Bulgarian government to seek a €200 million loan from international banks to finish the railway project on European transport corridor 8, linking the Black Sea with the Adriatic Sea.

(Source: Railway Market, <http://www.railway-market.pl/>)

Colombia to invest in railways

Three cities in Colombia are to benefit from the governmental plan to invest US\$600 million in railway projects, according to Intelligent Transport Systems International (ITS), citing El Pais paper. The new railways will be integrated with urban transport systems to connect Bogotá, Medellín and Cali with neighbouring towns.

Officials from the transport ministry said the US\$300 million project to transfer 200,000 passengers daily in Bogotá would need financial support from the national and local governments and possibly from private sector. The paper reported that the Medellín plan would cost US\$180 million, whilst the Cali project was estimated at US\$120 million.

ONFCM reported a US\$320 million turnover in 2006, 6% up on the year before, 23.5 million passenger-journeys, up 12% increase over 2005, with freight traffic reaching 35 million tonnes.

(Source: Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) International, <http://www.itsinternational.com/>)

Major infrastructure plans in Spain

The Spanish rail infrastructure authority ADIF (El Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias) announced its targets for the year 2010, focusing particularly on key areas: high safety, punctuality and efficiency standards. According to International Transport Journal, ADIF earmarked 80% of the €23.4 billion investments needed for increasing the high-speed rail network up to 2,200 km. Another €1.8 billion will fund the construction or expansion of freight stations and terminals, and a fibreglass cable network.

(Source: International Transport Journal, <http://www.transportjournal.ch/e/>)

World Bank support for Croatian Railways

The World Bank Board of Executive Directors approved a Programmatic Adjustment Loan (PAL) in the amount of €150 million. The loan aims at improving fiscal sustainability of Croatian Railways (HZ) in a larger context of supporting the Croatian government in implementing structural and institutional reforms.

At the same time, HZ and Slovenia Railways (SZ) agreed on simplifying customs procedures and the introduction of interoperable railway engines to speed up transport, according to Railway Market, citing Slovenia Business Week. Croatia accounts for 40% of Slovenia's international passenger traffic.

(Sources: The World Bank, <http://web.worldbank.org/>; Railway Market, <http://www.railway-market.pl/>)

Level crossing crash in Australia

A lorry travelling along the Murray Valley Highway collided with a Melbourne-bound V/Line passenger train at a level crossing in the Australian state of Victoria. BBC News reported that the accident, which occurred near Kerang, 280km northwest of Melbourne, killed at least 11 people and injured as many as 50, some seriously.

Local media said that the level crossing had flashing lights, but no gates. Witnesses said the impact was so severe, carriages flipped over and at least one was ripped open down one side. Victorian premier Mr Steve Bracks promised a public investigation into the cause of the accident.

(Source: BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>)

Zambia: Concession in trouble and plans for new line

Railway Systems of Zambia (RSZ), a subsidiary of New Limpopo Bridge Investments (NLBI) that operates the national railways, might lose the 20-year concession because of its poor management. Zambian president, Mr Levy Mwanawasa, was quoted by AllAfrica Global Media, citing The Times of Zambia as describing as 'tragic' the operations of RSZ that have not been performing to the expectation. "We've asked RSZ to hand the railway network back to us so that we can look for another investor who can manage it properly," he said.

Meanwhile, Zambia's North Western Railway Company (NWR) announced that investors from the US, UK and South Africa would finance the US\$250 million project to build the proposed new line from Copper Belt town of Chingola to the Lumwana copper mine, according to Reuters Africa. Mr Enoch Kavindele, NWR's chairman, said that his company signed a consultancy agreement with Kwezi V3 Engineers from South Africa and the German DB International to design the rail project, partly funded by the US\$1.4 million grant from South Africa's Capital Equipment and Allied Services (CEAS).

(Sources: AllAfrica Global Media, <http://allafrica.com/>; Reuters Africa, <http://africa.reuters.com/>)

Lötschberg tunnel is open

On 15 June 2007, transport Swiss minister, Mr Moritz Leuenberger, officially opened the world's longest rail tunnel on land - the 34.57-km Lötschberg tunnel under the Alps, BBC News reported. It took eight years to build the US\$3.6 billion tunnel, which is meant to move cargo off the roads and onto rail and to reduce by 50% the travel time between Bern and Valais cantons. It will be handling 42 passenger trains and up to 80 freight trains daily after becoming fully operational in December this year. Lötschberg tunnel is, along with Gotthard and Ceneri tunnels, part of the New Railway Links through the Alps (NRLA) project estimated to cost up to US\$19.5 billion.

(Source: BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>)

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