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INLAND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Working Party on Combined Transport
(Thirty-seventh session, 18 and 19 April 2002,
agenda item 8)

THE ROLE OF THE RAILWAYS IN THE PROMOTION OF COMBINED TRANSPORT

Transmitted by the Vice-Chairman of the Working Party

1. Since the nineteenth century and until recently the development of the railways has been on a national footing. This is the case both for the nature of the services proposed and for construction or operating standards.

2. The growth of trade, the development of heavy vehicle road traffic, the taking into account of the ecological consequences of human activity and the development of the concept of "sustainable" transport have meant that rail freight is no longer considered to be in a state of inevitable decline, and have led to decision-making at the European level on a series of activities to revitalize the railways.

3. Discussions on this subject with the railways group last April have resulted in three main lines of reflection in the context of the development of combined transport:

(a) improvement of the partnership between railway groups (railway companies and/or infrastructure managers);

(b) improvement of the quality of service;

(c) improvement of costs.

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4. Reflection should be geared particularly to technical and legal aspects targeting combined transport and not market considerations. One of the objectives is to ensure the complementarity of transport modes and not to have them compete with each other.

5. Combined transport is growing substantially, particularly in international transport, and has long-term political objectives which should enable this transport mode to occupy an important place in the carriage of freight.

6. The technique of combined transport requires a more complex organization than transport by complete train load. It is therefore important for countries to show a rapid interest in it. The rail component will be considered as one of the links in the combined transport chain. It will therefore be important that reflection should apply to the whole of the chain established to forward goods from point A to point B.

7. Initially, by concentrating reflection on "improvement of the partnership between railway groups in order to develop combined transport", the results obtained should have a direct or indirect impact on the quality of service and on costs. At a later stage, a more detailed examination of the quality of service and costs could be envisaged.

8. Three themes could be considered:

(a) <u>interoperability</u>

(i) of training

(ii) of the rolling stock

(iii) of rail networks

(iv) of signalling

(v) of information systems

(b) <u>terminals</u>

(i) availability of trains

(ii) responsibility of terminal managers

(iii) safety of goods inside terminals

(c) <u>introduction of an incentive scheme</u> (e.g. 95/20)

9. These themes could be broached from the angle of the partnership between railway companies and/or infrastructure managers through bilateral agreements on some specific combined transport routes the final objectives of which would become apparent in the process of reflection.

10. The development of the railways and their technical progress on a national basis has led to technologically divergent choices, such as to advantage national suppliers. Investments in infrastructure and rolling stock are a weighty item and their amortization period spans several decades. The responsibility of the respective States in strategic or technological choices should not, therefore, be minimized.

11. Although bilateral agreements between railway companies make it possible to solve certain problems of interoperability, the level of cooperation between railway companies remains uneven and of limited scope.

12. A first programme of work to prepare specifications, aimed as a matter of priority at facilitating the operation of international combined transport trains, could concern:

- rules concerning characteristics, documents and operating conditions;
- training and qualification of drivers and crews of combined transport trains;
- interconnection of computer systems for transmitting train-related information;
- harmonization of command systems and signalling;
- rolling stock used for international combined transport (wagons and locomotives).

(a) Interoperability of networks

13. The development of rail freight requires an efficient network on which operators have access to train-paths which provide a satisfactory response to the needs of shippers. An unsaturated infrastructure is required to ensure punctuality, reactivity and safety. It is thus indispensable to reduce points of congestion.

14. An initial working document could identify the major bottlenecks on the European combined traffic routes, analyse their nature and propose means of resolving them, for example, coordination among countries on the investments to be made in infrastructures, cooperation of railway companies as joint operators on a route (cf. belifret freight corridor) or in subcontracting, length of trains, etc.

15. These bottlenecks could be administrative (border-crossings), technical (lack of interoperability), physical (network capacity) or involve breakage of load (connection between transport modes).

16. The development of combined transport infrastructures in Europe is ensured by different bodies in parallel. On the one hand, the European Union has established trans-European networks, while on the other, UN/ECE has developed the European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines and Related Installations (AGTC). This Agreement is more highly developed since it defines very technical questions such as mass per axle, speed, length and capacity of trains, loading gauges, terminals, etc.

17. The efforts made by European and international bodies to draw up a combined transport infrastructure network need to be unified so that they can benefit from synergies and from studies already carried out. Reflection could begin with the AGTC, efforts in respect of which have already been undertaken by a large number of European countries. A legal and technical framework could be adapted by coordinating the organizations concerned (EU - UN/ECE - ECMT).

(i) Training

18. There are no longer borders today between the 15 members of the European Union, and yet they still exist for reasons that are mainly technical and administrative. For example, a heavy vehicle crosses a border without stopping although the driver may not know the language of the country.

19. This flexibility where rail combined transport is concerned could take the form of standardization of training. Training could be ensured by a European training centre or under bilateral agreements between railway companies (principle of the “Eurostar” and “Thalys” passenger trains). The objective is that the train should not stop, while ensuring that working time is compatible with safety (e.g. long-distance bus drivers in France). Driver training would involve only one country in addition to the driver’s own. This could be made part of the enhancement of the profession of goods train drivers.

(ii-v) Interconnection of computer systems, harmonization of control systems and signalling

20. Good combined traffic management in Europe needs to be built on the principles of technological and computerized harmonization, so that interoperability will involve all dimensions of the problem from purely technical aspects to documents.

21. There is a trend in Europe at this time towards compatibility of computer systems. In telecommunications, the strategies of competing companies do not always converge towards the interests of users over their own interests, although compatibility is always possible.

22. The development and management of combined transport should be based on the systematic use of open, compatible and integrated technologies so that any operator with the right of access to the market is on an equal footing in terms of regulations and technologies.

23. If communications are considered to be a basic technology, it is essential for the development of a high level of quality in combined transport to make the most of the synergy between modes and to harmonize the messages, protocols and computer applications by means of neutral and independent bodies so as to solve the problems of safety and reliability of the data transmitted.

24. Spheres of action could involve:

- standardization of signalling, compatible with the different systems;
- collaboration between European standardization bodies and equipment manufacturers;
- installation of projected interoperable equipment, for example, for the follow-up and inspection of trains;
- traffic management;
- automatic identification of wagons and intermodal units.

25. The European Union has already made substantive progress in some of these areas. The initial investigations should involve inventorying the steps taken and considering the possibility of transposing them to other countries.

(b) Terminals

26. They are an essential link in ensuring the effectiveness of the combined system. Physical operations must be correctly performed and data systems need to be efficient if the transport chain can be claimed to function well. It is therefore important for the management of trans-shipment terminals to be of optimum quality in order to ensure proper regularity in the transport of goods and customer satisfaction.

27. A review is proposed of the quality of service, not only in respect of the times of handover or delivery of trains but also of road hauliers responsible for earlier and subsequent sections of the route.

Particular attention will be paid to the safety of property inside terminals.

(c) Introduction of an incentive scheme

28. In France, an agreement known as 95/20 (cf. annex) was signed between the SCNF, the GNTC, the FNTR and NOVATRANS. The aim is that, on specific routes, the SNCF should contribute a 95 per cent regularity of service and that road hauliers should in exchange contribute an additional 20 per cent freight. This arrangement could be considered for application on certain routes, to be specified, with the necessary adjustments to make it applicable in the countries concerned.

29. At the previous session, the Working Party hoped that investigations would concern specific cases. It is therefore proposed that groups of experts should be set up to discuss each of the topics. They would be in permanent liaison with the European Union which is already working on most of these questions.

Annex 1

QUALITY DEVELOPMENT CHARTER
FNTR, SNCF, NOVATRANS, GNTC

The development of combined transport is one of the main lines of transport policy in France.

It provides a complementary and efficient link between rail transport in the central section of the route and road transport for the terminal approaches.

This association between rail and road has undeniable advantages for shippers, carriers and the community in that it provides an efficient response to the problems of congestion, safety and environment.

This development is, however, closely linked to the level of quality of service provided by the combined transport chain as a whole to the final customer.

It has been agreed among the parties that they will give concrete expression to mutual commitments concerning quality improvement and the promotion of services on routes selected for their development potential and using trains capable of absorbing at least 20 per cent additional traffic.

In order to do so, the SNCF and NOVATRANS undertake to make every effort to ensure a high level of quality in rail transport. NOVATRANS and its customers undertake to make every effort to ensure that the quality of the road-rail interface makes for quality in rail transport.

The FNTR and the GNTC undertake to carry out communications and promotion activities among their members in order to increase the level of traffic on the routes selected by 20 per cent.

The special clauses of these commitments are defined in a “service protocol” grouping all the signatories of this charter for implementation as from 1 March 2000.

A monthly report on commitments will be established after hearing of the parties and circulated to the signatories.

Paris, 20 March 2000

The Chairman of the FNTR — The Chairman of the SNCF

The Chairman of the GNTC — The Chairman of NOVATRANS

Annex 2

DETAILS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SERVICE PROTOCOL

The scope of the service covers compliance with:

- forwarding time from depot to depot
- railway hand-over deadlines (RHOD) and delivery deadlines (DD)
- road hand-over deadlines and delivery deadlines.

Compliance with the agreed service shall achieve a rate of consistency of 95 per cent per half-hour on the following three services and for the trains indicated:

PARIS/TOULOUSE

PARIS/AVIGNON

PARIS/MARSEILLE

The road customers undertake to increase combined traffic by 20 per cent on the services concerned (calculated on all the trains operated or used by NOVATRANS).

THE SERVICE PROTOCOL CONCERNS THE FOLLOWING TRAINS:

PARIS/TOULOUSE service

Train 450413 Rungis/Saint Jory	RHOD 20h50	DD	5h45
	21h50 (track 2)		5h45
Train 450414 Saint Jory/Rungis	RHOD 21h50	DD	6h20

PARIS/AVIGNON service

Train 450561 Maisons Alfort-Pompadour/Avignon	RHOD 20h00	DD	4h10
Train 450934 Avignon/Maisons Alfort-Pompadour	RHOD 19h15	DD	4h35

PARIS/MARSEILLE service

Train 450049 Valenton/Marseille	RHOD 21h55	DD	6h45
Train 450064 Marseille/Valenton	RHOD 20h45	DD	6h35
