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European Commission
Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport
Directorate D – Inland Transport
B-1049 Bruxelles

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■ **European Rail Network for Competitive Freight - Consultation on the draft handbook for implementation**
Position Statement by the Independent Train Path Allocation Body Trasse Schweiz AG (Swiss Train Paths Ltd)

Dear Mr Grillo Pasquarelli

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to be able to comment on the draft “Handbook on Regulation concerning a European rail network for competitive freight”. As the independent train path allocation body for the standard gauge networks of Swiss Federal Railways (SBB), BLS AG and the Swiss South-Eastern Railway (SOB), we are responsible for the Swiss sections of the Rhine and Benelux-France Corridors and thus directly affected by Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 as well as by the explanatory notes contained in the handbook.

In principle

We welcome the thrust of the Regulation as a step in the right direction. The Regulation focuses on the actual demands being made on the various individual corridors. Likewise, we support the intention to clarify how the Regulation should be interpreted by producing an explanatory handbook.

We would nevertheless like to point out that the circumstances of the various corridors and the degree to which capacity is actually used on those corridors vary significantly. The Rhine Corridor, in particular, is already well developed and has well-oiled institutions and processes. In addition, that corridor has a high level of use. Accordingly, for example, train path catalogues in Switzerland are constructed to maximise capacity. By contrast, other corridors are only at an initial planning stage and in part have significant reserves of capacity available. We expect, as the handbook suggests, the corridor authorities responsible will be allowed the flexibility necessary to take account of these differing circumstances when they come to implement the Regulation. Too great an imposition of common standards on the individual corridors is to be avoided as it would have a negative effect on the existing processes which function well and are valued by both railway undertakings and the shipping community.

Remarks on the individual themes in the handbook

Below we provide comments on the individual themes within our area of competence. We have structured our statements following the structure of the handbook.

The governance of a rail freight corridor and the implementation plan for a corridor

- *Governance structure: agreement to the policy of including all the actors involved*

We welcome the intention to bring all the actors concerned on-board to promote international freight traffic by rail and to build on the existing ERMTS and RNE corridor bodies. We also assume that the inclusion of governmental authorities will ensure that an appropriate source for financing any corridor development plans which are decided will also be available. The inclusion of railway undertakings, other applicants and the freight terminal operators will ensure that the train paths offered meet market requirements as closely as possible. In particular, we agree that the independent allocation bodies should also be involved. Allocation bodies meet requirements of the Directives of the First Railway Package and undertake the crucial tasks of capacity planning and allocation; hence their inclusion is absolutely essential.

Nevertheless, the inclusion of all the actors involved must not be allowed to lead to mutual reconciliation processes which are time-consuming and delay action. This danger can be countered by periodically benchmarking the operating methods of the various corridors.

- *Positive inclusion of the customer perspective in the service plan; market studies must however incorporate railway undertakings' and shippers' actual service plans*

We welcome the policy of using advisory groups and market studies to allow the customer perspective to flow more strongly into service planning. In addition to identifying trends which develop over the longer term, market studies must also deliver enough relevant information on customers' particular service plans so that actual train path plans can be aligned to them. Given the short term planning horizons of freight railway undertakings, the time frame proposed for drawing up the market studies seems too long to us to serve as the basis for train path planning. Dividing the market study into a longer-term trend analysis and a summary of service plans (without customer detail) updated annually could be more purposeful.

In addition, on corridors which are being used up to their capacity limits, discussions must be held to reconcile railway undertakings' market requirements with the characteristics of the infrastructure so that a trade-off between maximising capacity and the best possible satisfaction of customer requirements can be found. This process will lead to making the best possible use of the capacity.

One stop shop and capacity applications

- *OSS organisation: independent allocation bodies are predestined for this work*

Contrary to the statement in point 5.1.1 of the handbook, it seems to us that an independent allocation body set up to conform with the requirements of the first EU Railway Package is predestined to be the organisational home of a one stop shop. In accordance with the requirements of EU Directive 2001/14/EC and the European Commission's proposals for a recast of the First Railway Package, information on allocation of capacity or the conditions of use of freight corridors belong within the competence of an allocation body. Accordingly, Trasse Schweiz AG works together with both the RNE's OSS network and the RNE's Rotterdam-Genoa corridor OSS network.

- *Priority in the allocation of pre-arranged catalogue train paths to international freight traffic is only to be given after the coordination process of path conflicts – at least on heavily occupied corridors*

The approach to train path allocation described in the handbook corresponds to the RNE's "Click and Ride" concept and makes the assumption that railway undertakings apply for catalogue train paths as they stand. On the Rhine Corridor, however, a large proportion of the catalogue train paths applied for require further work, to accommodate stops for operations purposes in particular. Railway undertakings also apply for ancillary services in addition to the catalogued train paths and these ancillary services have to be coordinated by the national train path allocation bodies. For a majority of applications for catalogued train paths therefore, coordination between the one stop shop and the national train path allocation body is essential.

Certain sections of the Rhine Corridor also feature a high proportion of domestic freight traffic. In the event of train path conflicts, particularly on heavily occupied corridors, the objective of the coordination process is to find alternative train paths accepted by the railway undertakings, which meet the needs of the market and which allow all the international and domestic trains applied for to run. Only by following this process in conjunction with skilful linking of pre-arranged catalogue train paths with the domestic passenger system can the capacity available be totally used whilst providing the train path quality which is necessary. By contrast, priority allocation to applications for international train paths *before the coordination process* would reduce both the use made of the corridors and also the attractiveness of the railway for domestic freight traffic. Priority allocation for international freight traffic by rail should therefore only take place after the process to coordinate it with domestic traffic.

- *On established corridors, the one stop shop process should be implemented through the RNE's well-oiled corridor-specific OSS networks*

The exchange between the one stop shop and the national train path allocation bodies or infrastructure managers is central to avoid delays in the allocation of train paths due to the mutual reconciliation process mentioned in the point above. RailNetEurope's OSS networks are built on customers' tangible corridor-specific requirements and have harmonised tools and processes which are well-oiled and proven in practice; RNE's OSS networks are thus able to offer a solid basis for this cooperation to take place in the spirit required. We therefore press for the OSS approach to be implemented through the corridor-specific OSS networks of RNE, at least along established corridors.

- *Reserve capacity: agreement to the policy of publishing details of the capacity remaining for train path applications in the current timetable after the allocation of paths for the annual timetable*

We support the policy of publishing details of the capacity remaining in the form of specific train paths only after allocation of the train paths for the annual timetable. On the Swiss sections of the Rhine Corridor, the train path catalogue for the annual timetable is constructed to maximise capacity. Blocking specific individual train paths in the annual train path allocation process for applications in the current timetable process would needlessly limit railway undertakings in optimising their service pattern (use of resources, rolling stock circulation planning and train driver scheduling, etc.) and hence reduce the attractiveness of freight traffic by rail overall. Trasse Schweiz AG currently publishes the first editions of catalogues of the capacity remaining together with the train path allocation for the annual timetable four months before the timetable change date. At present these catalogues of the remaining capacity are updated in a two-monthly cycle. With effect from the timetable change in December

2011, it is planned to publish details of the capacity remaining over the whole Rhine Corridor updated daily. The preparatory work necessary is being carried out within the RNE "Click and Ride" project.

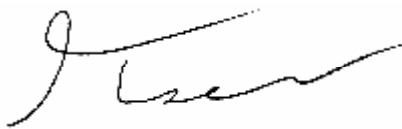
- *Flexibility of train paths: on heavily occupied sections of line, the train paths in the catalogue must be precisely planned (classic approach)*

On heavily occupied sections, such as the Swiss section of the Rhine Corridor, the capacity available can only be used to the maximum if the individual train paths in the catalogue have been planned to the minute. Railway undertakings, however, have the opportunity to apply for train paths which vary from those published in the catalogue. These "flexible" applications (which in practice arise because of stops for operations purposes in particular) nevertheless require a close interface with the national train path planning and train path allocation bodies. This is one of the reasons why the OSS approach to heavily occupied corridors is best implemented through an established corridor-specific OSS RNE network.

In respect of pre-arranged train paths, we agree with the remarks in the handbook that in the interests of freedom from discrimination, and fair competition, the train path catalogue must take account of the balanced production plans of all train path applicants. Trasse Schweiz AG already holds discussions with all applicants for train paths on these topics.

We would ask you to acknowledge and consider our views and suggestions favourably but in any event we thank you again for the opportunity to state our position.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Thomas Isenmann
Managing Director



Werner Grossen
Head of Train Path Allocation