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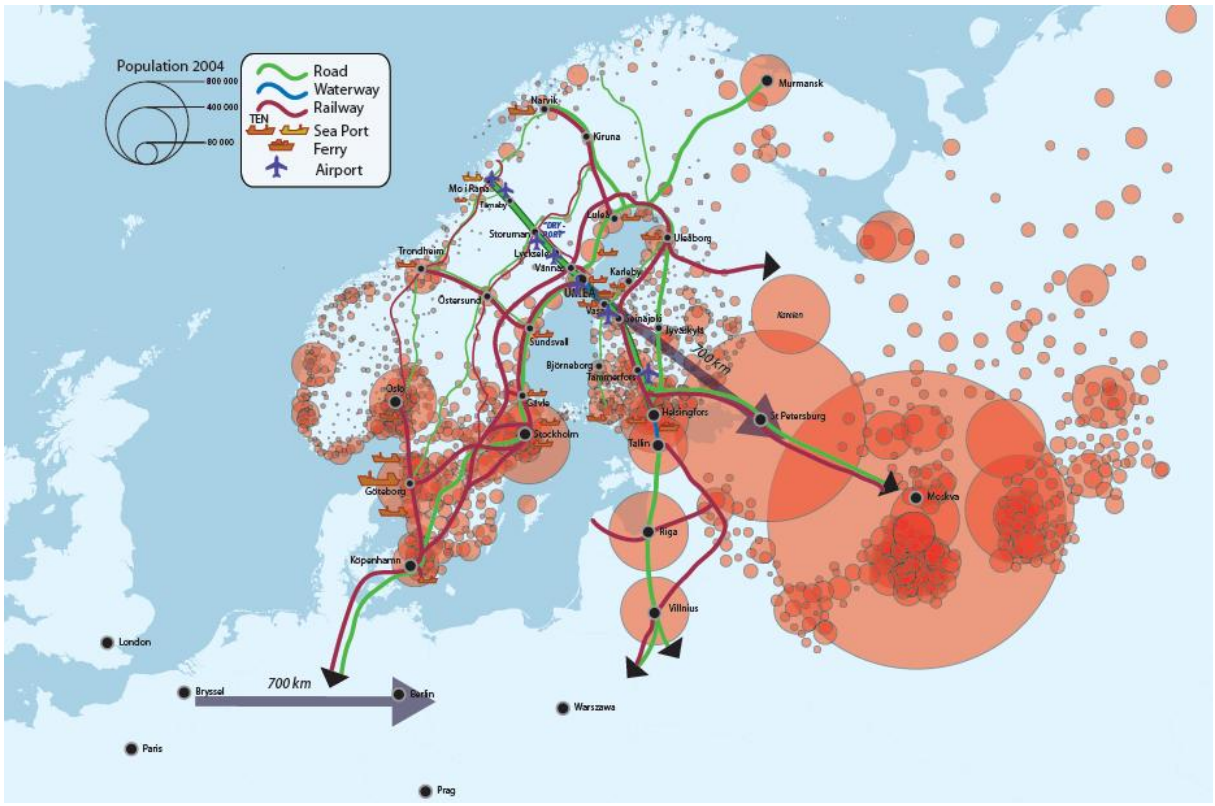
The European Commission consultation on the future trans-European transport network policy

The Blue Highway/E12 Association in Sweden, the Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce and the Kvarken Straits Council welcome the opportunity to respond to the EC consultation on the future of trans-European transport network policy.

Northern Europe is a resource for the whole of Europe

We represent the regions of northern Finland and northern Sweden, which are linked by the E12 highway (Map 1). The E12 area has large supplies of natural resources as forests and minerals that are dependent on good infrastructure in Europe and in third countries.



Map 1: Illustration of the E12 corridor major transport links and proximity to populated areas. (The bigger the circle, the denser the population and the higher the potential for a trade market).

The E12 corridor is already a functioning east-west transit link, but a better use and more recognition of the Swedish part of the E12 as a part of the European transport network could also contribute to the relief of the heavily polluted and congested southern part of the Baltic Sea. The E12 is a potential transport link for the shipments that today pass Denmark and Northern Germany with high costs for congestion in the transport sector. The E12 in Finland already has TEN-T status, and it would be of great benefit to the whole of Europe, if the link was completed for the entire E12 corridor.

There are few places in the world today where the potential for growth in trade and interaction is larger than in the deregulated Baltic region. This is a unique opportunity for Northern Europe to develop the connections to St. Petersburg, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland (Via Baltica). It is also a unique opportunity to develop freight transports from the U.S. and Canada via the Norwegian Atlantic coast.

Infrastructure investments

Major infrastructure investments have been made and are in progress in connection with the E12 and Nordic logistic centre. A new freight terminal has just been put into service, the Nordic Logistic Centre Terminal in Umeå, which will be part of the strategic network combined. The freight terminal is the largest and most modern in northern Sweden today. Together with the new coastal railway "Botniabanan" and with the existing railways like "Stambanan" (the Northern Trunk Railway), "Tvärbanan" (the Cross Railway) and "Inlandsbanan" (the Inland Railway), the freight terminal will get a very clear and strong inter-modal function with high efficiency. At Storuman, the point of intersection between "Tvärbanan", "Inlandsbanan", the E12 and the E45, a new trans-shipment terminal is also built, NLC Lapland. The inland is rich in raw materials and is a producer of renewable energy. It makes the area an important supplier in Sweden and also to other parts of Europe.

When a new passenger service begins operating via "Tvärstråket" (the Cross Railway and the Northern Trunk Railway), which connects "Inlandsbanan" and "Botniabanan", there will be major investment in the railway to improve accessibility for both passenger and freight transports.

In connection with the freight terminal there will also be a new ring road system around the City of Umeå, which will mean a new passage for the E12 with much better availability and accessibility of transport along the E12, not least to the Umeå Port. The Umeå Port is part of the Nordic Logistic Centre and is the northernmost port for container flows to and from continental Europe, Britain and Finland. The business is growing and significant investments are being made. The E12 will be given a new and more direct route into the port area, and the existing railway is extended to the right next to the ferry situation, so that containers and trailers can be unloaded directly from ships and railway wagons.

The ferry connection between Vaasa and Umeå is the strategic link in the E12, which connect the Swedish logistic terminals and railway network to the new Logistic Center in

Vaasa /Korsholm (which will be built in 2012) and to the Finnish and Russian rail network. This connection opens new possibilities for a shortcut, which is shorter, faster and more environmentally friendly.

Response to the questions

We have chosen to give our opinion on selected topics from the Commission's proposals on future TEN-T planning.

3. The methodology for TEN-T planning

Are the principles and criteria for designing the core network, as set out above, adequate and practicable? What are their strengths and weaknesses, and what else could be taken into account?

We agree that the core network should consist of nodes and links of the highest strategic and economic importance throughout the EU. We want to emphasize that a node of strategic and economic importance is not necessarily urban. In Northern Europe, there are smaller municipalities of great strategic and economic importance because of their proximity to major natural resources, and its access to ports, railways, airports, roads and major trans-shipment terminals. It is important in the planning of the TEN-T to take into account specific regional conditions such as those that exist in Northern Europe.

TEN-T planning requires an optimal interconnection between different modes of transportation like shipping, rail, air and road transports. It is therefore important that the selected nodes for freight services include trans-shipment terminals. Passenger and freight services have different node requirements, which complicates the planning process significantly. Passenger transport is more dependent on nodes in cities.

We think it is important that the TEN-T planning creates opportunities for the internal market in the EU. It is also important to strengthen the availability for third countries to provide for a strong export industry in Europe. In Northern Europe it is very important to link the East and the West to create conditions for sustainable and environmentally-friendly transport. In this context the E12 highway is, very strategic, since, together with

rail and shipping, it is a link between the Norwegian Atlantic coast and Russia as well as the southern parts of Europe. The E12 crosses the Bothnian Corridor that has a strategically important position in a north-south perspective.

To what extent do the supplementary infrastructure measures contribute to the objectives of a future-oriented transport system, and are there ways to strengthen their contribution?

By using existing infrastructure and combining it with new technologies the socio-economic benefits will be optimized. It is not economical to build new infrastructure before the existing infrastructure is in optimal use.

It is important that comprehensive network and core network complement each other to create a functioning network. We think that there should be a strong focus on removing bottlenecks and giving priority to environmentally sustainable transport in the EU and in third countries.

The Blue Highway/E12 Association, Sweden

The Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce

The Kvarken Straits Council

Geographical representation

The Blue Highway/E12 Association, Sweden, The Västerbotten Chamber of Commerce & the Quark Straits Council representing the geographical areas as shown in the maps.