

Warsaw, 17 February 2008

**DG TREN**  
**Brussels**  
% Ms Anne Houtman

**Re: Future influx of Asian travellers into Europe**

From DG TREN 'annex A35297':

...assuming a rate of growth of 12% per year, similar to Chinese GDP high rates of growth, and three times larger than rates of growth foreseen for EU-25 aviation growth, this would lead to **almost 100 million passengers in 2017 to/from the Far East and to above 240 millions by 2025.**

**Dear Madam/Sir,**

My concern is with what the future has in store for us, for Western Europe in particular, once the rapidly growing Chinese economy has ensured a decent income to hundreds of millions of people who, in the footsteps of the affluent West, will start exploring the world and eventually put Europe on their itineraries.

The fivefold increase in Europe–Far East (air) traffic predicted for 2025 may be either an overestimate or an underestimate; still, earlier or later, Europe will be exposed to this ‘Asian invasion’.

The measures envisaged by the European Commission’s ‘action plan for airport capacity, efficiency and safety in Europe’, just as the resolution of 11 October 2007<sup>1</sup> in which the European Parliament requested the Commission to report to Parliament before 2009 on a *master plan for enhanced airport capacity in Europe*—will not avert the approaching disaster, which is bound to impact at first Western Europe, as the most congested, populated and urbanised region.

From the current EU growth rate, a twofold rise in air traffic by 2025 is being predicted, but this extrapolation is "Eurocentric" and as such ignores the outside world, which is not in a mood to observe our standards. Among the states with GDP growth rates five times higher than Europe are the two most populous countries of the globe: China and India. It goes without saying that in the next 15 to 20 years those two and a half billion hard-working people will become rich enough to set out on trips in every direction, not excluding Europe.

Taking notice of the current high Chinese GDP growth, DG TREN conceded<sup>2</sup> that by 2025, air traffic between Europe and the Far East alone might top 240 million passengers per year—which would mean a fivefold increase over a period of 20 years.

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1 **The European Parliament**, in its resolution of 11 October 2007 **on airport capacity** and ground handling (2007/2092(INI)) ...

9. Requests the Commission to report to Parliament before 2009 on a master plan for enhanced airport capacity in Europe; stresses that such a report should lay down a cohesive approach for Member States in order to promote and coordinate any national and cross-border initiative for building new airport capacities dedicated to international traffic and make better use of existing capacities, as well for managing secondary airport capacity.

2 **Doc** title: "Jankowski draft reply SM+AB+CSM annex A35297" [to a letter signed by Anne Houtman and dated 27 August 2007]

While the contemplated expansion of Europe's two biggest airports, Heathrow and Frankfurt, by an additional runway placed beyond the port perimeter may improve the economic performance of the two giants, far more comprehensive measures must be taken to avert the approaching crisis. (By the way, a certain relief would ensue if passengers heading across the Atlantic—East Europeans, for that matter—were dissuaded from changing planes in Western Europe.) A radical improvement will bring only **a European high speed rail network.**

In Poland, there are plans to upgrade the CMK (central trunk line)—built to high-speed specifications 30 years ago—to at least 300 km/h, thus bringing the two major conurbations in the south, Cracow and Katowice, within one hour from Warsaw. Furthermore, a brand-new HS line will be built from Warsaw via Łódź to Wrocław in the South-West and to Poznań in the West, on the way to Berlin.

The recent animation of relations between Poland and Russia has revived a long-cherished dream of linking Moscow with Europe by high speed train. The Russians, who are currently upgrading to high speed the Moscow - St. Petersburg trunk line (to be serviced by Siemens Velaro-R trains), seem to be taking seriously the prospect of running high speed services from Moscow via Warsaw to Berlin.

Thus, we may safely assume that, in one way or another, some kind of HS network will build up across Europe in the foreseeable future.

### **Co-ordination or leadership?**

While the European Commission is determined to re-orient the energy sector upon renewable energy and is working on measures to curb greenhouse gas emissions—in an effort to avert the most dramatic consequences of climate change, so far it has failed to work out measures aimed at rebalancing the transport modes and making national governments implement them.

With this goal in mind, one would expect the EC to monitor closely the ratio of (EU-shared) financial outlays on the three 'competitive' modes: Rail, Road, and Air, in each EU member state. But even in the face of the threat of climate change and its dire consequences, the European Commission (or DG TREN) seems reluctant to exert any pressure on the national governments to make them revise the allocation of funds to rail and road in favour of the former—in oblivion of the ambitious goals set by the 2001 White Paper, bent as it was on rebalancing the transport modes in favour of rail.

Reverting to the leading topic, one wonders why the EC has left the planning and development of the *European* high speed rail network in the hands of the national governments. Dare we hope that, in the absence of a European master plan, the EU member countries will not drag their feet too much?

As in the case of the "energy shake-up", our European habitat could only benefit if the European Commission, in addition to ensuring co-ordination, were to *provide leadership* in the realm of transport.

### **A symbiosis of Rail and Air**

Originating in the deployment of a TGV station in the belly of Charles de Gaulle airport, the idea of feeding big airports with high speed trains is slowly catching on. Currently, Berlin is expanding the Schönefeld (BBI) airport into a hub with a mid-field terminal where, in addition to shuttle trains from the new Hauptbahnhof, ICEs will discharge their passengers within walking distance of the check-in counters. But because of its location in an urbanised area, the new airport will be subjected to night flight restrictions. In addition, it is not placed

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[Question 1.] *Does the DG have any estimates of the number of passengers from Asia likely to arrive in Europe in, say, 2017?*

We do not have specific estimates, but assuming a rate of growth of 12% per year, similar to Chinese GDP high rates of growth, and three times larger than rates of growth foreseen for EU-25 aviation growth, this would lead to almost 100 million passengers in 2017 to/from the Far East and to above 240 millions by 2025.

directly on top of a high speed line where trains could stop over without having to slow down on meandering tracks. Furthermore, the German high speed lines do not ensure journey times that could compete against flights over distances of 400 kilometres and longer.

Consequently, BBI will not give much relief to the bursting hubs of Western Europe—once the massive influx of Asian travellers becomes a reality. Indeed, such reliever hubs should be built *in the less crowded and poorly urbanised flatlands further east*, where high speed trains could cover distances of up to 600 km in a couple of hours. Only compact airports with train stations right under a mid-field (central) terminal, from which passengers could take high speed trains in all (at least four!) directions, will ease Europe's environmental squeeze, especially that the HS lines will also reduce traffic on our motorways.

The first such mega-hub should be built in Central Poland, less than 40 km west of Warsaw, where the CMK (or its northward extension) will intersect with the planned east-west HS axis, a couple of kilometres from the A2 motorway. By 2025, the Central Poland Airport (CPL) may have to cope with 100m passengers/year, and only their distribution by high speed trains, in place of short-haul flights, will help salvage Europe from an ecological catastrophe.

A second major airport could be located on top of the future intersection of the CMK—extended southwards, towards Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Austria—with a second east-west high speed axis linking Dresden, Wrocław, Katowice, Cracow with Lviv (and Kiev). Also the northern-Polish airport near Gdańsk ought to be connected to the European HS network. Needless to say, an *interconnection of major airports by high speed trains* will offer convenient alternatives to flights affected by bad weather and other emergencies.

Let me wind up by saying that each of the three transport modes, Rail, Road and Air, can be economically employed on specific transport assignments over a certain range of distances, while being uneconomic on others. Accordingly, the various means of transport should be put to their proper uses.

In effect, Europe would have a truly balanced transport system with high speed rail occupying the prominent place it deserves. In fact, the harmonious cooperation, or symbiosis, of all transport modes should produce extra benefits as expressed in the notion of synergy<sup>3</sup>.

Boguslaw Jankowski [www.airport-on-rails.org](http://www.airport-on-rails.org)

P.S. Exploring the French TGV timetable, I was amazed to find that passengers arriving at Charles de Gaulle airport and heading for Strasbourg are offered only three direct TGV services per day: before 8 a.m., at 1 p.m. and at 8 p.m. In practice, this means that most of them are forced to board another plane for a short-haul flight to Strasbourg! Now, Brussels is nearer and better off with five trains per day (at 7:44, 9:40, 12:35, 17:28, 18:48). The alternative on the way to Strasbourg: to travel to Paris Nord and walk over to Paris Est, cannot be taken seriously!

But the big surprise came when I looked up the Brussels – Strasbourg route. There are (only) three direct trains between the two EU capitals (!), each taking more than 5 hours. At the same time, there is one connection (leaving Brussels at 11:10) via Aeroporte Charles de Gaulle, which is one hour faster!

Evidently, the European Commission must think of measures that would encourage the native country of high speed rail in Europe to make better uses of the existing network, even before it is extended all over Europe.

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3 The term SYNERGY conveys the notion that the combined effect of concerted actions is greater than the sum of the effects of the same actions pursued in separation.