Project Newsletter #8

Rail4Regions is an Interreg Central Europe project that is aiming at improving the access to the European rail freight networks. Eleven project partners are developing solutions to optimise regional rail lines and access points and create action plans to encourage the uptake of their solutions in regional development plans. Current project activities focus on pilot actions to test elaborated solutions.

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The Port of Rijeka: A Key Node for Terminals in the Balkan Hinterlands

The port of Rijeka, which is located at Kvarner Bay, on the Adriatic coast in Croatia, currently has only one container terminal, the one at

Once a week, container terminal Vrapče in Zagreb is also served with container trains. These trains are operated by Croatian national

Brajdica, operated by the Adriatic Gate Container Terminal - AGTC. The terminal has operated for over 15 years, and it handles almost 400.000 TEU every year. Container volumes between Rijeka and its hinterland are expected to significantly increase once the Rijeka Gateway project is completed. The new Rijeka Gateway terminal will start its operations next year and it will more than double the capacity for handling the containers in the area of the Port of Rijeka.

Even before that happens, the existing terminal, the AGTC, has established a set of fixed routes for container block trains, serving one terminal in Croatia, one in Bosnia and Herzegovina and several terminals in Serbia. Besides Croatia and Serbia, container trains regularly serve terminals in Hungary, Slovakia and Austria. These multimodal routes help to form sustainable and green distribution chains and, as such, are contributing to carbon neutrality set by European Green Deal. Just as a remainder, the same amount of goods transported by rail, instead of by road transport, reduce carbon emission by at least 75%.

One of the first regular train container first service was the one connecting AGTC in Rijeka with the Leget terminal in Sremska Mitrovica. Since it lies next to Sava River, Leget terminal is a trimodal terminal which combines road, rail and inland navigation. Currently the service from Rijeka to Leget and vice-versa runs five (5) times per week, meaning five pairs of 500 meters long container trains traveling the route.

The regular container train services from Rijeka serve terminals in Serbia operator, HŽ Cargo, and the terminal is being managed by Manšped Ltd company situated in Kukuljanovo at the outskirts of Rijeka. A container block trains from Rijeka also serve the terminal in Brčko in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The service operates on request, up to once a week.

The development of terminals in Serbia and the one at Vrapče in Zagreb is encouraging companies and cities to develop new terminals in the hinterland of the port of Rijeka. The plans to run regular container block services exist in the city of Varaždin and Križevci. A private company Kos Transporti Ltd from Varaždin has plans to build the industrial siding, to buy equipment and to start transloading containers from trucks to trains and from trains to trucks in the next two years. The city of Križevci has the similar idea, but the main investor should be the city. The plan is to establish a container terminal at Čret economic zone, near the city.

The transport operations from and to the Port of Rijeka, carrying containers to and from the hinterland, shows the true meaning of multimodality in freight transport. The existing network of terminals in Croatia and Serbia is attracting many users and the other companies and cities are willing to follow these examples. All the activities that will help to further increase the usage of the existing terminals, and the activities to build new terminals, will definitely contribute to reach EU climate targets.

with four more pairs of trains per week, three pairs serving MAKIŠ terminal and one pair serving NELT terminal, both in the vicinity of the Serbia's capital – Belgrade.

The RailHub Finder is taking shape

Based on the bottlenecks analysed in the first work package, the transnational working group has been working intensively on the development of the RailHub Finder in recent weeks and months. The tool will be used to record the potential of loading points, meaning all access points to the rail network for freight transport, on a map. The economic activities in the viewer are also to be displayed in order to better recognise possible shifting potentials. During the development of the RailHub Finder, particular focus was placed on the completeness of the metadata describing the loading points, which should provide the user with a quick and clear overview of the capacities and possibilities of the loading point.
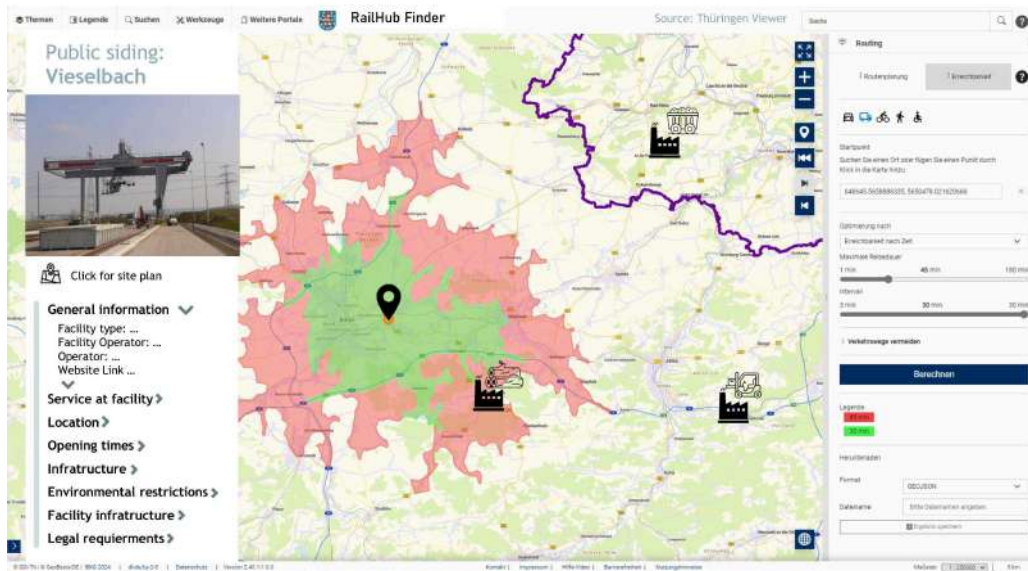
In addition, there are various helpful functions, such as the routing function, which offers a simple display option for time and length-related distances. Fortunately, we were able to launch a tender for the technical development of the RailHub Finder, with the help of which we want to find a developer to realise our idea. The contract to the developer has recently been awarded. During the pilot phase, we want to use Thuringia as a test area and, after appropriate evaluation, carry out a rollout on a Central European level.

Guideline for the Revitalisation of branch lines

In contrast to major European economic centres, which benefit from extensive connectivity to existing freight transport corridors, rural regions often face the challenge of longer transport distances to the nearest rail freight connections. This disparity is primarily due to the sparse rail network and the lack of adequate branch and feeder lines that connect rural areas with the main freight transport corridors.

The primary objective of this guideline is to provide a strategic framework for the revitalization of branch and feeder lines, ensuring their effective transformation to meet current and future transportation demands. The approach aims to facilitate occasional freight traffic (phase 1), support regular freight services (phase 2), and ultimately enable combined passenger and freight operations (phase 3).

The guideline will be tested in South Moravia Region, where a possibility to use railway siding for passenger transport will be investigated. Modernization of this siding could improve efficiency of operation freight trains. Implementation of the pilot case will check, whether the guideline has been designed so that it can be applied as an universal tool for revitalization of branch and feeder lines or construction of new ones.

The subject of siding revitalization in the particular pilot case is to create a conceptual proposal for the operation of the new suburban train line, to examine the possibilities of its management and to verify the competitiveness of the new connection in comparison with the existing bus lines. If the siding is also used for passenger transport, synergies are created between freight and passenger transport. There can be a higher usage of the siding and the plots of land it occupies Possible substitution of several bus lines by modern trains will enable usage of sustainable public transport in the area.

Meet our partners: Province of Novara (IT)

Being a Rail4Regions partner represents a good development opportunity for the Novara area, one of the most relevant logistics centers in northern Italy located in a strategic position at the crossroads of two European corridors for the transit of goods. It is no coincidence that two important loading points, CIM and Intermodaltrasporti, are located at the gates of the capital city, allowing it to support a significant flow of goods.

The proximity to Milan's industrial hub and the Swiss border, which is the gateway to Central and Northern Europe, also means that the entire area is heavily infrastructured, including in terms of rail, but consequently also heavily congested. Supporting the modal shift from road to rail, as proposed by Rail4Regions, is therefore an almost compulsory choice, which would allow the area to be partly rid of excess traffic and meet the environmental and safety needs of citizens.

Rail4Regions

https://www.interreg-central.eu/projects/rail4regions/