

European Passengers' Federation

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Report of 8th Annual Conference

MARCH 20TH 2010, CONCERT HALL, MALMÖ, SWEDEN

"EASIER AND MORE ATTRACTIVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT - PASSENGERS JOIN REGIONS"

INTRODUCTION

EPF Chairman Trevor Garrod welcomed 70 members and visitors from Sweden, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, France, Poland, Hungary and Greece. There were several apologies for absence including those from members in Ireland, Luxembourg, Bulgaria and Finland.

Ms Marta-Lena Schwaiger, Chairperson of ResenarsForum, welcomed visitors to Sweden, where there had been a cold winter. "This," she said, "should not be a surprise - but for public transport users it was." Services had been severely disrupted, with a lack of information, and a parliamentary enquiry had had to take place. Everyone had blamed someone else. Public transport operators were "good at thinking inside-in but not outside-in."

There was a new slogan "Passenger in Focus", but it tended to be a cliché. Therefore it was important to have a passengers' association to whom operators and decision-makers could talk. They must also recognise that "citizens" were also "customers" and "people."

Mr Anders Rubin, Mayor of Malmö, welcomed us to the city and recounted its history. Over the centuries there had been prosperous periods and some less prosperous. The opening of the Oresund Link and the building of the north-south rail tunnel under Malmö, providing easier access to the city centre, were contributing greatly to its regeneration. There were also plans to improve further public transport in the city.

DOUBLING OF TRAVEL BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Ms Charlotta Rosengren Edgren of Svensk Kollektivtrafik (the Swedish Public Transport Association) explained the country's aim of doubling public transport usage by 2010 "by releasing resources and by innovation." Public transport was a strategic tool for improving the environment and employment, but the government also had to do its share.

Skanetrafiiken had been formed in 1999 in the southern region of Skane which had a population of 1.2 million. It was comparable to Transport for London in the way that it brought operators together. Over the past decade Skane had seen a 10% increase in train and bus usage.

It was important to identify passenger needs, and then develop future service concepts to fulfil those needs. The "whole journey concept" was vital, and co-operation between operators would enable the whole market to expand.

CO-OPERATION IN REGIONAL PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND PASSENGER INFLUENCE

Mr Jan Windau (Commercial Director, DSB Sverige) and Mr Morten Norup-Nielsen (Innovation Manager) gave a joint presentation in which they stressed, "This business is about attracting more passengers."

DSB is Danish-owned but has expanded abroad, primarily in southern Sweden, with 800 employees, 105 train sets and 16 million passenger-kilometres per year.

The public transport business was "about helping people to get about to do what they want in their lives". It was necessary to focus on "the whole value chain" and "what is going on in people's minds" This meant focussing on operational effectiveness and innovation.

They had a Customer Relations Management Model of "marketing leading to sales leading to service and production leading to aftercare." A key element at the start was the ease of finding out about and then buying a ticket. They wanted to work with customers to improve this. Therefore they also needed to have dialogue with the customers after they had left the train.

INFORMATION TO PASSENGERS ON LOCAL, REGIONAL AND LONG-DISTANCE TRAVEL

Mr Gerhard Wennerstrom, Chief Executive Officer of Samtrafiiken i Sveriga AB, began by stating, "I have a dream of one day seeing a happy customer!" Samtrafiiken had 134 years of experience of providing information for passengers and for the past 15 years had provided information on line. They had a database from which they answered hundreds of thousands of queries every year.

The market economy was based on trademarks - such as SAS and Lufthansa. Operators must also recognise that the customer could be a business user one day and a leisure user another day. Sometimes the customer needed a table in the train; sometimes they did not.

He had arrived by train in Brussels on business and had walked to his hotel because he had no information about public transport in the city or how to pay for it.

"The American dream is freedom - answered by the car industry", said Mr Wennerstrom, and many people still see public transport as something for poor people. But for young people now, freedom is to be able to choose how to travel, and whether to live in Malmö or Copenhagen. In fact, car ownership in big urban areas is now lower than it was."

The role of Samtrafiken was to present information to passengers and there would soon also be a "book and buy" button on their information channels. It was also important to promote the "reachability function" of public transport - how far you could get within a certain amount of time. They were also developing a meeting planner function - optimising when to meet so that all participants could reasonably get there by public transport.

Competition could bring uncertainty. Samtrafiken wanted to avoid this by giving information that was reliable. As an example of their work, he cited the Travel Planner between Malmö and Halsingborg, which showed how to do the journey by train, bus or car, including departure times, length of journey and trademarks.

In discussion with all four speakers, the point was made that the public transport sector must give "a common promise to the customer." Operators must also be prepared with contingency plans when things went wrong. Some delegates also said that they were not interested in which operator was providing the service, but only in how best to get to their destination. The point was also made that, in addition to the Internet and mobile technology, it was also important to use staff, especially on the train, to help passengers and receive feedback.

SWEDEN'S TRANSPORT AND CLIMATE POLITICS - THE ROLE OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT AS AN IMPORTANT FACTOR.

Mrs Asa Torstensson, Swedish Minister of Infrastructure, addressed the conference and began by stating that public transport was already an important element in society and could be an essential part of the strategy for tackling environmental issues and creating jobs. However, it must offer good and affordable services.

When she took office in 2006 she had raised the question: What do passengers need and what do they want? How do we get more people on to public transport?

In 2008 a Long-term Action Plan was received from the transport industry and to succeed this needed a well-adapted legal framework

The opening up of the rail network in 2009 should make rail a more modern industry - for example with competitive tendering for non-viable services. There were no longer any barriers to potential operators.

Already the effect could be seen with two different companies operating between Malmö and Stockholm offering different prices. On October 10th a final step would be taken to make the rail market fully open.

Mrs Torstensson said that the focus must now shift from production to catering for the consumer. Current legislation was 30 years old and a new law was being drafted to allow open access to local and regional services. Strategic regional planning was needed to cater for long-term needs, including urban planning and infrastructure. For all operators, participation in a central information system would be mandatory.

This new law would enter into force on January 1st 2011.

Turning to staffing issues, the Minister said that it was difficult to recruit new train and bus drivers and so there was a proposal to lower the age requirement to 18 under appropriate conditions.

For a long time there had been discussions about a cross-modal perspective, but this did not exist in reality.

Under the Swedish EU Presidency, high priority had been given to the regulations and rights of bus, coach and boat passengers. Agreement had now been reached in the European Council.

In Sweden, a national investigation had been commissioned to look at filling gaps in users' rights. A proposal was being made to the Government for an Advisory Passenger Forum. Research had indicated that cars were the mode of transport which produced most satisfaction for their users. Satisfaction with public transport modes needed to be increased.

In answer to a question about the need to harmonise passengers' rights across modes Mrs Torstensson said that this issue had become very relevant in the bad winter weather this year in Sweden and much had been learned. She also stressed that politicians could only provide the legal framework for public transport, it was then up to the industry to offer attractive services!

EPF PRIORITIES

EPF Vice-Chairman Christopher Irwin reported on the progress of EPF priorities at European level. He detected a greater awareness now in the industry to match services to passengers' needs. Research undertaken by DGSANCO in 2006 and 2008 showed a low level of satisfaction with public transport compared to many other service sectors, with urban transport having a particularly low score.

New cars produced most satisfaction and air travel was about half way down the list.

Research carried out by the European Infrastructure Managers in 2004 showed that, for transport outside urban areas, passengers considered reliability, punctuality, information and value for money were the most important factors governing their choice. Speed was not always important.

These conclusions reflected those of the UK National Passenger Survey in recent years, where most concerns were expressed about performance and the way in which Train Operating Companies managed delays; with punctuality being the next concern. Passenger Focus, which conducted the survey, also now had a remit for buses and its initial findings on passenger concerns in this mode were punctuality, value for money, frequency, inter-availability of tickets and the ability to obtain a seat. In fact the concerns of bus users were largely the same of those of train users.

These findings had an effect on the work of the European Passengers' Federation. "The days when the state, or the operator, knew best," said Mr Irwin, "are gone." EU intervention was needed in order to empower passengers. The Telematics Applications for Passengers developed by the European Railway Agency was vital, and it needed to be cross-modal.

Passenger rights must be relevant, understandable, publicised, accessible, enforced and monitored. Air passengers' rights - as he had discovered when travelling by helicopter to the Isles of Scilly - only applied to fixed-wing aircraft. The legislation needed to be extended.

Eurostar did not apply the new passenger rights legislation when their services were disrupted by snow in December, claiming that they did not understand it.

National Enforcement Bodies were applying different procedures.

EPF would "continue to work to make travelling easier."

EASY TRAVEL FOR EUROPEANS - CURRENT QUESTIONS OF PRINCIPLE IN EUROPEAN TRANSPORT POLICY

Mrs Veronica Manfredi, Member of the Cabinet of European Commission Vice President Kallas, Transport, described their key goals as

- ❖ a minimum level of service quality across the EU
- ❖ an appropriate level of mobility for all
- ❖ establishment of a Single European Transport Area for Citizens.

Each year about 8 billion journeys were made by train, 750 million by plane and 400 million by ship. The current priority was to implement effectively the existing passenger rights legislation for air and rail, complete the coverage for road and ship, make the legislation coherent across all transport modes and communicate it.

The European Commission had established good co-operation with the air transport National Enforcement Bodies (NEB) and was now doing the same for rail.

Bus/coach and maritime/inland waterways legislative proposals were about to start their second reading phase through the European Parliament and Mr Kallas wanted it all to be sorted out by the end of the year.

Before the summer break, it was planned to launch a Trans-modal Information Campaign - one of the breakthrough EC projects for this year - to make citizens aware of their rights. Already EuropeDirect was receiving thousands of queries from citizens and aimed to reply to these within three weeks. Sometimes citizens would be advised to contact their NEB first.

Thinking ahead, the aim was to have a minimum set of common rights, while taking into account each mode's specific characteristics and this could in due course lead to a "Common Charter of Passengers' Rights."

In reply to questions, Mrs Manfredi said that the EC was trying to ensure that NEBs talk to each other and that a complaint addressed to the wrong body is automatically transferred to the correct one; that they were aiming for a transmodal booking system; and that the Commission were "sensitive" to the fact that looking after delayed passengers, and providing them with accommodation or alternative transport, could be more important to them than compensation.

Concerns were also expressed by delegates about national derogations and the fears of a "two-tier Europe" regarding rail passengers' rights. Mrs Manfredi said that for centuries people had "travelled with a passive attitude" but expectations were now changing.

Concerns were also expressed by some delegates that passenger rights on urban transport were not yet being addressed. However, there were some examples of good practice that

could be considered elsewhere. For instance, in Stockholm it was possible to take a taxi and claim the fare back if the bus or metro was over 20 minutes late. Some concerns were also expressed about cities that had different ticketing systems for different modes or operators.

Mrs Manfredi referred to the EC's Sustainable Urban Mobility Action Plan, but said that because of subsidiarity the Commission itself could not intervene in local issues. National parliaments must also be involved. She also said that it was hoped to have a European on-line booking system, trans-modal if possible. It was also important for EPF to put these issues to the European Parliament.

RAILWAY TRAVEL IN EUROPE - FASTER AND MORE FREQUENT

M Jacques Dirand, Senior Policy Advisor of the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies (CER) stated that finance was the key but was lacking in some countries, and asked whether liberalisation would help.

Sweden had increased modal share in the period 2002-7, with passenger traffic up 16% and freight 21%. On the other hand, Poland had seen rail's share of the market drop by 6% with a poor level of financing and high access charges. Denmark and the UK had seen a good level of financing and new entrants. Romania had also seen new entrants but very high infrastructure charging and lack of finance for rail.

"The higher the access charges," said M Dirand, "the lower the traffic. Despite the market opening, it has not had the predicted growth. The liberalised countries that were the most successful had the lowest access charges and the best financing."

In EU10 (the newer member states of the EU), 35% of the PSO was not compensated and the governments and local authorities were putting obligations on to operators but were not prepared to pay a realistic rate for them.

In EU15 (the older member states), over 35 years motorway length had increased by 3.5 times, and rail had decreased by 14%. Since 1995, however, rail had retained its modal share and increased its productivity.

Our speaker said that the CER favoured harmonised passenger rights across all modes, but that these would only be effective if there was adequate financing.

EASY TICKETING FOR EUROPEAN PUBLIC TRANSPORT PASSENGERS

Ms Margareta Berg, Chief Executive of Resekortet i Sverige AB described the Swedish Travelcard on to which passengers could load value and which had national interoperability. There was a similar Rejsekort in Denmark.

The barriers to be overcome when introducing such a system were legal, technical, security and trust. However, its success lay in taking into account the consumer's perspective, providing incentives, having the same user interface and bringing regulations and guidelines into line.

Sweden had 21 Passenger Transport Authorities with 12 separate systems and 5 different suppliers. The trend was to open payment systems, and seamless ticketing and she saw the future as a smarter type of ticketing and "travel purse". Experience had shown that it was necessary to start with a business model and then a technical specification.

Mr Shef Janssen, Chief Executive Officer of VDV-Kernapplikations-GmbH & CoKG, had been involved in the development of the Dutch chipcard system and said that many such systems had been introduced worldwide over the past ten years. E-ticketing made sense. It had started in urban areas, sometimes in connection with libraries, swimming pools, parking and rent-a bike and matched modern passenger expectations.

In Germany there were currently some 35 different projects and co-ordination was needed for inter-operability. For example, the previous day our speaker had used his mobile phone in 3 different countries, but could not use the same piece of technology for all public transport in those countries.

A standard for cards had been agreed in 2005 and by 2007 there were 2 million cards in the field. The number was growing and was expected to reach 5 million in 2011 and 10 million in 2015.

Advantages were that customers did not need to know local tariffs, they had easy access and a seamless journey. There was also a cost saving for the operators.

Six countries were now involved in IFM schemes (the UK, Netherlands, Sweden, Germany, France and Portugal) and an IFM roadmap was due to be published in May 2010. Large-scale EU interoperability would take several years, partly because individual countries have invested in their own schemes, but it was possible if there was financing and political will.

PLANNING IN THE CITY OF MALMÖ TO IMPROVE PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND ENVIRONMENT

Mr Klas Nydahl, Traffic Director of Malmö City, spoke of the growth of the city since the opening of the Oresund Bridge. The cross-city tunnel was also due to open in December 2010. The old western harbour area had been redeveloped, including the building of a new

university, and attention would now be given to the area north of Central Station. Some of the tunnel had been constructed by cut-and-cover, and some by boring.

The Central Station was being redeveloped with a blend of new and old styles and he hoped that it would be a good introduction to visitors to the city. The tunnel section of the Central Station would have three entrances, including one by the university. There would be a new bridge just for buses and parking for 3-4000 bicycles. The Triangeln underground station would be one kilometre from Central, and give better access to the business area of Malmö. Its entrance had been carefully designed to blend in with the sensitive architecture of the area. The new Hyllie station would be close to Malmö Arena and have car and cycle parking. The JoJo travelcard would also be used to pay for safe bicycle parking.

By the end of 2011, there would also be a circular local train service using the tunnel and existing railway to the east of the city.

Mr Nydahl outlined future plans to operate cleaner and quieter buses and, when capacity justified it, to introduce trams. They would also develop the areas around the station as places for people to meet.

BUSES IN THE PUBLIC TRANSPORT SYSTEM

Ms Anna Gronlund, Chief Executive Officer of the Swedish Bus Association, said that 53% of local public transport in Sweden was by bus and passengers were mostly young people or women. Most passengers used the bus to travel to work or education.

Long-distances coaches in Sweden were completely deregulated, and did cater for leisure travel. There had been a slight decrease in usage, attributable to the economic crisis.

There was a need to recruit more younger drivers and she referred to EU legislation on driver training and the need to make the career more attractive.

In the more lightly populated rural areas there was a need to look for other transport solutions, including taxis, and also a common information system for all modes.

The Swedish company Volvo was also involved in projects for guided busways, notably in India and South America.

In discussion with the speakers, it was stated that the Malmö City Tunnel had been financed 80% by the government, 12% by the city and 8% by the region with a small contribution also from a regeneration company. Some delegates suggested that as such schemes also benefited private companies, they should also help pay for them - possibly through a Land Value Tax.

The issue was raised that bus operators might oppose reintroduction of trams if these were taking away their most profitable routes.

CONCLUSION

The Chairman thanked all speakers and delegates for their contributions. Topics had been raised which could also be addressed in more detail at a future conference.

He also thanked Kurt Hultgren and colleagues from ResenarsForum for organising a most interesting event - which was followed on March 21st by visits to the City Tunnel exhibition, the Oresund Bridge and to the towns of Lund, Landskrona and Halsingborg

Pau Noy of the Catalan association PTP then announced that the next Annual Conference of EPF would take place on Saturday March 12th 2011 in Barcelona, and extended an invitation to all EPF members and colleagues to come to Spain for this event.

For more information about the European Passengers' Federation and its member associations, including an update on its activities, log on to www.epf.eu Most of the conference presentations can also be found on our website and you can also subscribe electronically to our twice-yearly bulletin.

Report compiled by Trevor Garrod and Trevor Jones.

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