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DRAFT PROTOCOL

BARENTS REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

MEETING IN TROMS 01.03.2016

Place: Troms County Council, Troms, Norway

Time: 13:00-17.00

Present:

Bo-Erik Ekblom

Mikael Bergström

Mårten Edberg

Eirik Selmer

Marius Chrømer

Björn Kavli

Hannu Heikkinen

Rebecka Snefugli Sondell

Jorma Leskinen

Tuija Maanoja

Jaakko Ylinampa

Jyrki Suorsa

Juha Hyvärinen

Jarkko Rantala

Agenda

1. Approval of the Agenda

- The Agenda was approved.

2. Approval of the Protocol of the meeting held in Rovaniemi 29.9.2015

- The Protocol was approved.

3. Chairman's Overview (Hannu Heikkinen)

- Hannu Heikkinen gave a short overview of the activities since the last WG meeting: Regional council of Kainuu is now chairing the Barents regional cooperation as well as this working group. Some priorities for the regional chairmanship of interest for this group is to improve large scale cooperation, safety and functionality of border crossings, develop east west transports, telecommunication and smart communications.

4. Partners' Overview

- Eirik Selmer, Finnmark, gave a short overview of the Norwegian National Transport Plan that was presented the day before. There are many protests from the north of Norway as not many objects from this area has made it into the plan. The transport plan will now be commented and will be finalised in 2017. Erik also informed about a new flight route from Troms via Alta and Kirkenes to Murmansk. The route will be operated by a Norwegian company and will start in the summer of 2016. The plane will be a 39 seater Dash 8 which is very suitable for the traffic.
- Marius Chrømer, Troms, also commented the Norwegian Transport Plan. Troms has challenges with the gap between national and regional roads as the regional financial situation is getting poorer. Troms is working together with Finnmark and Nordland to try to get the national level to see this problem. Troms is also working with a regional transport plan that will be finished next year. Troms has a lot of regional cooperation with the Russian regions of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk and now wants to strengthen this cooperation as well as making a new agreement with Oulu. North Norway now sees a growth in the travel industry while oil and gas industry is decreasing.
- Mårten Edberg, Västerbotten informed about the upcoming 2018-2029 Swedish transport plans, national and regional, and the preparatory work for these. A mutual system analysis Västerbotten and Norrbotten is now conducted. The Bothnian corridor is a big question where several Finnish and Swedish regions are working together. The North Bothnian line has got 100 000 million SEK for planning from the European Union and the government has promised to start building in 2018. The EU decision says that it has to be finished by 2029.
- Bo-Erik Ekblom, Norrbotten, informed about a huge dredging project in Lulea Harbour that is coming up. Norrbotten is very eager to develop the railway connections between Sweden and Finland with the terminal in Tornio/Haparanda as a vital part. There are for example plans for personal traffic between Lulea and Haparanda. Important to connect this to the Finnish railway system and to be able to do this in an effective way the last couple of kilometres to Tornio on the Finnish side must be electrified. 60 tonnes trucks allowed in Sweden but the plan is to increase this to 74 tonnes on some roads. There is a new speed revision coming up, the first step was conducted a couple of years ago and now there is a second step that will affect quite a lot of roads. For example 70 km on the E4 between Umeå and Skellefteå will be decreased from 90 to 80 km/h.
- Jyrki Suorsa, North Karelia presented the Joensuu - Petrozavodsk transport corridor. Tourism and forest based industries are important industries in the corridor. A preliminary study has been conducted that states that simplifying visa requirements in the region will mean a lot for tourism and the people living in the area, new easy ways for crossing the border has to be developed especially for or international travellers. Today there is bus traffic between Petrozavodsk and Joensuu, however passenger transports on rail as well as charter flights between the cities would be important steps to further developing the corridor.
- Jaakko Ylinampa informed about the big maintenance backlog in Finland. The government just appointed 600 million euros for decreasing this backlog the coming three years. However, it has not yet been decided how it will be divided in the country. Lapland is grateful for getting money for highway E18 between Kilpisjärvi and Muonio. More information on http://www.liikennevirasto.fi/web/en/transport-system/maintenance-backlog-actionplan?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_bCad2sooZUBR&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1#.VtWccHlf3IU. A map of all Finnish investments made with these 600 million is presented by Jaako <http://liikennevirasto.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=cba49c3d5eb14fc>

[b93eb71a3db0fdeb0](#). Another 364 million will come for similar projects and hopefully the electrification in Tornio is included in these.

A memorandum of understanding has been signed on developing the road Tornio to Troms to a testing road for intelligent transport and automated driving. The reason for this is that there is car test sites in connection to this road where tests can be made in a protected environment. <http://www.liikennevirasto.fi/web/en/-/world-class-arctic-testing-ecosystem-for-intelligent-transport-opens-in-fell-lapland#.VtWcf3lf3IU>.

- Tuija Maanoja informs on how BEATA finds the mutual meetings with BRGTL very good. Russia is now chairing BEATA and wants the experts working group to continue, but that would need a new mandate with an assignment but nothing has come from the chair regarding this yet. In a couple of days there will be an official invitation to the ministerial meeting to be held in Arkhangelsk. Railways and flight connections are important areas for the Russian chair. There will probably be an update to the Russian part of the Barents Transport Plan.

5. The mandate of BRWGTL and the action plan for 2016.

- Are there any needs to update the Mandate for BRWGTL?

Decision: A working group made up by Erik, Mårten and Hannu will come up with a suggestion for a new mandate for the BRWGTL and it will be sent to the rest of the group for comments.

Regarding the action plan 2016 discussion: Mårten states that dates for the coming meetings must be decided long beforehand in order to get participation and back to back meetings with other activities of general interest is always fruitful. Erik means that it is important that we have some common project; it does not need to be a big one. Bo-Erik informs about a possibility to apply for investment money from CBC Kolartcic for a suitable corridor on Russian territory. We can have such a suggestion for the next meeting. A Brussel activity is considered (more information under bullet point 12.).

Decision: A draft action plan will be made up by the chair to the next meeting based on today's discussions.

6. The proposal for a new Norwegian Transport Plan for 2018-29 (Marius Chramer)

The proposal for a new Norwegian Transport Plan was presented yesterday to the Ministry of Communication. In the coming year the ministry will gather comments from regional partners, cities, organisations etc. The plan focus on cost benefit which always is more positive for the bigger cities and regions with more people and not regions where the production and the natural resources is located. This is more evident than ever before. There is a tough road ahead for the northern regions as many northern objects are not in the plan. The plan is made up by many old binding projects that allocate money for a long time ahead. A big part of the plan is also allocated to maintenance. There are some binding projects in the north however as double track on Ofotenbanan that will be built. Especially E8 has suffered severely with several objects taken out of the plan, much focus from Troms and other regions will be on these objects. A short summary of the plan will probably be translated to English. If/when this comes Marius will send it to the working group.

7. Current transport issues in Russia (Juha Hyvärinen)

Juha informs the group on the latest Russian transport issues. There are new orders from the Russian Transport Ministry to harmonise the transport sector, radar systems for shipping and training of drivers are examples of this. Russia was forced last year to cut in the transport budget. This has meant that the Arkhangelsk deep sea port and the Murmansk gas terminal has been taken away from the Russian transport program. Road construction and reconstructions will be cut by 10% and according to experts new road projects in the future will be partly cofinanced with heavy vehicle fees. From November 2016 all lorries over 12 tonnes will be pay road fees of 1,53 rubble for every driven km on federal roads. This will affect the prices for transports. China is interested of financing roads in Karelia which will be paid with fees for the vehicles, however, nothing decided yet.

Regarding the Chinese financing to BELKOMUR railway, an agreement with China will be signed later this year by Arkhangelsk Governor Orlov.

Airport of Petrozavodsk has been opened after long reconstruction.

8. Coordination Project for Lapland Accessibility (Jarkko Rantala)

Started in October last year and lasts until 2018. The project is about corridor development dealing with issues as, businesses and volumes and costs. The presentation is annexed.

9. The Strategy of Transport and Logistics of North Finland – project (Jorma Leskinen)

The first phase of the transport and logistics strategy for northern Finland has been launched. The transport and logistic strategy will be ready by the summer 2017. The focus will be on the changes and challenges affecting transport and logistics in the foreseen future. Some aspects are the big potential in the tourism industry in the north, the possibility for a new railway to the Norwegian coast.

Jorma expresses that the Finns would like to have a meeting with Norwegian and Swedish experts on there experience of long time planning. There will be a meeting in April 25-26 in Ylläs, more information on this will be sent to the working group later.

10. What after Barents Transport Strategy? (activities and resources)

- The project idea for expand the Barents Transport Strategy (appendix)
- Other ideas for activities.
- discussion

This bullet point was discussed under 12.

11. Communication, cooperation and participation in the working group (Rebecka Snefuglli Sondell)

Rebecka informed about how the International Barents Secretariat is making an evaluation of the working groups communication, cooperation and participation. There are three parts of this projects, interviews, making a new platform for the homepage and developing a communication plan (together with the regional chair Kainuu).

The group raises the issue that if there was someone that held the work together, a kind of secretary, the work would be more efficient. Today everybody is doing this work in top of everything else. It is also important to have a clear mandate for the working group. Participation from Russian partners is very important.

Other comments and feedback can be sent by email to Rebecka.

12. Discussion and the next steps

Last meeting some project ideas were discussed and at this meeting there has come up some more ideas.

Mårten suggests a case study of how the national and regional authorities look at cross border interaction. Can be somehow of interest in the countries. Can look at statistics, models etc, how is cross border investments coordinated. The Barents Transport Plan has not been visible in national transport plans and similar documents. Why do our national authorities not prioritise according to this plan? We can work together more; we have common analysis from the Barents Transport plan. For example the members of the working group could send general remarks regarding the national transport plans in other countries that stress the Barents region. We support each other when needed.

It is important to find a project, the question is who shall be the leader and what about the finance. Hannus project idea for expanding the Barents Transport Strategy to railways and seaports is well received but where do we find finances. Terminals can be added to railways and seaports.

Both Hannus paper and Mårten's intervention is welcomed by the working group. Many regions are not pleased with how the national level is coordinated their international cooperation. Pressure needs to be put from the regional level, the regions lives close to the border and knows more about this cooperation than those in Oslo or Borlange. One way to go further is to ask for a mandate from the regional council to work with questions such as transport plans and the possibility to work with transport policy questions.

Mårten raises the question that Barents regional transport issues have to be discussed in a larger scale, for example in CPMR/Baltic Sea commission, NDPTL and NSPA. It is also important to present ourselves in Brussels and our regional EU offices can help us finding the right circumstance for that. If we want to be more active we have to take some steps. Tuija Maanoja explains that BEATA has been thinking in the same way regarding Brussels and has invited the Commission to several meetings without getting any answers. The problem is the sanctions towards Russia have made the political situation somehow complex. This is even more complex now with Russia as the chair of both BEATA and BEAC.

13. Next meeting

Preliminary 25-26 of April in Ylläs in connection to the meeting regarding the transport and logistics strategy for northern Finland. The meeting after that could be in Kajaani when there are meetings with the Regional Barents Committee and the Regional Council on the 30th of May. Hannu will check with BEATA of their plans if a back to back meeting could be of interest. Dates will be confirmed later.

Appendices:

Secretary, Mikael Bergström, Västerbotten