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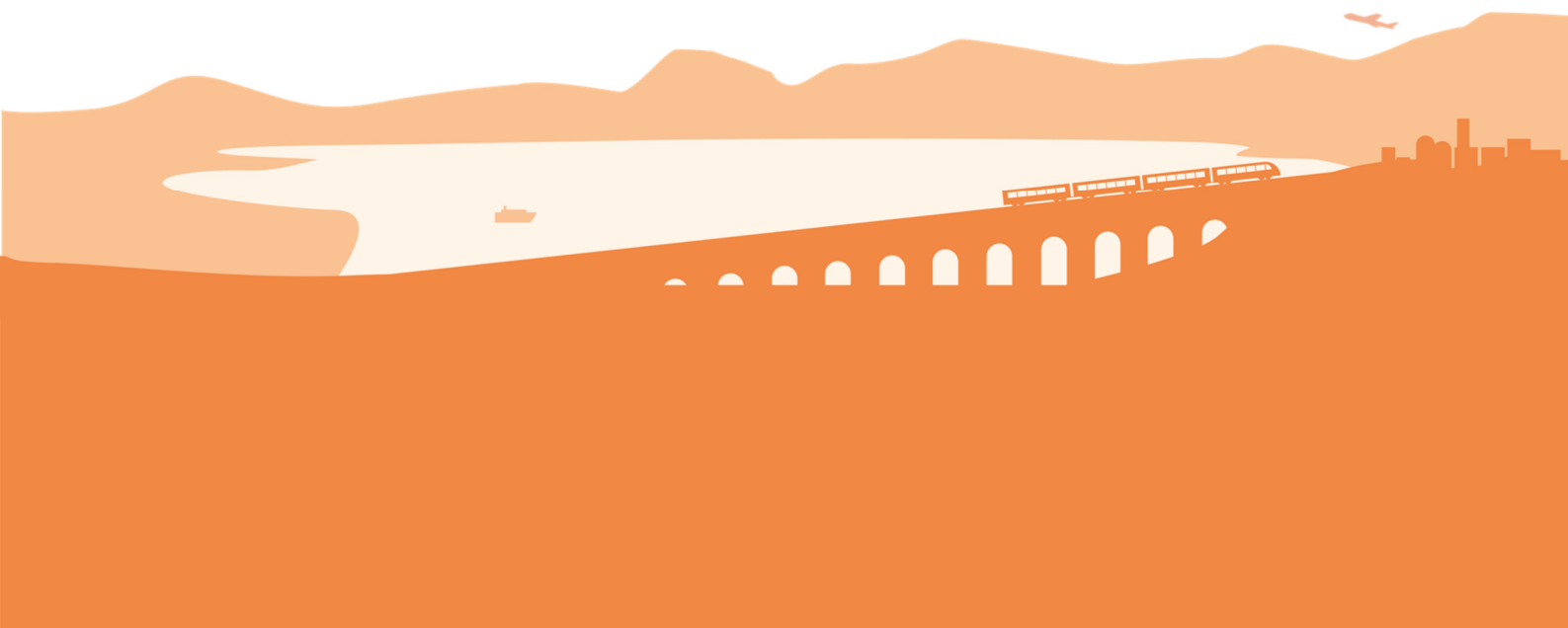
report on the SWL working group pilot action

December 2024 – January 2025

Rail Cargo Hungaria
working group leader



PILOT ACTION: STAKEHOLDER WORKSHOPS

in 4 regions in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia

1. Pilot action

The working group established to examine SWL traffic (Rail Cargo Hungaria as the leading organisation, in conjunction with Prometni Institut Ljubljana, University of Zilina and Malopolska Regional Development Agency) endeavoured to identify solutions for SWL traffic within a living lab setting. The result of this endeavour, predicated on a meticulous and exhaustive analysis, was a set of proposals.

This set of technical and financial proposals explores the potential contributions of the four target groups involved in SWL traffic – namely, national/regional/local decision-makers, infrastructure managers, railway companies and customers – to enhancing traffic levels.

The implementation of these proposals, as well as the establishment of the necessary organisational and financial conditions, requires a duration that exceeds the six-month timeframe allocated for the project. Consequently, the pilot project was structured as a ***series of workshops*** *with relevant stakeholders to validate and further develop the proposed package:*

- *21.November 2024 – Budapest (workshop organized by Rail Cargo Hungaria)*
- *8.,11.,12. November, 3. December – Zilina (meetings with stakeholders organized by University of Zilina)*
- *19. December 2024 – Krakow (workshop organised by Malopolska Regional Development Agency)*
- *23. January 2025 – Ljubljana (workshop organized by Prometni Institut Ljubljana)*

2. Participants

The workshops were attended by stakeholders involved in SWL traffic and by the organisations responsible for regional planning.

Budapest

- Ministry for Construcion and Transport: ministry responsible for transport, including transport strategy and rail infrastructure
- Hungrail (Hungarian Railway Association): association of companies operating in the Hungarian railway sector, representing their interests. It also edits and publishes the professional journal Magyar Vasút, which has a monthly circulation of 2000 copies. It has 38 members and represents a significant lobbying power.
- MÁV Zrt.: Railway infrastructure manager
- GySEV Zrt.: Railway infrastructure manager
- MMV Zrt.: Railway undertaking, providing SWL traffic service
- CER Hungary Zrt.: Railway undertaking, providing SWL traffic service
- UD Stahl Kft.: Customer using SWL traffic service

Zilina

- ŽSR: Infrastructure manager
- ZS CARGO: National cargo carrier
- LTE Logistik: Private cargo carrier
- AROS: Association of Railways Operators of Slovakia

Krakow:

- Marshal's Office of the Małopolska Voivodeship (Region)
- Krakow Technology Park Ltd
- Business in Małopolska Center
- Rabka Region Development Foundation
- Cushman & Wakefield

The institutions mentioned above are responsible for, among others: for spatial planning, creation of investment areas, cooperation with entrepreneurs, investment implementation, local administration and economic promotion.

Ljubljana

- SŽ-Tovorni promet: National railway freight operator
- SŽ-Infrastruktura: Railway infrastructure manager
- Ministry of Infrastructure
- Directorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Infrastructure Minutes

3. Conclusions

The workshop participants expressed the following ideas and suggestions for comments and additions to the working paper presented:

- In addition to direct operating aid, subsidies for the purchase of equipment, rail infrastructure and siding improvements can assist the segment in surviving and growing.
- Single wagon traffic can also be subsidised through network access charges, providing discounted rates for the segment. As the revenues of infrastructure managers cannot be reduced, discounts for single wagon traffic (e.g. free cancellation of train paths, discounts on track access charges) can be financed from the cost of block trains.
- In the field of human resources, the objective should be to create a digitalised, e-learning type of training for today's generations. Curricula for basic training should be upgraded and digital teaching materials developed.
- Railway companies should improve the quality of the service provided by the single wagon, ensure the traceability of consignments, and apply the benefits of digitalisation as widely as possible.
- Shunting services should be made more efficient, building on existing resources. Addressing the challenges posed by staff and resource constraints, the development and introduction of complex job profiles could be a viable solution. Planning for the provision of services should also be taken forward.

- There is an urgent need to improve loading areas and sidings. When designing development concepts, it is advisable to examine the available options and successful development models in other countries/regions.
- In the field of infrastructure, greater efficiency in the use of available resources is crucial. It is essential that the infrastructure manager has a clear understanding of the resources that will be available in 2-3 years (planning for public procurement, planning for track access charges, negotiating with railway companies).
- It is proposed to expand the network of loading/unloading points in order to bring rail closer to the customer and to make rail transport more cost-effective.
- Rail companies must optimise their services and minimise their costs related to the transport of single wagons in order to offer a more competitive alternative to road transport and reduce freight charges.
- The aid scheme for the development and operation of railway sidings should not only take the form of transport or rail development aid. By its nature and impact, it may also be eligible for support under schemes of an economic development or environmental nature.
- Local/regional economic development programmes should be rail-focused rather than road-focused.
- On those railway lines where traffic is interrupted, the technical condition of the lines depends on the level of maintenance by the infrastructure manager.It would be useful to set a minimum technical level of maintenance to ensure that lines closed to passenger traffic can still be used by freight trains where appropriate.
- The deterioration of the rail network must be halted by introducing a minimum technical level for the network.
- The future of single wagonload transport will be strongly influenced by market expectations regarding the quality of service. Rail companies must better understand and address the needs of their customers.
- It is essential that border crossings for transnational single wagonload traffic are made more seamless. The faster a freight train can cross the border, the more competitive it will be.
- Rail transport, including single wagonload transport, is a sector that must be made more predictable, as in many cases it is impossible to predict exactly when a customer's consignment will arrive, not even to the hour, but to the day. This has a negative effect on customer satisfaction and can lead to additional costs.
- In order to improve service quality and increase the volume of single wagon traffic, it is essential to purchase more modern rolling stock. However, the investment required is significant and the return on investment is slow, therefore subsidies are necessary to develop a modern fleet.
- Outdated locomotives requir frequent repairs and often cause problems in serving customers. They are more often subject to technical problems during use, causing further delays for customers.
- The provision of shunting locomotives is a key issue in the organisation of single wagon traffic. However, optimising them and ensuring their utilisation is challenging.
- Rail infrastructure development should not only focus on passenger transport, but also take into account the specificities of freight transport.
- Many stations lack the necessary infrastructure for rail loading, which is a key issue for the sector. The presence of overhead lines near loading tracks, for instance, necessitates the station being switched off during loading operations.
- It is recommended that improvements to station infrastructure include the installation of rail weighbridges in as many locations as possible, thus making rail services more attractive to customers.

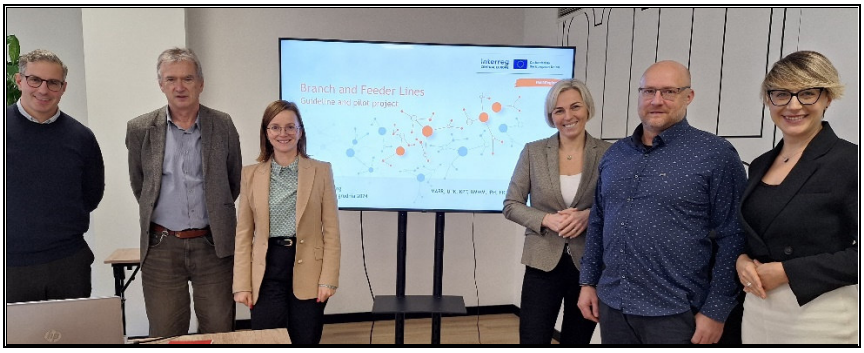
- The national/regional regulations on the authorisation of railway construction should be reconsidered and simplified. The use of sidings should be facilitated, both financially and administratively.
- To ensure smoother border crossings, harmonisation of the various instructions in different countries would be necessary, with preference being given to the use of TSIs.
- Simplification of technical rules and instructions will also have a positive impact on training (fewer and simpler training materials).
- For the creation of new industrial parks, a rail link should be compulsory for certain volumes and/or types of goods.
- The need for change in organization and technology of the SWL services – simplified technical rules, more digitalization, more flexibility
- Capacity of regional lines is sufficient, but there are personnel problems. Cumulation of working positions can be a good solution.
- Expected changes in system of subsidies for railway transport are needed
- SWL like public service similar like in passengers transport, based on public tender
- Complicated cooperation between all market subject, especially sensitive business info between carries – solution is needed.
- Enhanced Collaboration: Strengthening partnerships between various stakeholders, including government bodies, railway companies, and industry experts. Establishing regular communication channels to ensure ongoing dialogue and cooperation.
- Infrastructure Improvements: Prioritizing investments in railway infrastructure to eliminate bottlenecks and improve efficiency. Accelerating modernization projects to support the increased demand for single wagon load transport.
- Financial Support: Continuing and expanding state funding to subsidize single wagon load transport, making it more economically viable. Exploring additional funding opportunities from European Union programs and other international sources.
- Sustainable Solutions: Emphasizing the importance of sustainable practices in railway transport to reduce environmental impact. Implementing green technologies and energy-efficient solutions in railway operations.
- Market Adaptation: Adapting to market changes by developing new transport routes and optimizing production processes. Enhancing the flexibility and responsiveness of railway services to meet the evolving needs of customers.
- Future Workshops and Training: Organizing follow-up workshops and training sessions to address emerging challenges and share best practices. Encouraging continuous learning and professional development among stakeholders.

4. Photos

Budapest




Krakow



Ljubljana