

Rail Infrastructure Capacity Regulation must result in more and better-quality train paths for freight trains

The Commission's proposal for a new **Rail Infrastructure Capacity Management Regulation**, published as part of the **Greening Freight Transport Package (GFTP)**, is greeted by UIRR as a **promising start**. The UIRR position paper¹ published today takes stock of the merits of the proposal and suggests some improvements to it.

The starting position of operators of intermodal freight trains is **the need for more and better-quality train paths**. Today 5-6 passenger trains fall on each freight train that runs on the European railway network. Every second rail freight tonne-kilometre is produced by an intermodal train, 90% of which crosses at least one national border.

The growth in the number of passenger trains has considerably outpaced passenger ridership. The trend coincides with a "not-in-my-backyard" mentality when it comes to building additional railway lines. Today, European transport policy objectives must be met largely using the existing railway network.

These objectives include the **doubling of the market share of rail freight until 2050**. A performance of 800-1000 billion tonne-kilometre will require the doubling of the number of freight trains that run every day on the European network.

As the tool to achieve this outcome, the Commission's proposal foresees a **socio-economic and environmental cost-benefit analysis**. UIRR proposes to reinforce these with the following:

- 1) A **minimum train length requirement** on "highly utilised and congested lines",
- 2) the removal of the **"own network" and the "modal" constraints** on the bypass capacity design, and
- 3) the introduction of **European train path categories** and their hierarchy.

The **new structural and organisational choices** defined in the proposal would need to be firmed up, particularly by the reinforcement of the Review Body consisting of railway undertakings, authorised applicants and terminal managers. A **uniform methodology** for the socio-economic and environmental cost-benefit analysis should be defined in the implementing act.

UIRR will deliver its amendment proposals to this highly technical Regulation to both the European Council and the European Parliament, with a hope to enhance the Regulation's capabilities of delivering the number and quality of train paths the rail freight sector needs to fulfil the European Union policy objectives.

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Ralf-Charley Schultze

"The cost-benefit analysis based on socio-economic and environmental criteria should unequivocally reflect the value of a freight train to European citizens and the economy. Ultimately, this should lead to a more balanced access to the rail infrastructure for freight." – stated UIRR President Ralf-Charley Schultze.

Who is UIRR?

Founded in 1970, the **International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport (UIRR)** represents the interests of European road-rail Combined Transport Operators and Transshipment Terminal Managers.

Road-Rail Combined Transport (CT) is a system of freight forwarding which is based on efficiently and economically inserting electric rail into long-distance (road) transport-chains through the use of intermodal loading units (ILU).

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¹ <https://www.uirr.com/en/media-centre/press-releases-and-position-papers/2023/mediacentre/2693-position-paper-capacity-regulation-more-and-better-quality-train-paths-for-freight.html>