



FREIGHT TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION

**Enterprise and Learning Committee**  
**EL(3) 23-09 (p2) : 11 November 2009**

**“Future Railway Infrastructure in Wales”**

**Submitted by the Freight Transport Association (FTA)**

**Introduction**

1. Freight Transport Association (FTA) represents over 14,000 companies engaged in the transport of freight both domestically within the UK and internationally. Their interests range from those as operators, carriers, freight service providers, through to customers – suppliers of raw materials, retailers, manufacturers, and wholesalers, covering all modes of transport – road, rail, water, air and sea.

**Background – UK Rail Freight**

2. The use of rail freight has been on an upward trend since the mid 1990's. As well as continuing use for coal and other bulk goods, the success story has been about getting into the intermodal market – competing with road for container traffic. However, total market share is still low (about 11% of UK freight movements). There is still the potential to substantially increase rail's role – with all the environmental and economic benefits that would bring.

3. More than doubling rail freight from 23.5bn tonne km to over 50bn per year by 2030 and increasing its market share towards 20% is feasible. This will only be done by making rail more competitive in intermodal traffic.

**Importance of Rail Freight**

4. Every tonne of freight carried by rail produces at least two thirds less carbon dioxide than if moved by road. A typical freight train can remove 50 lorries from the road – congestion on the roads currently costs British business £17 billion per annum.

5. Often measures designed to improve the rail network are only concerned with improving conditions for passengers. However high-profile and justified the concerns of passengers might be, policy makers should not lose sight of the importance to the UK economy of rail freight. Freight traffic, in terms of distance travelled, accounts for approximately 10 per cent of the use of the rail network, when judged by weight that increases to around 30 per cent. In terms of trains per day there are some 1,000 freight trains and around 19,000 passenger trains. Freight is a significant player in the rail industry and its needs should be taken into account accordingly.

## The Role of Rail in Freight

6. As well as its continuing crucial role in moving bulk goods such as aggregates and coal, rail is increasingly taking a key role in containerised traffic of manufactured goods and retail products. It provides services for purely domestic movements, links Wales' ports to distribution centres around the UK and now provides direct international services via the Channel Tunnel.

7. There are, however, limitations to movement of goods by rail. Most goods are travelling to destinations such as shops or distribution centres that have no rail access, and so the goods must move part of their journey by road. It is therefore crucial to the development of rail freight that appropriate venues exist in the right locations to make transfer between modes as easy and efficient as possible.

## Rail Freight and Wales

8. Since 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government has been responsible for the country's rail network and has authority to:-

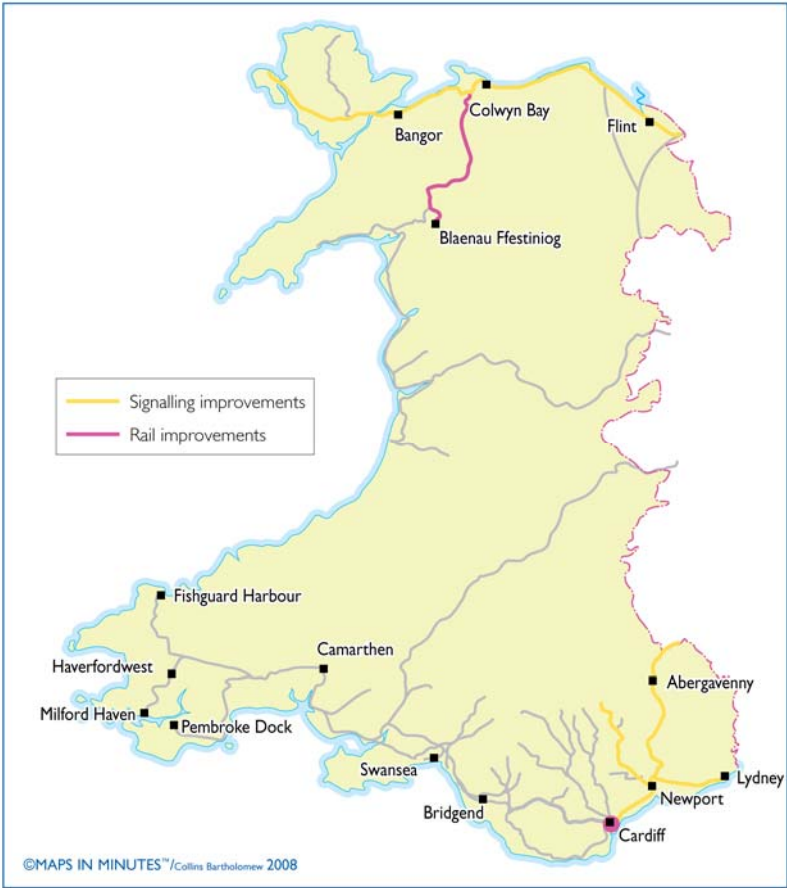
- Develop and fund infrastructure enhancement schemes.
- Develop new rail passenger services.
- Invest in improving the journey experience for rail users.
- Fund rail freight improvement schemes through Freight Facility Grants (FFG)

9. In 2008, Network Rail published the Wales Route Utilisation Strategy which the Welsh Assembly Government made contributions to. The RUS outlines a programme to enhance and modernise the network. Alongside this, the Welsh Assembly announced in late 2008 its Rail Forward Programme which aims to encourage an integrated transport system for Wales. Until recently, rail infrastructure projects were delivered through local authorities using transport grant arrangements. With the move to Regional Transport Plans, rail projects will now be delivered according to the priorities of the Assembly Government as set out in "One Wales".

10. The following table and map outlines the proposed schemes which will improve the network for freight interests:-

Cardiff area resignalling renewal	<b>Funded by Network Rail</b> Improved looping facilities in the Cardiff Central, bi-directional signalling throughout the station area and improvements at Cardiff Queen Street should provide capacity for freight traffic
Newport area resignalling renewal	<b>Funded by Network Rail</b> The major benefit to freight is the removal of East Usk Yard signalbox to the Newport Power Box. This will

	enable greater flexibility in terms of access to East Usk Yard
Little Mill to Hereford signalling improvement	<b>Funded by Network Rail</b> This has a benefit for freight in that it increases both capacity and performance for all operators
South Wales relief lines	This scheme is proposed for funding from the National Rail Discretionary Fund, however the scope of the scheme is being revisited to see if it can reach the desired numbers. If the scheme were to progress, the opportunity to increase freight speeds would be taken
North Wales line speed improvements	This scheme is not funded by Network Rail and is subject to a feasibility scheme. Any improvements in line speeds would, of course, be taken as a benefit to freight as well as passengers, provided that the increases were not purely differential.



11. In the request for evidence, the committee asks:

*How to increase the use of the railways for freight, including freight transfer facilities;*

From feedback from members FTA would put forward the following as areas to consider in addressing this:

- Ensure that W12 (or at least W10) gauge clearance is provided when electrification is done on the Great West Main Line to Swansea – this allows compatibility with standard freight flows, allowing the line to work as part of rail’s developing Strategic Freight Network.
- Alternate routes out of south Wales are gauge constrained. While this is not a big issue for bulk movements (eg steel and coal) it is an issue for containerised movements. With increased production at places such as Port Talbot, there is a growing demand for container movements. Diversionary routes need a better gauge clearance.
- In order to attract retail traffic onto rail it is essential that land is available at the intermodal interchange point to attract retail warehousing for RDC's. This will allow retailers to develop RDC's at the rail terminal allowing rail to be viable to service the RDC.
- There also needs to be a plan for the Welsh ports that are rail connected to have adequate rail infrastructure and land to support the use of rail. Currently we are not convinced there is adequate infrastructure. This radically reduces the ability of rail to compete with road.
- It has been suggested that there is potential for slate waste at Blaenau Ffestiniog to be moved by rail as a secondary aggregate, but the line requires upgrading.

12. The Wales Freight Strategy<sup>1</sup> reinforces these concerns with many of the recommendations on rail freight consistent with the statements above. FTA would recommend that these are taken forward by the Welsh Assembly Government, using the Wales Freight Group as a mechanism for delivery.

### **Other issues raised**

13. Where appropriate, some of the other questions raised by the Committee have been touched on above. The following additional comment may also be of use:

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<sup>1</sup> Welsh Assembly Government: One Wales Connecting a Nation: The Wales Freight Strategy (May 2008)

*The case for a high speed rail link between London and South Wales (in addition to the recent announcement that the existing mainline is to be electrified);*

14. A high speed line to Wales is not a requirement for freight. Gauge clearance and improved capacity for lower cost 'classic' lines is the necessity. This is not to say that the project may not be justified on the grounds of passenger needs alone, but it is not something to advocate for freight's needs.

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