

Protocol no 5
Steering Committee of
the Barents Euro-Arctic Transport Area
Date: September 26, 2001
Place: Haparanda/Tornio, Sweden/Finland

Members present: Tomas Brolin, Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications in Sweden, Rita Piirainen, Ministry of Transport and Communications in Finland, Kjell Rosanoff, Ministry of Transport and Communications in Norway, Vyascheslav Parfenov, Ministry of Transport in Russia, Boris Sitkov, Ministry of Railway Transport in Russia, Kristina Weichbrodt, European Commission DG TREN.

Other participants: Jane Bækken, Norwegian Ministry of Transport and Communications; Marjukka Vihavainen-Pitkänen, Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications; Kaj-Peter Mattsson, Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications; Ulla Isakson, Swedish Foreign Ministry; Bo-Erik Ekblom, Norrbotten County Administration; Gaute Strom, Finnmark County Administration; Vladimir Belozarov, October Railway; Martti Miettinen, Secretary of BEATA Steering Committee.

§1 Opening of the Meeting

Mr Brolin welcomed the participants to Haparanda/Tornio and opened the meeting.

The meeting agenda (Appendix 1) was adopted.

§2 Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Steering Committee (Protocol no 4)

The minutes of the fourth meeting of the Barents Euro-Arctic Pan-European Transport Area (BEATA) Steering Committee in Murmansk, Russia, May 24, 2000 were approved (Appendix 2). Comments of the draft minutes have been received earlier and they have now been duly inserted in the final text of the minutes.

§3 Status reports of projects initiated by BEATA

§3.1 BEATA GIS

Mr Miettinen informed the meeting about the status of the BEATA GIS database project. The development work has been carried out with the financial support from the Finnish Ministry

of Transport and Communications. The current phase will be completed by the end of the year, after which the fully functioning production version will be available. While the BEATA homepage and database will be technically operational, there remain some deficiencies such as the still incomplete database. However, with time the database can be assumed to become progressively more complete. There has also not been success with the development of a Russian language version of the site. Best options are still being explored. In 2002, it is envisioned that any further development of the site and the database will be carried out under the proposed Interreg III B program.

§3.2 Planned infrastructure projects

Mr Brolin stated that the list of planned infrastructure projects in Finland, Norway and Sweden is now complete and it has been sent to the members. The project list is based on the current national plans and priorities. Similar project information is expected from Russia as well.

It was agreed that the Russian party will provide the project list covering the Russian regions after the Russian national investment budget will be announced in November.

After completion of the project list with information from Russia the members will have two weeks time to respond. If no comments are received, the list will be considered final.

§ 3.3 Study of traffic evaluation and forecasts

Ms Jane Baekken has prepared a report which evaluates the results of six different transport studies in the Barents area. The report reveals that the approaches and assumptions can differ widely in studies performed by different parties and authorities. Furthermore, it seems difficult to create a single forecasting model for the entire Barents region with the available financial resources that could be used in all the cases. Nevertheless, much can be done in this area to help and harmonise future investment planning. It was proposed that further steps can best be taken under the future Interreg III B project.

It was concluded that any comments about the study report should be forwarded to Jane Baekken (Norwegian Ministry of Transport) or the Secretariat by Friday, October 26.

§ 4 Interreg III B Project

The Communications Group of the Barents Regional Council has decided to initiate a large transport project in the Barents Region and apply for it Interreg III B funding. The project and application is being prepared in a small work group of three regional representatives (Bo-Erik Ekblom (S), Per Munkerud (N) and Tuomo Palokangas (FIN)). The preparation process is assisted by Mr Miettinen.

Mr Miettinen told the meeting about the planned transport project and the Interreg application process. The transport project is proposed to be rather large totalling close to 3 million

euros over the three year period 2002-2004. The project has four components: general studies, specific projects, investment program and project administration.

The key elements of the project organisation are the steering committee and the permanent secretariat. The steering committee is envisioned to be the same as the Communications working group of BEAR, which has one representative from each region. It is also proposed that the Steering Committee has as members the chairman and secretary of the BEATA Steering Committee. In addition, it has been proposed that the BEATA Steering Committee would act as an advisory board for the Barents transport project. These arrangements would create a direct link between the BEATA Steering Committee and the planned Barents transport project.

Project financing was discussed. In all the countries the Interreg funding must be matched with national funding, which can be either national or local. The shares between the partners differ from country to country. Financing is the most urgent issue that must be resolved before filing the application.

In the discussion that followed all the Nordic members of the Steering Committee considered the proposed Interreg project as very valuable. The project would complement nicely the future work of the BEATA Steering Committee and therefore it was supported strongly. Mr Rosanoff brought up some complications concerning the Norwegian financing of the project, which must be resolved in the next few weeks.

It was recommended that each region and respective Transport Ministry will carry out immediate discussions as to how the national and local financing can be secured. It was decided that by October 12 the parties should report to the BEATA chairman and/or secretary about the status of project financing. The deadline of the first round of Interreg applications will be October 26.

§5 Reports of the BEATA members and other participants

Finland: Ms Piirainen was pleased to inform the meeting that just one week ago the motorway between Kemi and Tornio had been opened to traffic, which is a major transport improvement in the area. Another large road project is the section Liminka-Oulu, which will be built by 2003. There are also substantial railway electrification programs underway (Oulu-Vartius, Oulu-Rovaniemi), which have longer timeframes until 2004 and 2006. Ms Piirainen also commended the progress in the Ledmozero-Kotchkoma railway construction in Russia, which will have a direct impact also in the Finnish side.

Norway: Mr Rosanoff wanted to refer to his later presentation on the Norwegian National Transport Plan. However, in the BEATA area Norway will prioritise the Northern Maritime Corridor and the Transport Corridor running in northeasterly - westerly direction. In addition, a much wider transport route has recently drawn interest, namely a direct maritime connection between North America/Boston and Narvik. The hinterland would be served using the Swedish railway network to Haparanda/Tornio.

Russia: Mr. Parfenov explained in great detail the latest developments in the Northwest regions of Russia. There are three major seaports in the area: Murmansk, Archangelsk and Kandalaksha. Murmansk has the highest cargo volume, which increased 13% even last year. In the port a continuous improvement program has been carried out and now Murmansk can take ships up to 140 000 tons. The Kandalaksha Port has also been expanded increasing the port's capacity by 70%. Now ships up to 60 000 ton can use Kandalaksha. The Port of Archangelsk has explored a possibility to establish a transshipment terminal in Kirkenes. The plan is to use smaller vessels to transport cargo from Archangelsk to Kirkenes where the cargo could then be reloaded in larger ocean liners. The Port of Kirkenes has technical capacity to participate in the proposed scheme.

There are two major international aviation routes in Northwest Russia: Arctic 1 (London – USA) and Arctic 2 (London – Tokyo/China). The Murmansk airport has plans to establish itself as a transfer airport. This requires the completion of an improvement program, e.g. the runway must be extended from 2500 m to 3000 m in order to accommodate Boeing 747 class aircraft.

An urgent concern in aviation is the meeting of the anti-collision device requirement set by Eurocontrol. This concerns very hard the small Russian airlines. The AVL company of Archangelsk has requested assistance in this matter from the Nordic countries as well as the extension of the deadline. Unfortunately Mr. Maximov of Archangelsk Regional Administration was not present to explain the situation.

The road from Nickel to Prirechnyi and to the Lotta road has been upgraded with Norwegian financial assistance. There is still a problem with GSM coverage along the road. A feasibility study has been carried out with the assistance of Norway for relocating the Borisogleb border station at the Norway-Russian border.

The Salla road to the Finnish border is being rebuilt. A Tacis application of 6.5 million euros has been prepared for the section Salla - Alakurtti.

In the Karelian Republic the road Louhi-Suoperä is being repaired. The works are connected with the planned Suoperä border station construction at the Finnish-Russian border. Attention is also paid to the road improvements in the corridor Oulu-Archangelsk-Syktvykar.

The Nenets Region has made some progress in the projects: Naryan-Mar airport, Naryan-Mar – Usinsk road, and Varandai oil terminal.

Lastly, according to Mr Parfenov, there are three pipeline projects in the region that are in various stages of development. The first is the Komi pipeline, the second the Baltic pipeline network and the third Varandaya Bay pipeline.

Russian railways: According to Mr Sitkov Russia pays attention to the BEATA cooperation. The area is important for Russian foreign trade, which mostly relies on railway transport and uses border crossings and harbours of the BEATA area. There are about 5000 km of railways in the region, of which 30% have double track, 60% are electrified and 16% have automatic

blocking. Major railway projects are located on the St. Petersburg – Murmansk line and in section Ledmozero – Kotchkoma. The new railway Ledmozero – Kotchkoma will be opened to commercial traffic by the end of 2002. The line's electrification will be completed also in 2002. The capacity of the railway is six million tons per year.

Sweden: Mr Brolin mentioned that the main transport project in the Barents area within Sweden is the construction of the new coastal railway. Construction of the first section Nyland – Örnsköldsvik will start in 2003.

European Commission: Ms Weichbrodt introduced the new *White Paper on Common Transport Policies* which was just released by the DG TREN.

§6 Organisational changes in the Barents Council and Barents Regional Council

In June 2001, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) made a decision that the Council's chairmanship will be extended to two years from the current one year. While the BEATA Steering Committee is not strictly bound by the BEAC decisions, the Committee's Rules of Procedure specify that the Steering Committee is to be chaired by the delegation representing the country chairing the BEAC.

All the members were asked to express their view on the eventual extension of the period of the BEATA chairmanship to two years by Friday, October 19. Based on the received opinions the Swedish chair will prepare a proposal in December 2001 as to how the BEATA chairmanship should be organised in the future.

Mr. Ekblom reported that also the Barents Regional Council (BEAR) had made the same change in the duration of chairmanship. In addition, the BEAR has rearranged chairmen of its working groups including the communications working group. The BEAR proposes that Russia, namely the Archangelsk Oblast, should take the responsibility of the communications questions. However, the BEAR had not approached Archangelsk directly in this matter. After confirmation of the decision, the Archangelsk Oblast will still consider the proposal and give its final approval, as the arrangement involves also financial commitment from its part.

§7 Norwegian transport infrastructure in the coming ten-year period

Mr Rosanoff explained the Norwegian Parliament's decision on transport infrastructure taken in February 2001. The National Transport Plan 2002 – 2011 has among its priorities: transport safety, transport corridors, rail capacity and intermodal terminals. Transport corridors in the Plan correspond to those of the BETA backbone network, although the Plan has a few more additional links to the borders. The Plan proposes the transport budget to be raised 15% from the 1998-2001 period. More information about the Transport Plan can be obtained from the Ministry's home page www.dep.no/sd/, but mostly in the Norwegian language.

§8 Information on Arctic Council

Mr Mattsson informed the participants about the transport experts' meeting of the Arctic Council, which was to follow the BEATA Steering Committee on the same day. Most participants also were to take part in the expert meeting.

§ 9 Closing of the meeting

The next work meeting will be held in Sweden in February, 2002, probably during week no. 6 (February 4-8).

The Chair will seek a possibility to arrange the meeting jointly with the BEAC Working Group on Economic Co-operation. This may change the exact date for the next meeting.

The Chairman thanked all the participants for their presence and closed the meeting.

Martti Miettinen

Tomas Brolin

APPENDICES:

1. Agenda
2. Protocol no. 4