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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
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Subject:	Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Greening Freight Transport **[doc 11856/23 - COM(2023) 440]** Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accounting of greenhouse gas emissions of transport services **[doc 11821/23 - COM(2023) 441]** Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area, amending Directive 2012/34/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 **[doc 11718/23 - COM(2023) 443]** Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 96/53/EC laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the Community the maximum authorised dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorised weights in international traffic **[doc 11722/23 - COM(2023) 445]** Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/106/EEC as regards a support framework for intermodal transport of goods and Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 of the European Parliament and the Council as regards calculation of external costs savings and generation of aggregated data **[doc 15200/23 - COM(2023) 702]** – Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Greening Freight Transport

Delegations will find attached a copy of the above-mentioned opinion.

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European Committee of the Regions

COTER-VII/033

159th plenary session, 31 January – 1 February 2024

OPINION

Greening Freight Transport

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

- Highlights that we have to implement measures to make freight transport more efficient and more sustainable by improving the management of rail infrastructure and short sea shipping, offering stronger incentives for low-emission lorries for last-mile and short-distance intermodal transportation;
- Emphasises the importance of strategic investments to meet the growing demand for rail capacity across the EU and to facilitate effective modal shift and the establishment of efficient, resilient transportation networks;
- Considers that we have to put in place a European authority/regulator for rail transport in order to ensure that we have cooperation between national infrastructure managers, to improve efficient rail transport in Europe between the Member States and fair competition, especially in freight transport across several Member States;
- Recommends a holistic approach to education within the transport sector, encompassing digital literacy, sustainability, innovation, and continuous learning;
- Calls on the EU institutions to pay special attention to regions with geographical and demographic disadvantages, such as island regions, because of the limitations that this entails on infrastructure in these regions and on their ability to adapt their transport and goods-distribution systems;
- Underlines that the expanding size and weight of lorries may create substantial challenges and costs for regions and cities, necessitating significant adjustments to their road infrastructure to accommodate the larger vehicles and mitigating the heightened risk of accidents.

Rapporteur

José Ribau Esteves (PT/EPP), Mayor of Aveiro, Portugal

Reference documents

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Greening Freight Transport – COM(2023) 440

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accounting of greenhouse gas emissions of transport services – COM(2023) 441

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area, amending Directive 2012/34/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 – (COM(2023) 443/2)

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 96/53/EC laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the Community the maximum authorised dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorised weights in international traffic – COM(2023) 445

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/106/EEC as regards a support framework for intermodal transport of goods and Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 of the European Parliament and the Council as regards calculation of external costs savings and generation of aggregated data – COM(2023) 702

Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Greening Freight Transport

I. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS

Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the use of railway infrastructure capacity in the single European railway area, amending Directive 2012/34/EU and repealing Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 – (COM(2023)443

Amendment 1
Recital 2

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR amendment*
The Communication on Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy15 sets out milestones to show the Union transport system's path towards achieving the objectives of a sustainable, smart and resilient mobility. It envisages that rail freight traffic should increase by 50% by 2030 and double by 2050; traffic on high-speed rail should double by 2030 and triple by 2050 and scheduled collective travel under 500 km should be carbon-neutral by 2030 within the Union. To achieve these goals, rail transport must become more attractive in terms of affordability, reliability, and services better adapted to the needs of travellers and freight shippers.	The Communication on Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy15 sets out milestones to show the Union transport system's path towards achieving the objectives of a sustainable, smart and resilient mobility. It envisages that rail freight traffic should increase by 50% by 2030 and double by 2050; traffic on high-speed rail should double by 2030 and triple by 2050 and scheduled collective travel under 500 km should be carbon-neutral by 2030 within the Union. To achieve these goals, rail transport must become more attractive in terms of affordability, reliability ***and accessibility***, and services ***must be*** better adapted to the needs of travellers and freight shippers.

Amendment 2
New Recital after Recital 2

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR Amendment*
	In order to meet the sustainability and climate goals, unfair competition between various modes of transport must be avoided and a level playing field established. The framework conditions for such fair competition must be set at European level, ending unfair advantages for fossil-fuel powered modes of transport, thus incentivising choices for sustainable modes of transport for both passenger and freight transport.

Reason
In the past, the CoR has underlined that a transition to sustainable transport is only possible through establishing a level playing field between the modes of transport.

Amendment 3

New Recital after Recital 2

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR amendment*
	EU's decarbonisation and modal shift targets will not be able to be addressed with this rail capacity regulation alone. Both Member States and the Commission should continue to work on numerous other elements that can help to further increase both transport and train capacity, such as the bundling of train paths, speed harmonisation, integrated regular timetables, efficient passenger changeover, the use of longer trains, the use of reciprocal commercial conditions for capacity-friendly behaviour (both infrastructure managers and applicants), the roll-out of harmonised ERTMS across Europe as well as automated trains operation (ATO).

Reason
In order to achieve the EU's goal of increasing rail freight traffic by 50% in 2030 and doubling it by 2050 and to achieve the necessary climate targets, the Member States and the European Commission will have to implement numerous other elements that can help to further increase both rail infrastructure and rail transport capacity.

Amendment 4

New Recital after Recital 2

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR amendment*
	Tackling the multi-modal competitive aspect between different transport modes is important to facilitate a substantial modal shift and reach the targets set in the Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy. In order to guarantee a fair level playing field between the transport modes, framework conditions need to be levelled out. This would incentivise people and companies to make transport choices in line with the Union's sustainable transport vision. With an increased demand for rail capacity by both passenger and freight services, investments will also be needed to implement the capacity enhancing measures described above.

Reason
Multi-modal competitive aspects between transport modes have to be addressed in order to guarantee a fair level playing field between modes. With an increased demand for rail capacity, investments will

be needed to enhance capacity.

Amendment 5

Recital 8

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR Amendment*
An increasing portion of the Union rail network is either congested or close to congested and cannot accommodate the needs for rail infrastructure capacity of all applicants and support further growth in the volume of rail transport. Infrastructure development and digitalisation, in compliance with the technical specification for interoperability developed under Directive (EU) 2016/797 of the European Parliament and of the Council, in particular the European Rail Traffic Management System ("ERTMS"), is expected to result in an increase of available capacity in the medium to long term. Nevertheless, infrastructure managers will be required to assign priorities for the use of congested sections. Without prejudice to general principles on priority set out by Member States in the framework for the allocation of infrastructure capacity, infrastructure managers should take decisions on priorities using transparent and harmonised methodologies which clarify how social, economic and environmental factors have been taken into account and affect their decision.	An increasing portion of the Union rail network is either congested or close to congested and cannot accommodate the needs for rail infrastructure capacity of all applicants and support further growth in the volume of rail transport. Infrastructure development and digitalisation, in compliance with the technical specification for interoperability developed under Directive (EU) 2016/797 of the European Parliament and of the Council, in particular the European Rail Traffic Management System ("ERTMS"), is expected to result in an increase of available capacity in the medium to long term. Nevertheless, infrastructure managers will be required to assign priorities for the use of congested sections. Without prejudice to general principles on priority set out by Member States in the framework for the allocation of infrastructure capacity, infrastructure managers should take decisions on priorities using transparent and harmonised methodologies which clarify how social ***(including social cohesion and accessibility of all regions)***, economic and environmental factors have been taken into account and affect their decision.

Amendment 6

Recital 11

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR amendment*
When allocating capacity, infrastructure managers should adhere to the strategic plans for the supply of capacity and at the same time ensure that capacity is allocated in accordance with market demand in a fair and non-discriminatory way. For that purpose, some capacity requests may be refused and the plan for the supply of capacity must be regularly updated to reflect the actual demand.	When allocating capacity, infrastructure managers should adhere to the strategic plans for the supply of capacity and at the same time ensure that capacity is allocated in accordance with market demand in a fair and non-discriminatory way. For that purpose, some capacity requests may be ***served with alternative capacity or in the last resort*** refused and the plan for the supply of capacity must be regularly updated to reflect the actual demand.

Reason
Infrastructure managers should ensure utmost efforts to provide alternative capacity outside of the

capacity plan. This allows for flexibility and the possibility to develop paths that reflect end user needs.

Amendment 7

Recital 17

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR Amendment*
The operation of railway infrastructure not only requires close cooperation between infrastructure managers, but also a strong interaction with railway undertakings and other stakeholders directly involved in rail and multimodal transport and logistic operations. Therefore, it is necessary to provide for structured coordination between infrastructure managers and other stakeholders.	The operation of railway infrastructure not only requires close cooperation between infrastructure managers, but also a strong interaction with railway undertakings and other stakeholders ***(including local and regional authorities)*** directly involved in rail and multimodal transport and logistic operations. Therefore, it is necessary to provide for structured coordination between infrastructure managers and other stakeholders.

Amendment 8

Recital 19

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR Amendment*
	One of the main objectives of the Trans-European Transport Network is to ensure the connectivity of all the EU's regions and territories. Territorial and social cohesion must remain the main objectives of connecting citizens and regions through transport infrastructure. Cohesion must also be the main objective in the provision of railway transport services.

Amendment 9

Article 2(3)

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR Amendment*
In fulfilling their responsibilities in accordance with paragraph 1 and 2, infrastructure managers shall: (a) make optimum effective use of the available infrastructure capacity as required in Article 26 of Directive 2012/34/EU; (b) maximize the value to society of rail transport services enabled by rail infrastructure in social, economic and environmental terms;	In fulfilling their responsibilities in accordance with paragraph 1 and 2, infrastructure managers shall: (a) make optimum effective use of the available infrastructure capacity as required in Article 26 of Directive 2012/34/EU ***with the aim of increasing the share of rail transport, both for passengers and freight, in line with the Union's climate targets;*** (b) maximize the value to society of rail transport services enabled by rail

(c) ensure non-discriminatory management of and transparent access to infrastructure capacity, including during works, with a view to supporting fair competition; (d) enable seamless rail traffic across more than one network; (e) ensure transparency about the state and availability of rail infrastructure capacity; (f) review and improve the performance of rail infrastructure and transport services in close cooperation with rail sector operators; (g) contribute to the implementation and development of the single European railway area.	infrastructure in social, economic and environmental terms***, promoting in particular areas under their responsibility that suffer from low connectivity***; (c) ensure non-discriminatory management of and transparent access to infrastructure capacity, including during works, with a view to supporting fair competition; (d) enable seamless ***and punctual*** rail traffic across more than one network ***and connecting all territories of the EU***, ***by striving to eliminate bottlenecks and operational obstacles***; (e) ensure transparency about the state and availability of rail infrastructure capacity; (f) review and improve the performance of rail infrastructure and transport services in close cooperation with rail sector operators***, including improving the environment in terms of electrifying lines;*** (g) contribute to the implementation and development of the single European railway area ***thereby ensuring territorial and social cohesion, while ensuring that it is fully rolled out in all areas under their responsibility, under competitive conditions, and not just in border regions***..

Amendment 10

Article 8(4)(a)

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR amendment*
	The Commission shall adopt a delegated act in accordance with Article 71 setting out the criteria and the standardised methodologies for the calculation and application of the socio-economic and environmental criteria, as well as determining the standardised and representative data sources. The Commission shall include European Rail International Capacity Allocation body (ERICA) in its work.

Reason
A standardised methodology and criteria in the union in particular to allow for cross-border solutions

is crucial. This does not undermine the possibility of Member States to locally adapt the weighing of criteria if the local circumstances so require for political or economic reasons.

Amendment 11

Article 11(3)

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR amendment*
Subject to the principle of management independence laid down in Article 4 of Directive 2012/34/EU, Member States may provide the infrastructure manager with strategic guidance based on the indicative rail infrastructure development strategies referred to in Article 8(1) of Directive 2012/34/EU. That guidance may cover/contain in particular: (a) general objectives of national rail policy relevant for strategic capacity planning within the scope of this Regulation; (b) an outlook on the development of rail infrastructure, taking into account relevant plans and strategies at national or regional level and the work plans of the European Transport corridors referred to in Article 53 of the [new TEN-T Regulation]; (c) general requirements and guidelines as regards the use of rail infrastructure capacity, which the infrastructure manager shall take into account in strategic capacity planning, in particular in relation to highly utilised and congested infrastructure referred to in Article 21; (d) an outlook on the planned development of rail services operated under public service obligations, taking into account***, where necessary,*** the views of the regional or local authorities involved. Member States shall coordinate to ensure consistency between the respective strategic guidance they provide in accordance with this paragraph with a view to supporting the development of international passenger and freight rail services.	Subject to the principle of management independence laid down in Article 4 of Directive 2012/34/EU, Member States may provide the infrastructure manager with strategic guidance based on the indicative rail infrastructure development strategies referred to in Article 8(1) of Directive 2012/34/EU. That guidance may cover/contain in particular: (a) general objectives of national rail policy relevant for strategic capacity planning within the scope of this Regulation; (b) an outlook on the development of rail infrastructure, taking into account relevant plans and strategies at national or regional level and the work plans of the European Transport corridors referred to in Article 53 of the [new TEN-T Regulation]; (c) general requirements and guidelines as regards the use of rail infrastructure capacity, which the infrastructure manager shall take into account in strategic capacity planning, in particular in relation to highly utilised and congested infrastructure referred to in Article 21; (d) an outlook on the planned development of rail services operated under public service obligations, taking into account the views of the regional or local authorities involved. Member States shall coordinate to ensure consistency between the respective strategic guidance they provide in accordance with this paragraph with a view to supporting the development of international passenger and freight rail services.

Reason
As local and regional authorities operate transport services under the public service "obligation to carry", their views should be taken into account as a matter of course, not just "where necessary".

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 96/53/EC laying down for certain road vehicles circulating within the Community the maximum

authorised dimensions in national and international traffic and the maximum authorised weights in international traffic – COM(2023) 445

Amendment 12

Recital 9

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR Amendment*
European Modular Systems (EMS) have been used and trialled at length and have proven to be an interesting solution to improve the economic and energy efficiency of transport operations, while ensuring road safety and protection of infrastructure, thanks to their confinement to adequate parts of the road networks. Given national specificities, different economic interests, transportation needs and diverse transport infrastructure capacities in Member States, they are best placed to assess and authorise the circulation of EMS on their territories. At the same time, to enlarge the positive socio-economic and environmental impacts of the use of EMS, it is crucial to remove unnecessary barriers to their use in cross-border operations between neighbouring Member States that allow such vehicle combinations on their territories, without limitation in the number of borders crossed as long as they comply with the maximum authorised weights and dimensions for EMS established by Member States within their respective territories. This is to ensure that EMS used in cross-border operations comply with the common lowest weight and dimension limit for EMS applicable in those Member States. In the interests of safety of operations, transparency and legal clarity, common conditions should be established for the circulation of EMS in national and international traffic, including providing clear information on the weights and dimensions limits for EMS and on parts of the road network compatible with specifications of such vehicles, and monitoring the impacts of the use of EMS on road safety, on the road infrastructure, on modal cooperation, as well as the environmental impacts of European Modular Systems on the transport system, including the impacts on modal share.	European Modular Systems (EMS) have been used and trialled at length and have proven to be an interesting solution to improve the economic and energy efficiency of transport operations, while ensuring road safety and protection of infrastructure, thanks to their confinement to adequate parts of the road networks. Given national ***and regional*** specificities, different economic interests, transportation needs and diverse transport infrastructure capacities in Member States, they are best placed to assess and authorise the circulation of EMS on their territories. ***This assessment must be done in close cooperation with the regional authorities, especially where they exercise competencies in terms of road infrastructure management and maintenance. The impact on local and regional road infrastructure and road safety must be taken into account. Especially in those regions where, due to their topography, the transport infrastructure contains many costly and already highly congested structures, EMS should not be used.*** At the same time, to enlarge the positive socio-economic and environmental impacts of the use of EMS, it is crucial to remove unnecessary barriers to their use in cross-border operations between neighbouring Member States that allow such vehicle combinations on their territories, without limitation in the number of borders crossed as long as they comply with the maximum authorised weights and dimensions for EMS established by Member States within their respective territories. This is to ensure that EMS used in cross-border operations comply with the common lowest weight and dimension limit for EMS applicable in those Member States. In the interests of safety of operations, transparency and legal clarity, common conditions should be established for the circulation of EMS in national and international traffic, including providing clear information on the weights and dimensions limits

	for EMS and on parts of the road network compatible with specifications of such vehicles, and monitoring the impacts of the use of EMS on road safety, on the road infrastructure, on modal cooperation, as well as the environmental impacts of European Modular Systems on the transport system, including the impacts on modal share.

Reason
EMS and the associated measures are quite unsuitable for regions whose transport infrastructure, due to their topography, contains many structures that are costly and already highly congested; their deployment should be firmly rejected.

Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 92/106/EEC as regards a support framework for intermodal transport of goods and Regulation (EU) 2020/1056 of the European Parliament and the Council as regards calculation of external costs savings and generation of aggregated data – COM(2023)702

Amendment 13

Recital 6

Text proposed by the European Commission	***CoR amendment***
For developing intermodal transport, the availability of transhipment terminals is essential. However, support measures for increasing terminal capacity should not be covered by this Directive, as they are included in [add a reference to the revised TEN-T Regulation, currently being negotiated by the co-legislators].	For developing intermodal transport, the availability of transhipment terminals is essential. However, support measures for increasing terminal capacity should not be covered by this Directive, as they are included in [add a reference to the revised TEN-T Regulation, currently being negotiated by the co-legislators]. ***However, it is necessary to increase funding for multimodal terminals in the successor programme of the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) after 2027.***

Reason
In order to ensure a modal shift from road to more sustainable and less harmful modes of transport, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity of multimodal terminals, or even create them. Few projects have been supported in recent years.

Amendment 14

Recital 7

Text proposed by the European Commission	***CoR Amendment***
Eligibility for the benefits from Directive 92/106/EEC is based on distance limits of different parts of operation. That approach of defining "combined transport operations" does not sufficiently support the objective of reducing external costs as it is not targeted enough.	Eligibility for the benefits from Directive 92/106/EEC is based on distance limits of different parts of operation. That approach of defining "combined transport operations" does not sufficiently support the objective of reducing external costs as it is not targeted enough.

Furthermore, it does not reflect objectively the conditions and circumstances in different regions and disregards the characteristics of the environmental performance of the actual operation, including for instance the type of vehicle and fuel used. Therefore, the support provided should apply only to intermodal transport operations that ensure a sufficient level of external costs savings and allow an optimised use of the transport network. To capture such operations, a threshold of savings from external costs, including greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions, air pollution, injuries and fatalities, noise and congestion, of an intermodal transport operation compared to the commercially viable alternative unimodal road operation should be set. The threshold should allow all modal combinations to benefit, while ensuring that rail, inland waterways and short sea shipping legs would constitute a major part of an intermodal operation. Moreover, external costs of all integral parts of the intermodal transport operation need to be taken into account when calculating the external costs savings to allow for fair comparison with other transport options.	Furthermore, it does not reflect objectively the conditions and circumstances in different regions***, especially peripheral and sparsely populated regions,*** and disregards the characteristics of the environmental performance of the actual operation, including for instance the type of vehicle and fuel used. Therefore, the support provided should apply only to intermodal transport operations that ensure a sufficient level of external costs savings and allow an optimised use of the transport network. To capture such operations, a threshold of savings from external costs, including greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions, air pollution, injuries and fatalities, noise and congestion, of an intermodal transport operation compared to the commercially viable alternative unimodal road operation should be set. The threshold should allow all modal combinations to benefit, while ensuring that rail, inland waterways and short sea shipping legs would constitute a major part of an intermodal operation. Moreover, external costs of all integral parts of the intermodal transport operation need to be taken into account when calculating the external costs savings to allow for fair comparison with other transport options.

Amendment 15

Recital 17

Text proposed by the European Commission	*CoR Amendment*
Some Member States have national policies to promote intermodal rail, inland waterway or short sea shipping transport, aiming to reduce the cost difference between road transport and alternative transport options. However, those modal policies are not always aligned between the modes or between the neighbouring Member States. Furthermore, some Member States have no support measures in place. The fragmentation caused by uncoordinated approach reduces effectiveness of the existing support and results in an uneven playing field between the modes and Member States. Therefore, all Member States should establish and implement national policy frameworks to support the uptake of intermodal transport, considering the potential of each modal combination as well as the interactions of all	Some Member States have national policies to promote intermodal rail, inland waterway or short sea shipping transport, aiming to reduce the cost difference between road transport and alternative transport options. However, those modal policies are not always aligned between the modes or between the neighbouring Member States. Furthermore, some Member States have no support measures in place. The fragmentation caused by uncoordinated approach reduces effectiveness of the existing support and results in an uneven playing field between the modes and Member States. Therefore, all Member States should establish and implement national policy frameworks to support the uptake of intermodal transport, considering the potential of each modal combination as well as the interactions of all

modes comprehensively; Member States should regularly reassess the effectiveness and relevance of the national measures.	modes comprehensively ***and across borders so that border regions are not penalised by their peripheral location. Cross-border intermodal transport should also not be hampered by the non-alignment of national policy frameworks***; Member States should regularly reassess the effectiveness and relevance of the national measures.

Amendment 16

Recital 21

Text proposed by the European Commission	***CoR amendment***
Where there are no connections other than road between certain terminals or in their vicinity, "start-up" support to open new intermodal connections could be necessary as demand for services at start-up phase may not be sufficient to ensure profitability of such services.	Where there are no connections other than road between certain terminals or in their vicinity, "start-up" support to open new intermodal connections could be necessary as demand for services at start-up phase may not be sufficient to ensure profitability of such services. ***Thus, the role of regional and local authorities should be emphasised in relation to the renovation of railway lines, multimodal terminals and support for the creation of connected terminals.***

Reason
It is necessary to highlight the activity of regions that support combined transport through investments in multimodal infrastructure.

Amendment 17

Recital 22

Text proposed by the European Commission	***CoR amendment***
Member States can introduce State aid measures to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal and the Climate Law, provided those measures are compatible with the internal market.	Member States can introduce State aid measures to achieve the goals of the European Green Deal and the Climate Law, provided those measures are compatible with the internal market. ***In particular, the State aid regime for railway companies will have to be developed in line with the objectives set out in this Directive.***

Reason
In the context of the future revision of the State aid regime for railway companies, it is necessary that it take into account the objectives set out in the Combined Transport Directive.

Amendment 18

Recital 26

Text proposed by the European Commission	***CoR amendment***

Dedicated regulatory provisions at Union level that address specific situations in intermodal transport can support the uptake and efficiency of intermodal transport. To ensure efficient terminal and non-road capacity use, it is important that ***the operation of terminals and non-road transport is not hindered by temporal*** driving limitations on road legs.	Dedicated regulatory provisions at Union level that address specific situations in intermodal transport can support the uptake and efficiency of intermodal transport. To ensure efficient terminal and non-road capacity use, it is important that ***exemptions from temporal*** driving limitations ***be limited to*** road legs ***leading to/from the nearest suitable terminal***.

Reason
It is in no way appropriate to rule out driving restrictions on road legs entirely. Rather, such exemptions from restrictions should be limited to the nearest suitable terminal.

Amendment 19

Annex Part I

Text proposed by the European Commission	***CoR amendment***
(e) planning and lease conditions for the land suitable for intermodal transhipment terminal development.	(e) planning and lease conditions for the land suitable for intermodal transhipment terminal development. ***(f) the competitiveness gap between combined transport and road transport, with measures to support transhipment costs.***

Reason
These measures are a means of supporting combined transport and promoting it at all stages.

II. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1. **Highlights that we have to implement measures to make freight transport more efficient and more sustainable by improving the management of rail infrastructure and short sea shipping, offering stronger incentives for low-emission lorries for last-mile and short-distance intermodal transportation and providing better information on freight transport greenhouse gas emissions, to achieve the objective of increased efficiency within the sector. This will help to contribute to the target of cutting transport emissions by 90% by 2050, as set out in the European Green Deal, while allowing the EU single market and economy to continue growing and promoting territorial cohesion;**

2. **Supports that, for European cities and regions, we have to make sure that there are better connections between the places where people live, where companies have their production and where the logistical platforms are, in order to make good transport services available throughout Europe**

3. **Emphasises the importance of strategic investments to meet the growing demand for rail capacity across the EU and to facilitate effective modal shift and the establishment of efficient, resilient transportation networks; Highlights that multi-modal competitive aspects between**

transport modes have to be addressed in order to guarantee a fair level playing field between modes;

4. **Recalls that increasing the offer of rail transportation is crucial to ensuring the competitiveness of regions and cities, to making a positive contribution to decarbonisation and environmental performance and to increasing the territorial cohesion of the EU and preventing transport exclusion. However, we must improve some measures to resolve problems, especially the many challenges that the rail transport sector faces in cross-border regions;**

5. **Emphasises that enhancing cross-border rail connectivity is crucial for fostering regional integration, economic development, and sustainable transportation alternatives and therefore deserves prioritised attention in comprehensive infrastructure planning and policy initiatives;**

6. **Considers that we have to put in place a European authority/regulator for rail transport in order to ensure that we have cooperation between national infrastructure managers, to improve efficient rail transport in Europe between the Member States and fair competition, especially in freight transport across several Member States;**

7. **Is convinced of the need to improve rail interoperability throughout Europe (and not only in the centre of Europe), namely through the implementation of a UIC rail gauge that provides secure, quick and competitive rail transport operations between all regions of Europe;**

8. **Emphasises that incentives are also needed for encouraging changes toward sustainable transport options, based on the interests of the stakeholders, users of freight transport services and the financial capacity to provide incentives. This means that options that support the sustainability of the transport system in Europe must be financially rewarding, while ensuring a level playing field between the various modes of transport and the financial sustainability of the incentives;**

9. **Recommends a holistic approach to education within the transport sector, encompassing digital literacy, sustainability, innovation, and continuous learning. This initiative aims to integrate tailored digital literacy programs for transportation workers, sustainability-focused educational modules, the establishment of innovation hubs in regional educational institutions, and the advocacy for continuous learning opportunities within the transport industry. By fostering a culture of adaptability, innovation, and environmentally conscious practices, this consolidated amendment ensures that the transport workforce is equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to navigate evolving challenges and contribute to the sustainable development goals of the European Union;**

10. **Supports that promoting an efficient railway system at European level is absolutely necessary to ensure the sustainability of the transport systems in Europe, which requires a large transfer of passenger and freight traffic to the railway system due to environmental and energetic constraints, as well as to reduce strategic dependencies of non-reliable suppliers of energy (fossil fuels);**

11. **Is also convinced that Europe has to provide rail capacity for future needs, mainly in the Core Network, where traffic forecasts that support infrastructure development should consider the goals of EU policies for the modal transfer from road to rail and maritime modes, and not just the increase of rail freight demand due to global economic growth;**

12. Considers that in order to make freight transport more sustainable and competitive, we have to improve the competitiveness of intermodal freight. The package that we need is the best combination between the current Combined Transport Directive and the Greening Freight Transport package, and helping the freight sector do its part in the EU to achieve its Green Deal goals;

13. Defends the support framework for intermodal transport, including appropriate regulatory and economic measures, because it is a logical step in the right direction to achieve a larger modal quota of the more sustainable modes – rail, maritime and inland waterways – in freight transport in Europe, in order to reduce GHG emissions and other negative externalities, towards a more sustainable transport system. Believes however that not only should it provide concrete information on the calculation, proof and control of the external cost savings, it could also contain more detailed and specific measures with this objective in mind, or propose improvements in other EU policies in order to get more financial support for rail and multimodal platforms, at least until a considerable modal shift in freight transport is achieved. The package should under no circumstances facilitate the road legs of intermodal freight transport, based on savings in external costs – for this purpose, as before, reference should be made to the nearest terminals; instead, fiscal and other incentives for the operation of rail freight transport and intermodal platforms, such as support measures for the costs of transhipment between road transport means that produce fewer negative externalities, should be incorporated into the package;

14. Considers that during intermodal transport operations, one loading unit, e.g., a container, should be moved via a combination of lorry, train, ship or plane. Combined transport is a sort of intermodal transport combining the flexibility of road transport, which would still be used for the first/last leg of a journey to ensure that any European city and region can be reached, with the environmental performance of rail, inland waterways or short sea shipping for the main leg of the journey

15. Calls on the EU institutions to pay special attention to regions with geographical and demographic disadvantages, such as island regions, because of the limitations that this entails on infrastructure in these regions and on their ability to adapt their transport and goods-distribution systems;

16. Argues that Europe needs to develop standards, supportive regulations and effective fiscal instruments to determine the carbon footprint and other external costs of transporting goods throughout their entire intermodal journey. It also aims, in the long term, for this information to reach the user;

17. Recognises that another relevant issue is calling for flexibility of rail and intermodal platforms in the allocation of capacity at the last minute, in order for capacity requests from rail operators to respond to quick changes in market demand, providing a service more able to compete with the flexibility of road-only freight transport. For this purpose, rail and multimodal platform infrastructures should be provided with the necessary reserve capacities;

18. Defends that Europe needs more competitive rail alternatives for freight transport across the longest distances, and it does not make sense to promote road freight transport for medium and long distances, for some transport routes, even with low emission HDVs, as low emission vehicles

create at least the same congestion and safety problems as other vehicles. A reverse modal shift is to be avoided;

19. Recalls that allowing longer HDVs to compensate for the size and weight of zero-emission technologies is correct, but emphasises the need to maintain road safety by allowing Member States, in cooperation with the local and regional authorities, to regulate the access of HDVs to specific roads, without restricting the free movement of goods and services or unduly impeding the smooth functioning of the internal market;

20. Underlines that the expanding size and weight of lorries may create substantial challenges and costs for regions and cities, necessitating significant adjustments to their road infrastructure to accommodate the larger vehicles and mitigating the heightened risk of accidents;

21. Supports that Europe needs a new strategy with modern planning for the financing programme CEF/Connecting Europe Facility, improving investments throughout Europe that can contribute to the better performance and combination between the different transport modes, in an economic, environmental and socially sustainable way, for which the abovementioned concerns regarding the interoperability and capacity of rail infrastructure should be accounted for. More CEF funding should be allocated to multimodal terminals.

Brussels, 1 February 2024

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions

Vasco Alves Cordeiro

The Secretary-General
of the European Committee of the Regions

Petr Blížkovský

III. PROCEDURE

Title	Greening Freight Transport
References	COM(2023) 441, COM(2023) 443, COM(2023) 445, COM(2023) 702
Legal basis	Article 307 TFEU
Procedural basis	Rule 43 of the Rules of Procedure
Date of Council/EP referral/Date of Commission letter	COM(2023) 441: EC on 12.7.2023 / EP on 21.9.2023 / Council on 27.09.2023 COM(2023) 443: EC on 12.7.2023 / EP on 5.10.2023 / Council on 2.10.2023 COM(2023) 445: EC on 12.7.2023 / EP on 25.10.2023 / Council on 27.09.2023 COM(2023) 702: EC on 7.11.2023 / EP not received / Council: not received
Date of Bureau/President's decision	9 November 2023
Commission responsible	Territorial Cohesion Policy and EU Budget (COTER)
Rapporteur	José Ribau Esteves (PT/EPP) Mayor of Aveiro, Portugal
Discussed in commission	17 November 2023
Date adopted by commission	N/A
Result of the vote in commission (majority, unanimity)	N/A
Date adopted in plenary	1 February 2024
Previous Committee opinions	• Opinion CDR 497/2021 *Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy* • Opinion CDR 4913/2021 *Towards zero emission road transport: Deploying alternative fuels infrastructure and strengthening CO2 emission performance standards* • Opinion CDR 1228/2022 *Guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network (TEN-T)* • Opinion CDR 1939/2019 *The potential of the rail sector in delivering EU policy priorities* • Opinion CDR 2633/2020 *European Year of Rail 2021*
Subsidiarity reference	N/A