

National report Finland – June 2009

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 Organisation Suomen Rautatiematkustajat ry.
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(Eventually) Positive points for public transport in our country:

I use the term "eventually" as many developments are pending conclusions.

1. **Construction of an orbital rail line linking Helsinki-Vantaa airport with the national rail network.** The 18-kilometre electrified double track Ring Line project is at its early stages and should be completed in 2.014. Only commuter trains will run, although easy connections can be made in Tikkurila with long distance trains.
2. **The government has for the first time decided to subsidize public transport in some big cities** (in our scale). This should be seen as an achievement on a principal level while the allocated sum is not substantial.
3. **Passenger operators on the national rail network.** Two work groups have been deliberating on the subject. The first one reflected only on commuter traffic in Helsinki region. But as there were requests of a more general view, another group was set up. The first one has already finished its work and handed over its findings to the second group. The findings so far reported suggest to the possibility of seeing more than one operator on rails.
4. **The bill for a new law on public transport is to be drafted soon** and should be in force by December 3rd. So far it is not known to what extent the bill has taken into consideration remarks received (see Negative points paragraph 1).

Negative points for public transport in our country:

1. **The bills drafted by the Ministry for Transport and Communications.** Widespread criticism has been presented towards the Ministry's work. Among the critics are The Parliamentary Committee for Transport and Communications, The National Audit Office of Finland, Parliamentary Ombudsman's Office and law professors. "The government bill has been drafted almost totally on entrepreneurs' terms. It nearly completely ignores the users', that is ordinary people's rights" says one expert. The Ministry has also proposed to alter legislation that has already been annulled.
2. **The status of organized rail passengers in the Ministry.** It seems that there are some attitude problems towards us. It must be admitted that SRM is young and we still have very few members, but there is something more to it. Suomen Liikenneliitto ry. (Finnish Traffic League SuLi, Association for citizen's pedal, pedestrian and mass traffic organizations) nominated me for a member in work group considering passenger rail liberalisation. The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry thanked for the tip and that was all. This can be considered as repercussions on paragraph 1.
3. **The reluctance of the Ministry to reconsider the viability of some subsidized night train services now discontinued.** SRM has unearthed a newspaper article in which a VR Manager admits the old passenger statistics have gone missing. On the other hand we have discovered a more recent civil servant quotation admitting the Ministry is not aware of the passenger numbers (either). In spite of these facts, the Minister is of the opinion that there has been enough evidence to justify discontinuance of the services. We disagree.