

National report Finland – June 2010

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Positive points for public transport in our country:

1. **The new "Bus Transport Act" (see negative points two).** Although defective, it abolishes regional monopolies and subsidy agreements without tendering.
2. **The status of organized rail passengers in the Ministry of Transport.** Attitudes seem to change as the Ministry has asked our opinion on the opening up of the network to several passenger rail operators¹. On the other hand, we are still waiting for a reply to our open letter from March² and the Attorney General's Office is also making up its mind on the recording culture of letters prevailing in the Ministry. However, see also point one on the negative sector.
3. **The status of SRM in the Finnish Transport Agency.** The Agency, formed on 1 January 2010, and responsible for the maintenance and development of the transport system, has no such prejudices as the Ministry: we have been asked our view of a rail project to the airport of Helsinki-Vantaa.

Negative points for public transport in our country:

1. **Passenger operators on the national rail network.** The two work groups deliberating on the subject found several positive points on opening up the network and even suggest it with a slow timetable. However, before the later group finished its work this May, VR Limited was consented a virtual passenger traffic monopoly for ten years last December. In addition, the minister in charge of the corporate governance of state-owned companies (The National Coalition Party) has required a "labour peace" for VR and its personnel. This means that there has been no possibility to discuss the matter openly as one could presume in a democratic western state.

There are some rail sections already open for other operators, and others will follow if VR discontinues its own traffic. But as the open sections are fragmentary and VR is able to run trains with little service value for passengers, presumably hardly anything will change.

2. **The bill for a new law on public transport.** It was transformed to an Act with substantial defects. For example, the passenger rail transport is in the hands of the Ministry (Helsinki region is an exception), so regional points of view will be incomplete. Bus Transport Act would be a more accurate designation.
3. **EU Regulation 1371/2007 on rail passengers' rights.** The regulation provides compensation only in long distance traffic, so the majority of rail users, that is passengers in the Helsinki region, are excluded. Also the "travel guarantee" system planned by Helsinki Region Transport will be of a formal nature.
4. **The attitude of the Ministry to reconsider the viability of some subsidized night train services now discontinued.** The Ministry had the matter reconsidered by a working group, which concluded that the trains can't run without a subsidy and the deficit could be in the region of ten million euros in the worst case. Other excuses were also invented such as the necessity to construct new sleepers. VR economy figures were kept secret so that one can't openly estimate the numbers. This paper essentially only justifies the discontinuance without a rethink.

¹ http://www.lvm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=964900&name=DLFE-10786.pdf&title=Julkaisuja%2017-2010 (short summary in Swedish and English)

² http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/SRM_vojunakirje_GB.pdf