

National report for Finland – October 2015

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Country	Finland
Organisation	Suomen Rautatiematkustajat ry, http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/
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Positive points for public transport in our country:

1. As a result of uproar caused by the news of service cuts of both market-oriented and subsidized train services (as well as personnel cuts), VR passenger monopoly is to be revised in a short time schedule.¹ VR is also revising its ticket pricing policy to fight for passengers (on trains that are still left after service reductions).
2. Helsinki Ring Rail Line² has been opened to ordinary traffic.³ After various teething troubles⁴ (and some blame game⁵) the line now works as well as it can.
3. A batch of electric buses will soon start running in Helsinki.⁶
4. Onnibus ordered yet another 13 new double-deckers to complement the already existing fleet of 35 such buses.⁷
5. Souter bus empire has started services between Tallinn and Warsaw.⁸ They are easily available also to Finnish passengers.
6. Old bus operators are further waking up from their Sleeping Beauty's Dream. They plan timetables more carefully than before, woo passengers in places where new operators don't bother to stop and add amenities in rolling stock etc.⁹

Negative points for public transport in our country:

1. We tried to keep our complaint against VR passenger rail monopoly alive¹⁰, but the EU Commission finally buried it in July¹¹.
2. VR is cutting its market-oriented passenger rail services all over the country because of competition from buses (the cuts reach also Helsinki)¹². VR's bus branch is also cutting some services.
3. The new Cabinet's reduction of public transport subsidies hits mostly rail services and not bus transport as estimated earlier.¹³ The cuts are spread all over the network with consequences also in Helsinki region (some lines will lose passenger service altogether).¹⁴

¹ <http://www.railjournal.com/index.php/policy/finland-to-liberalise-passenger-rail-sector.html?channel=00>
<http://www.helsinki-times.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/13556-vr-could-face-competition-from-a-number-of-fronts.html>

² <http://rybakoff.name/blog/2015/07/helsinki-ring-rail-line/>

³ <http://helsinkihisweek.com/articles/ring-rail-line-open>

⁴ http://yle.fi/uutiset/hsl_ring_rail_line_delays_partly_due_to_drivers/8153145

<https://www.finavia.fi/en/news-room/news/2015/hsl-how-to-buy-a-public-transport-ticket-at-the-helsinki-airport-train-station/>

⁵ http://yle.fi/uutiset/veturinkuljettajat_eivat_suostu_keharadan_aikatauluongelmien_syntipukeiksi/8151972

⁶ <http://www.tekes.eu/en/ajankohtaista/hanke-esimerkkeja/caset/linkker-electric-bus-manufacturer-selling-a-green-public-transport-concept/>

⁷ http://www.onnibus.com/en/press-release.htm?pid=20150821_0001

⁸ <https://m.facebook.com/383892365134839/albums/432213866969355/>

⁹

http://yle.fi/uutiset/perinteiset_bussiyhtiot_haluavat_saillyttaa_tiheamman_pysakkiverkoston/8160070?ref=leiki-uup

¹⁰ http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/eu-kantelu/SRM_PSA_VASTINE_EN.pdf

¹¹ http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/eu-kantelu/Komission_kirje_20150731.pdf (English)

http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/eu-kantelu/Komission_kirje_20150810.pdf (Finnish)

¹² <http://www.helsinki-times.fi/finland/finland-news/domestic/13514-vr-forced-to-cut-prices.html>

¹³ <http://www.railjournal.com/index.php/main-line/service-cuts-in-new-finnish-pso-passenger-contract.html>

¹⁴ http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/lakkautukset_2015-2016/Liite_1_Ostojavelvoiteliikenteen_muutokset_27.3.2016_alkaen.pdf

4. In accordance with the "political culture" prevailing here, areas affected with train service cuts were not consulted at all. The Ministry's "consultations" were limited to finding out if there are bus services and what an effect they will have on the travelling time (from zero minutes to + 90 minutes¹⁵). It really seems that they will never learn as the result was discovered in Britain already in the 1960's¹⁶.
5. Although the revision of VR monopoly is a positive thing, the process itself remains an obscure one, so far. For example, it has been the intent to simply stop running the trains before an alternative operator could even have a theoretical chance to take over (this benefits bus operators and makes people also use their own cars). It is evident that the decision was made abruptly, so we shall see, whether the liberalisation work gets any better or not (I bet we won't be consulted, for example).
6. EU did not award funding for construction of the City Rail Loop as applied¹⁷, although planning money was granted. This is inconsistent as they admit "its EU added value is reduced in comparison with other projects submitted."¹⁸ There are plenty of indications here, that the project will be postponed but not buried, which would be a more consistent solution.
7. Railway safety system is not failsafe as an incident regarding the use of a mobile phone and ATP system switched off tells.¹⁹
8. Helsinki Region Transport (HRT) estimates that ticket prices should be raised 6.9 per cent in 2016 and 11.4 per cent in 2017²⁰. Problem is that Helsinki Ring Rail Line and Western Metro²¹ (when opened) will increase HRT's infrastructure bill from 65M€ to 130M€ in 2017.
9. As Helsinki Ring Rail Line opened, the bus lines were reshuffled. This means that rush hour services sometimes pass stops as they are already packed full (the travelling time has also increased considerably). Intending passengers are not happy, no surprise.²²

NOTES:

1. This time many links are in English, and you can try Google translator with the Finnish ones (or ask further details from us).
2. You can follow the evolution of Finnish rail passenger numbers by studying these²³ statistics²⁴ (fortunately numbers and percentage are pretty well mutually intelligible "languages").

¹⁵ http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/lakkautukset_2015-2016/Korvaavat_yhteydet_yhteen veto.pdf

¹⁶ <http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/CanBusreplaceTrain.pdf>

¹⁷ <http://www.lvm.fi/pressreleases/4433547/finland-applies-for-eu-support-for-the-helsinki-railway-yard-and-city-rail-loop>

¹⁸ http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/pisara/EU-komissiolta_20150708.pdf

¹⁹

http://turvallisuustutkinta.fi/material/attachments/otkes/tutkintaselostukset/fi/raideliikenneonnettomuuskientutkinta/2015/QTQrtS7/R2015-03_Hyvinkaa_18.3.2015_-_tutkintaselostus.pdf (summary in English, page II and III)

²⁰ <http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/a1305981417251>

²¹ <http://www.lansimetro.fi/en/home.html>

²² <http://www.hs.fi/kaupunki/a1442808626068>

²³ <http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/Matkustajia.pdf>

²⁴ http://www.rautatiematkustajat.fi/SRM_matkustajatilasto_2010-2014.pdf