



Berlin, 23 June 2011

Dear Ms Favero,
dear members of the ECORails team,
dear guests

It is an honour for me to welcome you here in Berlin to the ECORails final conference.

I will keep my address short, but nevertheless would I like to pass on few thoughts on the importance of improving public transport services in general and more specifically on the contribution of the ECORails project to this objective.

Public Transport services are nearly perfect in Berlin: the frequency of the service and the speed of travel is high, the ticket fares are low. And in the metropolitan area of Berlin and Brandenburg regional rail transport ridership is increasing. For this level of public transport services we are envied by a number of large cities. But nevertheless there are always things to improve and the closer we look at the public transport system in Berlin, the more potential we find – or shall I say need – to improve it even further.

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Why do we need to do that:

- First of all: Energy prices will rise as well as the amplitudes of the price. This may result in risks for public budgets because the contracts between public transport authorities and the operators – as we know them in Germany – shifts the risk to the public authorities.

As a politician responsible for public transport I have to prevent a situation that may cause a reduction of services due to raising energy prices and a limited public budget.

- Secondly: The economic efficiency of the money - which we transfer to our operators for their services – has to be improved due to the financial situation of public authorities.
- Thirdly: One of the important political arguments to spend public money on transport services is the environmental benefit. Rail services contribute significantly to the reduction greenhouse gases.

Due to ambitious European regulations on road transport, it has reduced its environmental impact within the last three decades in an unexpected way. Regional rail transport does not show a comparable improvement because of the lack of European regulations for this transport sector. There is an upcoming possibility that the rail services may lose their environmental advantage, which is one of the most important reasons for the transfer of public money to the rail operators.

- And last but not least: there are considerable noise emissions caused by rail transport. Noise emissions alongside rail tracks are often the reason for complaints of residents living nearby.

In Germany the risk of court proceedings against ambient noise caused by rail transport is increasing. Juridical decisions that urge transport administrations to act against noise caused by road traffic make us sensible for this question. For public transport authorities there are severe risks if we have to change the conditions of existing contracts with our service providers.

We have some experience with retrofitting of the existing transport fleet and the high cost induced by these improvements.

To sum up: we need an administrative and political risk management due to the growing restrictions of public budgets and because regional service contracts last 12 to 15 years in Germany.

In this context the main question for public transport authorities is: “How do we get energy efficient and “silent” rail services on the tracks?” This question summarises our reasons – as a public transport authority – to initiate the ECORailS project in June 2008.

The first answer to this question was: By including energy efficiency and the reduction of noise emission in tenders for regional transport services. In Germany no public transport authority has done this up to now. Thus we had to develop a set of realistic criteria for tenders and contracts that are juridical secure and that can be controlled during the service time of the contract.

Ladies and Gentlemen

the need to improve regional rail transport - together with our favourable experiences with projects funded within in the STEER program, were the reasons for the Senate Department for Urban Development to initiate the ECORailS project. Right from the start of the project I was sure that we would find approaches that could be adopted to improve rail services even further.

The benefit of European projects is learning by exchange - we learn of the experience of our partners, share our knowledge with others and let others benefit from the experience we made so far – both positive and not so positive. Thus being a member of the ECORailS consortium was very important for Berlin.

The five workshops with rail operators and the rail industry to test our ideas and approaches and to develop guidelines turned out to be a very positive process. The workshops provided an open but protected space – not for representation and image building – but for discussion and debate. Many thanks to all actors involved.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

- I would like to thank first of all Ms Georgia Favero from EACI for supporting the project and
 - first of all Ms Georgia Favero of the Executive Agency for Competitiveness & Innovation (EACI) for supporting the project
 - second Mr. Klaus Baur, the CEO of Bombardier Transportation, who supported the boat trip of the ECORailS – working group last evening
 - and last but not least the whole ECORailS team; which did an excellent job with an impressive engagement for three years.

I wish you all a successful final conference.