

# CER POSITION PAPER

## Public Consultation on Enablers for European Multimodal Travel Planning and Information Services

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COMMUNITY OF EUROPEAN RAILWAY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMPANIES - COMMUNAUTÉ EUROPÉENNE DU RAIL ET DES COMPAGNIES D'INFRASTRUCTURE - GEMEINSCHAFT DER EUROPÄISCHEN BAHNEN UND INFRASTRUKTURGESELLSCHAFTEN



CER, the Community of European Railways and Infrastructure Companies, welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on Enablers for European Multimodal Travel Planning and Information Services. In addition to our response to the online questionnaire, we would like to bring a number of points to the Commission's attention.

## 1. MULTIMODAL TRAVEL PLANNING AND INFORMATION SERVICES: A REALITY

There are already a number of very innovative solutions for multi-modal journey planning and information services in Europe, some of which already provide door-to-door information. Railway undertakings have themselves developed a number of such journey planners, be it in partnership with third parties or by themselves. Most of these are multi-modal, and a fair number already go beyond national boundaries. Two of these solutions have won the first Mobility Challenge of European Commission Vice-President Siim Kallas (Trenitalia for the best journey planner, and SNCF, for the best idea of a journey planner). These solutions have emerged in response to market demand, in order to provide a better service to customers: heavy legislative solutions could therefore prove counter-productive and discourage market-driven innovation.

## 2. OPEN DATA: LEGAL AND COMMERCIAL ISSUES

The PSI Directive, mentioned in the Commission Background document to this public consultation, does not apply to bodies that have an industrial or commercial character<sup>1</sup>, such as railway undertakings. The Directive also excludes certain documents and data on the ground of commercial confidentiality<sup>2</sup>. Transport data, such as fares, pricing models, product design and service description are commercially confidential information which should be protected, in particular for open access services<sup>3</sup>. In an open market, no company should be forced to provide commercially confidential information to third parties. Yet, data sharing implies the use of commercially sensitive information, such as the provision of commercial agreements and conditions that regulate the offer of transportation services among providers, and which define or assume specific computation logic incorporating business decisions (e.g. such as specific business strategies behind yield management).

The issue of data sharing in the context of journey planners and information services also touches upon the commercial freedom of operators to define their own distribution strategies and select their preferred information and distribution channels. Most railway companies already collaborate with third parties, from GDSs to search engines and third party journey planning companies, but they do so within the scope of bi-lateral commercial agreements. These agreements can take place in a free and equitable way because none of the partners is forced to enter into such collaboration.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Article 2 of the PSI Directive

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Article 1 of the PSI Directive

<sup>3</sup> Open Access services or « free services » are services where operators may enter or exit the market at short notice and freely determine the characteristics of the services they offer. They usually relate to commercial services (namely services that can be operated on a commercial basis, without any need for public compensation).

### 3. RISK OF CONFLICTING STANDARDS AND DISPROPORTIONATE REGULATORY BURDEN

The Commission identifies the lack of data interoperability as one of the main barriers to the creation of multi-modal journey planners and information services, and lists “defining interoperable data format” as one of the key proposed measures to facilitate the creation of multi-modal journey planners and information services. However, data interoperability and exchange of information in the rail sector is already regulated by the technical specification for interoperability for telematics applications for passenger services (TAP TSI). Railway undertakings have already invested a considerable amount of time and resources to adapt to the standards defined in TAP TSI. The definition of new, potentially conflicting standards, would represent a disproportionate regulatory burden for rail companies, and should therefore be avoided.

### 4. WHAT IS REALLY NEEDED: A DISTRIBUTED SYSTEM WITH OPEN APIs

Most importantly, CER does not fully support the analysis of the situation provided by the Commission in its Background document. CER considers that the wrong barriers have been identified, both in the background document and in the consultation questionnaire. A journey planner is too complex to be limited to the aggregation of a set of transport data. Besides, the electronic flow of information related to rail passenger services is already regulated through TAP TSI, as explained above. While we recognize the need for solutions to allow customers to make informed choices about transportation options, we consider that the best way to achieve this will be through a distributed system with open APIs, which shall support multiple data formats and protocols, therefore providing de-facto interoperability.

A **centralized system** would tend to work in a similar manner to the current airline distribution system, where a third party integrator usually assembles the different parts of a journey through different operators. Such a system can prove particularly costly for transport operators if the third party integrator is in a dominant position. On the other hand, an example of a **distributed system** is the telecom industry: a phone call from Paris to Los Angeles, for instance, will transit through various operators’ networks, without requesting the intervention of a third party integrator. The result for customers is a seamless end-to-end connection. Another parallel would be the establishment of a wireless internet connection. New advances in journey planning algorithms require a fundamental shift away from the conventional mechanism of making data available to the concept of open distributed system architecture.

The interfaces thus defined should remain open, in order to allow all interested players to use them at limited cost. The overall distributed architecture should accommodate all business processes in their diversity, covering what exists today as well as future developments that will emerge as transport operators further refine their go-to-market approaches and service offerings. Most importantly, it shall not replace the need for commercial agreements defining the parameters of bi-lateral collaborations between transport operators, and between operators and third parties. Once transport operators have defined the specifications for this distributed system with open APIs, financial support from the Commission might be beneficial at proof of concept level.

## Disclaimer

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