

# MIDNORDIC GREEN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR

Development project North East Cargo Link II



## In the footsteps of our forefathers for the victories of tomorrow...

We are again standing face to face with extremely important and far-reaching national decisions in Norway, Sweden and Finland. In Sweden, for example, these decisions extend over infrastructure development up until 2050, but which will almost certainly have an impact beyond that. Such decisions will cover all infrastructure in which case we are suddenly talking not just about different means of transportation, but also about other methods of communication, energy supply, etc. Such decisions will not only affect individual countries, but also neighbouring countries. Such decisions are important from an environmental standpoint and for the competitive strength of companies on an increasingly global market; thereby they are important for all of us. Such decisions can provide us with the opportunity to maintain our standard and are essential to us being able to avoid the negative development trend that can be perceived in neighbouring countries.

I started thinking about what the situation looked like from a historical perspective and I used modern information technology to read about how it all once started... how we thought back then and what instruments dictated our decisions.

I found a link to *Jan Milld's website* [[www.janmilld.se/historia/6/jarnvagar.html](http://www.janmilld.se/historia/6/jarnvagar.html)].

Some of the questions I asked were...

- IS it really possible that we have learnt nothing from history...?
- CAN it really be that we are still struggling with the same preconceived notions as before, but in a new form...?

### Excerpts from the website...

The first above-ground railway was built in 1798 between the mines and the Höganäs harbour in north-west Skåne. It was a railway with wooden rails and the carriages were pulled by horses. The Swedish word for railway, "järnväg", translates literally to "iron way", so if we assume that railways are made of iron and require engine power, then the first railways in Sweden date back to 1856.

The break-through of the railways is associated with *the industrial revolution* – in two senses:

- It was the technical break-through and industrialisation that made railways possible. No steam power – no railway.
- Back then railways made possible the transport of heavy goods over long distances faster and cheaper than before, thereby speeding up the next steps of the industrialisation process.

In some cases railways supplemented the channels that were built, in other cases they came to compete with the channels. It was in the second half of the 19th century that the railway expansion gained momentum in Sweden.

The railway radically reduced travel times. A stagecoach trip from Stockholm to Gothenburg used to take a whole week. By train the route could soon be travelled in 14 hours – this time was gradually reduced as faster and faster locomotives became available.

Before the railway came, Sweden had no standard time. In 1879 standard time was introduced in all train stations. We got *Swedish standard time*.

From Hans Dahlberg's book "Vårt 1800-tal" (Our 19<sup>th</sup> century):

*"Regular and permanent stagecoach mail and passenger transport lines were opened in Sweden before 1831. The route Stockholm-Ystad required 6 days, including brief overnight stops.*

*The average speed was 7.5 km/h."*

*"Along came a boy who opened the gates to numerous routes through pastures and brought back the horses. The stagecoach lines did not affect the farmer's duty of carriage. On upward slopes passengers in ordinary seats had to get off and push from behind."*

However, it was far from obvious that Sweden would invest in railways. Many were against and they did not lack arguments. The Swedish rolling landscape with all its hills, deep canyons, lakes and large forests was not suitable for steam locomotives. These were most of the arguments.

Sweden's future lay on waterways: channels, coastal traffic and harbours. In addition, road transport - especially for passengers - was made faster, more frequent and cheaper.

Everyone thought that trips at such speeds would make people sick. Others feared that iron from the rails would be stolen.

In Sweden there was no production of locomotives, wagons, railway trucks, signalling equipment, etc. Most of it had to be bought from abroad. At that time, only English railway companies could manage the facilities and they would require a lot of resources.

The government and the parliament hesitated.

The development in other Western European countries and the USA soon empowered the railway supporters in Sweden. At the end of the 1840s very few European countries, amongst which Norway, Finland and Sweden, were left behind.

The railways' foremost pioneer in our country was Count Adolf Eugene von Rosen. In 1845 he received permission to build railways in central and southern parts of Sweden. A few other railway stretches for narrow-gauge tracks were built with private funding. It soon became clear that if a railway network was to be built in a sparsely-populated country such as Sweden, the government had to cover the costs.

***In 1853 the government*** decided that five main lines would be built as state railways: west, south, east, north and north-west state railways. The state was to provide the funding. The main lines could be connected to secondary and local railways, but on personal initiative and with private capital. In 1855 Nils Ericson was commissioned to plan and carry out the major project of building the main railway lines together with a state railway committee. The English track gauge, 1435 mm, was to be used and became the country's standard gauge.

Since the railways also needed fast telegraph connections between the rail stations, Telegrafverket and SJ soon agreed to collaborate on the project. In 1859 an agreement was reached on the joint use of pole lines and railways.

From the book "Svensk teknikhistoria", Hult et al.:

*"The electrical telegraph initially accompanied the railway. From the 1850s railways and telegraph lines were built simultaneously and in parallel. This applied to both mail railway lines and individual railways."*

The first train ferry connection to countries abroad was opened in 1892: *Helsingborg - Helsingör*. This way, the Swedish rail network was interconnected with the mainland. The first train ferry connection with Germany, *Trelleborg - Sassnitz* was opened in 1909.

## **To sum it all up...**

Nothing new under the sun is what comes to mind...

- The connection between infrastructure and communication
- The connection between infrastructure and social development
- The connection to technical development
- Problems regarding capital, state and private financing
- The need for fast and cheap transport
- The need for heavy goods transport
- Advantages and disadvantages
- The conflict between different types of transport
- All opponents, all advocates, all doubters and, last but not least,
- All capable

## **The advantage that everything is recognisable...**

When in doubt, we can easily look at the decisions our forefathers made for future victories. Everyone can see that we have developed successfully since 1798 when the first above-ground railway was built. Without the investments made at that time, we would not have had the development back then and to a certain extent the development we have now.

What one missed before, however, was having an international perspective. East-west connections were also omitted, or there was no need for them. Things have changed today and the opportunities for national growth lie in an international perspective. A perspective where both North-South and East-West effective and stable connections supplement each other.

## **Nothing comes for free...**

A few tough decisions and difficult priorities will have to be made to meet the challenges we now face. If you do not dare, take courage...

As Stor-Erik said in the TV series "Slope Guard": - Courage is something a coward resorts to when he doesn't dare."

([http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistvakt\\_%E2%80%93\\_En\\_vintersaga](http://sv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pistvakt_%E2%80%93_En_vintersaga) )

Today's decision makers have to dare make the decisions required for a positive development of future generations as well... or else?

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