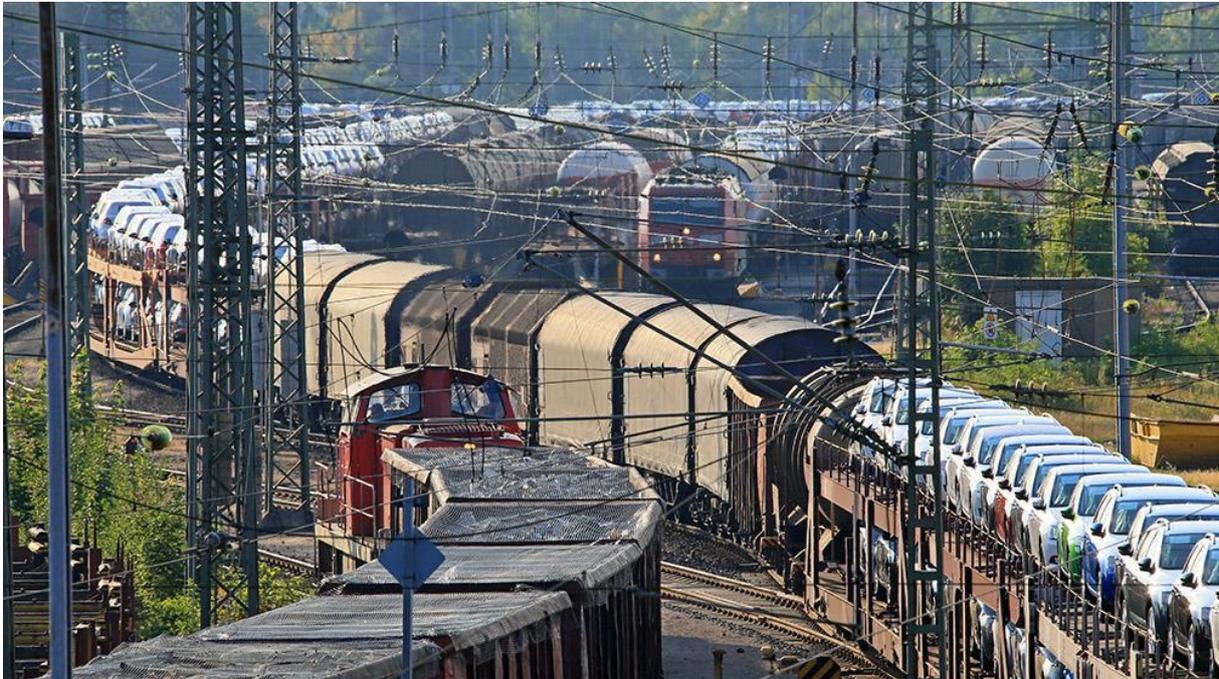


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A freight train as long as the eye can see? Not in Germany. Only 11 percent of trains on the nation's rails run at the standard length of 740 metres. Minor network bottlenecks are often the cause.

Railfreight heads call for network upgrade to allow longer freight trains

German rail network not yet ready for standard 740-metre length

Berlin, 30 August 2016. The heavyweight operators in Germany's railfreight sector are calling for comprehensive upgrading of the nation's rail network to accommodate standard-size 740-metre-long freight trains. Responding to requests from the German non-profit "Pro-Rail Alliance" (Allianz pro Schiene), the heads of DB Cargo, SBB Cargo, Havelländische Eisenbahn (HVLE) and the Hamburg Port Railway all anticipate rapid expansion once the green light is given, yielding vast potential for shifting more freight to rail and increasing efficiency. They say that targeted capacity increases at several bottlenecks in the German rail network will generate major benefits to the German economy – and at reasonable cost. Railfreight bosses also agree that bottlenecks in Germany's rail network are now hampering European-wide railfreight operations. According to Deutsche Bahn, many routes in Germany are simply unable to accommodate today's European standard-length train of 740 metres.

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Often because of minor network restrictions, [only 11 percent of trains in Germany](#) operate at this standard length.

Port of Hamburg: All major terminals ready for long trains



Harald Kreft, Head of the Hamburg Port Railway (Hamburger Hafenbahn), emphasises that the Port of Hamburg is already equipped to deal with the longer trains. "The Hamburg Port Railway's infrastructure as well as all major terminals in the Port of Hamburg are equipped to handle the full train length of 740 metres. So we would gladly welcome longer trains – but they don't come here." Inland rail bottlenecks – particularly on connecting routes to and from Prague/Czech Republic and Leipzig – force many shorter trains to compete for scarce rail capacity. "If we're able to operate trains of the standard 740-metre length, then we transport the same volume of goods with fewer trains, thereby using up fewer train paths." A nationwide network expanded to allow 740-metre-long trains would translate into double-digit increases in efficiency for trains travelling inland from the Port of Hamburg, which currently already operate at good capacity utilisation levels. The Port Railway chief reckons that an average of 8-12 more containers could be transported per train. "This boost in productivity would benefit everyone: the railfreight operators, the shippers, the economy and – not least – the environment," notes Kreft. "By tackling these key points in the rail network, the government would automatically improve competition, creating a more level playing field between environmentally friendly railfreight and truck transport."

HVLE sees particularly high potential in eastern Germany

Ludolf Kerkeling, Member of the Executive Board of Havelländische Eisenbahn (HVLE), believes longer freight trains will increase transport efficiency in eastern Germany by up to 25 percent. "The 740-metre network would be a quantum leap forward for us. We currently have to shorten our trains to 600 metres, sometimes merely because of just one signal being in the wrong place," states Kerkeling. Kerkeling estimates that the quantities of bulk goods and grain that could be transported additionally by HVLE in longer trains amount to some 2,400 truckloads per month. "In the tough competition between rail and road, the price alone determines the winner. What's more, the network expansion needed to allow the standard length of 740 metres could be had for comparably little money." The HVLE boss believes that,

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compared with the rest of Europe, Germany has already missed the boat in terms of network expansion. "While our neighbours of course also have bottlenecks to contend with, they're taking action, such as on the Betuwe route in the Netherlands, or the Gotthard in Switzerland. Unfortunately, with such a backlog of investment, Germany is projecting a very skimpy image. If politicians were to act now, quickly, "It will take some two to three years to get the main corridors up and running, and five to ten years to complete the upgrade to 740 metres across the board. Railfreight operators will gladly grit their teeth and deal with the construction sites if it results in a decent network," notes Kerkeling.



SBB Cargo International presses for expansion to 740-metre standard on incoming feeders to Gotthard

Michail Stahlhut, CEO of SBB Cargo International, expects railfreight volume on the North-South corridor through the new Gotthard Base Tunnel to increase by one third over today's benchmark. This would reduce current road freight volume by some ten percent. Stahlhut explains that "Because the trains passing through the new Gotthard Tunnel can be 740 metres long, we can shift 30 percent additional freight volume onto the rails with the same number trains alone. The Gotthard is a huge opportunity for European railfreight operations." This is ample reason for neighbouring countries to likewise upgrade to accommodate longer freight trains. "Italy is already getting its 740-metre network



into shape. Surprisingly, however, the upgrade remains on ice in Germany's current Federal Transport Infrastructure Plan," criticises Stahlhut. "A major boost in efficiency could be achieved with little money if train lengths could grow to 740 metres," confirms SBB Cargo International's CEO. "It's vital that Germany seize this opportunity."

Lokomotion calls for expansion to allow megatrans

Armin Riedl, CEO of Munich-based Lokomotion Rail, also bemoans the bottlenecks in cross-border railfreight services. "Lokomotion primarily runs trains to and from Italy. There, we're currently only able to operate 550-metre-long trains at maximum, right to the restriction limits of Italy's rail network. Still, Italy holds out good prospects for improvements, projected for 2018," says Riedl. Lokomotion's CEO



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Armin Riedl, Geschäftsführer
Lokomotion Rail

hopes for quick upgrading of the German network's main routes to accommodate longer freight trains. With an eye to the capacities in neighbouring nations, Riedl has called on policy-makers and planners at the federal level to bank on growth. "With longer trains, we get more freight off the roads. On certain selected routes it would now be very beneficial to expand for 1,000-metre-long trains already," exclaims Riedel, citing the Emmerich–Oberhausen section as an example where 690-metre lengths are already possible today: "There, Germany is currently constructing a complete new line. But instead of seizing the opportunity to build for 1,000-metre-long trains, they're only upgrading to 740 metres – while the Dutch can already operate today with 1,000-metre-long trains. This means no further progress for decades to come", complains the railfreight boss, noting the Rhine/Ruhr–Poland, Hamburg–Munich, and Emmerich–Basel routes as other lines well-suited for running 1,000-metre-long megatrans.

DB Cargo hopes to reduce freight unit costs

Network expansion for longer freight trains also means increased efficiency for Jürgen Wilder, the CEO of DB Cargo. "The length of trains is one of the single most effective levers for lowering railfreight unit costs. Our pilot project for longer trains carried out on the Maschen–Padborg section has demonstrated this," confirms Wilder. The Head of DB Cargo favours rapidly expanding the main corridors, also to enable railfreight to regain ground against road haulage. "We need the 740-metre network that allows

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continuous operation of these standard-length trains all along the main corridors. This will enable railfreight to better compete against road transport in terms of both price and quality," states Wilder.



„Die Zuglänge ist einer der wirksamsten Hebel zur Senkung der Stückkosten im Schienengüterverkehr. Wir brauchen das 740-Meter-Netz, um gegenüber der Straße wettbewerbsfähiger zu werden.“

Jürgen Wilder, Vorstandsvorsitzender DB Cargo

Freight forwarders: Zippel concerned with pricing squeeze between road and rail cargo

"As a freight forwarder, I can freely choose how I wish to transport goods," explains Axel Kröger, managing partner of the logistics firm Konrad Zippel. "In a direct comparison of rail and road, Konrad Zippel transports 70 percent of its loads by railfreight." He explains, however, that the economic



„Längere Güterzüge sind aus Klimaschutzgründen extrem smart. Jeder einzelne Zug, der mit 740 Metern unterwegs ist, holt die Ladung von acht Lkw zusätzlich von der Straße.“

Axel Kröger, Geschäftsführer Konrad Zippel Spediteur GmbH

conditions of railfreight today are clearly unfavourable. "Shrinking HGV tolls and low diesel prices are giving road haulage the upper hand," says Kröger. "Longer freight trains would be an extremely smart move precisely because public policy-makers are compelled to bank on railfreight in the interest of climate protection." Kröger calculates that expanding the rail network to the European standard could

have the immediate effect of reducing truck traffic noticeably. "Each and every 740-metre-long train on the rails takes the loads of eight more trucks off the road."

Allianz pro Schiene: 740-metre network must be freed from its holding pattern

Dirk Flege, Executive Director of "Pro-Rail Alliance" (Allianz pro Schiene), has called on government officials to accelerate upgrading to the 740-metre network for longer freight trains. "The tasks are clearly



defined and assigned: The Federal Ministry of Transport should now expedite completion of its long-awaited assessment of the 740-metre network so that Parliament can discuss the legislation on expansion in October." Flege puts the cost of the 100 or so expansion projects listed by DB Netz at just EUR 200–300 million. "These measures, while costing little, will greatly benefit both the economy and climate protection efforts. In many cases it's merely a matter of moving signals and extending passing and overtaking loops," notes Flege, stressing the need to move speedily. "Longer trains are already in service in our neighbouring EU countries. 835-long trains are operating in Denmark, while France plans to start running 1,000-metre-long freight trains as of 2018, says Flege. According to the EU Commission, all routes of the European core network are to be fit for 740-metre-long trains by 2030 at the latest.

For further information, visit:

[Background: How freight trains can grow longer](#)

[Graphics: How the pricing squeeze between road and rail freight has developed from 2010 to 2016](#)

[Business wants more railfreight: Concepts from Henkel and BASF for shifting freight to rail](#)

[EU per-capita investment: Germany lagging behind in rail network expansion](#)

Allianz pro Schiene (Pro-Rail Alliance) is the German federation for the promotion of environmentally friendly and safe rail transport. It unites 23 non-profit organisations, including the environmental organisations Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz

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Deutschland (BUND: Friends of the Earth Germany), Naturschutzverbund Deutschland (NABU: Nature and Biodiversity Conservation Union), Deutsche Umwelthilfe and NaturFreunde Deutschlands, the consumer groups Pro Bahn, Deutscher Bahnkunden-Verband (DBV) and Verkehrsclub Deutschland (VCD), the automobile clubs ACE and ACV, the Bundesverband CarSharing (bcs), the cycling club ADFC, the two rail unions EVG and GDL, the German conference of railway station church-based mission offices, and the rail organisations BDEF, BF Bahnen, VBB and VDEI as well as Wildau Technical University of Applied Sciences, Mittelhessen University of Applied Sciences, Aachen University of Applied Sciences and the Technical University of Berlin. Its member associations represent more than 2.5 million individual members. Allianz pro Schiene is supported by more than 130 companies operating in the rail sector which together report annual sales totalling EUR 30 billion.

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