

30.5.2018

Meeting of the Finnish-Norwegian Joint Working Group on Arctic Railway – 1st Meeting

Date May 30th, 2018
Time 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm
Location House of Estates (Snellmaninkatu 9-11, room 13), Helsinki, Finland

Participants:

Finland:

Lindström Sabina	Director, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Transport and Communications
Vihavainen-Pitkänen Marjukka	Senior Advisor, Ministry of Transport and Communications
Noukka Mirja	Division Director, Planning and Projects, Transport Agency
Suvanto Tuomo	Transportation System Specialist, Transport Agency
Ylinampa Jaakko	Director General, Lapland Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment
Heikkinen Ilkka	Nature Conservation Adviser, Ministry of the Environment
Riipi Mika	County Governor, Regional Council of Lapland
Lohi Timo	Development Manager, Region of Northern Lapland Municipality
Paltto Heikki	I Vice President, Sámi Parliament
Feodoroff Veikko	Skolt Sámi Elected Trustee, Skolt Sámi Village Committee

Norway:

Fredrik Birkheim Arnesen	Director General, Ministry of Transport and Communications
Eirik Vårdal Kvalheim	Senior Advisor, Ministry of Transport and Communications
Jarle Jarleson Vaage	Head of Section, Norwegian Railway Directorate
Ingvild Aleksandersen	County Governor of Finnmark
Eirik Selmer	Senior Advisor, Finnmark County Municipality

Minutes of Meeting

Representatives from the Finnish and Norwegian ministries and agencies responsible for transport matters of the states, and the representatives of indigenous Sámi people met in Helsinki on 30 May 2018 to initiate the assignment of the Finnish-Norwegian Joint Working Group on Arctic Railway.

Working group's assignment is to continue the study on Arctic railway line Rovaniemi-Kirkenes routing and prepare a research-based suggestion of project's future steps. As the basis of this work is the former study on the Arctic rail line, published on 9th of March 2018.

The meeting was the first meeting of the joint working group. The Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications convened and chaired the meeting.

The outcome of the discussion under the various agenda items is set out below.

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by the welcome and opening remarks by the chair of the meeting, Sabina Lindström.

2. Introductions

The members of the working group introduced themselves.

3. Approval of Agenda

The agenda of the meeting was approved.

4. Stake holder's representation and involvement in the process

It was noted that hearing of the stakeholders is highly important, especially when surveying the environmental impacts of the project.

Furthermore, it was agreed that representatives of the Reindeer Herders' Association should be added in the working group. The importance of the interpretation in Sámi language at the meetings was also taken into account.

5. Steering group's role

It was noted that in relation to sub-groups the role of the steering group will be directive and compiling.

6. Working group's objective and tasks

It was noted that the political assignment given to the working group is to prepare a suggestion for the further measures and the schedule of the Arctic railway line project. Furthermore, it was

noted that the question of project's impacts on nature and indigenous Sámi people have to be examined with special care.

It was noted that the socio-economic aspects and impacts of the project should be evaluated in regional, national, European and global levels. Special focus should be on paying attention to regional land use planning work in Lapland and in the dialog between stakeholders. It was noted that the interests of the land owners will be taken into account on the level of regional land use plan.

There was also discussion about the feasibility and financing of the project, which are, besides impacts on nature and indigenous people, the key questions of the project. It was noted that the work should also include examining of the positive impacts of the project on the regional level. Furthermore, it was noted that the assistance of consultant firms will probably be needed in this work.

The idea of adding also the zero option (i.e. the option where no railway line is built) to the study was largely supported among the members of the working group.

7. Working group's schedule and scheme for actions

This agenda item was treated together with the next agenda item no 8.

8. Working group's organization and sub-groups

It was agreed that working in sub-groups focusing in different topics would be practical. The sub-groups will report their progress to the whole group in order to draw conclusions. The suggested main topics for the sub-groups were found sufficient.

It was agreed that the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications would lead the sub-group 1 "Finance". It was noted that, besides impacts on nature and indigenous people, the question of finance has been in the centre of discussion in Finland and there has already been some discussion about what different financing possibilities would there be for a project like this.

There was some discussion about the role of the Asian investors and EU in the project. It was noted, that in this early stage of the project the official discussions with Asians are not yet of interest, even though the Asians have shown some interest related to the project. However, the funding of EU was noted to play an important role in the financing of the project. Involving some members of EU Commission was also taken in to account, yet the focus in this stage of the project should be on key stakeholders.

Moreover, it was agreed that the Finance sub-group would take also the examination of the positive impacts of the project, especially on regional level, under it as a task.

It was agreed that Lapland's Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment together with Sámi people and Norwegian representatives should work in the sub-group 2 "Impacts on nature and indigenous people". The leadership of the group was given to Lapland's Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment as environmental effects are in a close relation to regional work.

The Finnish Transport Agency was agreed to take the lead of the sub-group 3 “Permissions and planning”. Also representatives of the Regional Council of Lapland, Lapland’s Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment and the Finnish Ministry of the Environment were agreed to join the sub-group.

In conclusion to the question of sub-groups, there was agreement about the topics and main assignments of the three sub-groups, which would be as follows:

- 1) **Finance:** Investigate possible financial methods and financial structure. Investigate positive impacts on regional level.
- 2) **Impacts on nature and indigenous people:** Investigate and evaluate impacts on nature and impacts on indigenous people.
- 3) **Permissions and planning:** Investigate required permissions. Investigate planning requirements.

It was agreed that naming of the members in sub-groups and clarifying their specific tasks will be done within two weeks amongst the organizations. Furthermore, it was agreed that written reports concerning the sub-groups will be drawn up to make sure that the groups will not do overlapping work.

In addition, it was agreed that the working group should also form a secretariat to control and watch over the work of the sub-groups. The final composition of the secretariat was agreed to be decided on later.

9. Possible additions to Agenda

It was agreed that the working language of the meetings will be English. The final report and all meeting documents will be translated in English and one of the Sámi languages.

There was also a brief discussion about financing the research work and the report. The financing of the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications was noted. However, Norwegians should prepare to pay their share of the costs for the reason that the Finnish resources are limited when it comes to expenses outside the country borders.

10. Next meetings

The next meeting (2nd meeting) was suggested to take place week 35, in the end of August. It was agreed that the next meeting will be held in the North of Finland. The exact time will be agreed upon later.

It was agreed that the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications has the responsibility of arrangements for the next meetings with the support of the Norwegian representatives. The timing of the future meetings will be agreed upon later. Also the possibility to participate via Skype connection was approved.

It was noted that the sub-groups should start their work during the summer and make a sort of first draft as a framework for the next meeting in August. In addition, a briefing of the regional work is needed for the next meeting.