This is why there is no time to lose

www.europakorridorens.se
Our goal that Sweden should have a modern transport system.
A transport corridor must run through Sweden, aimed towards Europe.
High speed trains travelling at at least 300 km/h are the corridor’s arteries.

A modern transport system would enable people to travel further, and at a reasonable cost. It would expand their chances of living, working and studying where they want.

• **Modern transport creates freedom.**

Businesses and other activities would obtain considerably larger markets – where they can find suppliers and staff as well as customers.

• **Modern transport creates growth and development.**

The train is environmentally friendly in a way that other types of transport can only dream about. Where cars and planes record their carbon dioxide emissions per person in kilos, the train does it in micrograms.

• **Modern transport protects the environment.**

But there is no time to lose. That’s why this publication should be read as a bombshell.

For while here in Sweden we are still planning, the rest of Europe is already getting on with the job. If we miss the train (!) the result will be less freedom for people, inferior growth and continuing negative environmental impact.
In the last 100 years journey times, and thereby distances, have shrunk drastically. We have all got closer to everything.

This has had dramatic consequences. We have obtained ever greater opportunities to live, study and work where we want. But that’s not all: Shrinking journey times have also reduced the distance to new knowledge that has changed, improved and prolonged our lives. We have gained access to better education and better jobs, and these have put more in our wallets.

Faster and more efficient communications have also created contact and trade with other people in other countries, other cultures. It has enriched us in all ways.

The environmental effects of the substantial increase in traffic have however been extremely negative. We are facing a choice.

Many people believe that the solution is to make the transport sector smaller. To travel, meet, trade and cooperate less.

This might seem as wise and moderate as it is sympathetic.

However, the reality is that the market will shrink in line with the transport options. We will have a smaller and more expensive selection of goods and services. Inferior access to education and jobs.

The possibilities for individuals to influence their own situation will thereby deteriorate considerably.

The alternative is instead to invest in technical development and to change course in terms of infrastructure. Today high speed trains are already an efficient and very environmentally friendly mode of transport.

Research and development within the train sector – unfortunately for the most part outside our borders – is proceeding at lighting speed. High speed lines are being built throughout Europe and new technical solutions are constantly being tested and presented.

We still have the chance to join in, still have the possibility of offering a transport system that is sustainable in the long term from an environmental point of view. A transport system that enlarges the reach and range of opportunities for people.

A transport system that delivers greater personal freedom.

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It is very easy to become blinded by speed. When a train journey between, say, Stockholm and Helsingborg can take just over two hours, most people look in fascination at the clock.
However the effect of a high speed line is considerably more radical than that.

Reducing journey times between densely populated metropolitan areas is naturally important. However, reducing the distance also stimulates the regions in between.

Towns that were previously separated by long distances now represent a chain of opportunities. Complementary transport options, on both rail and road, make the benefits also accessible to people and businesses some distance away from high speed lines.

The effect of a larger market and better recruitment opportunities are well documented for companies and businesses. We gain higher productivity and become more competitive (including outside our own region; read increased exports).

For individuals, it entails greater opportunities to study, more jobs to choose among, better accommodation and greater proximity to important leisure- and cultural experiences, factors that in their turn stimulate demand for goods and services – and thereby development and growth for businesses.

Against this background it is certainly relevant to ask why in Sweden (and to such a great degree) we are sticking to an old transport structure, based on old technology.

An important part of the explanation might be that when it comes to infrastructure and trains neither consumers nor companies ‘vote with their money’, in the same way as in other contexts.

Both people and businesses have to meet their needs from a short-term perspective and are consequently referred to what is currently on offer. Even though in the long term this entails inferior economic conditions, negative environmental impact etc.

The question of our infrastructure is therefore essentially a political one. The solution to which will require a clear will, unconventional and on occasion perhaps uncomfortable decisions – and accordingly great political courage.

Do we have the will and the courage?
In the last 15 years the insurance companies’ costs for natural disasters have increased more than fivefold. We all notice that the climate has changed, that storms are rattling our houses. The forces of nature are making themselves felt in a way that is surpassing our most dire forecasts.

The debate on how we should tackle this is, to say the least, high-flown. A lot of people would like to put on the emergency brakes, through demands for restrictions, obstacles and prohibitions on our communications and trading routes. Others are shaking off these uncomfortable insights and want to continue as before. Trade with letters of indulgence – so-called emissions rights – is already in full swing.

There is a high symbolic value in politically correct soul-searching. Knowledge-based contributions that can de facto reduce our emissions and have a positive impact on the environment have to take a backseat. To an increasing extent we are obstructing, restricting and raising the price of today’s transport, but without offering alternatives.

And yet creating these alternatives is fully realistic. High speed technology – trains that travel at 300 km/h and faster – are already a functioning reality.

Sweden has all of the prerequisite to derive benefit from this technology, and moreover to take a leading role in future developments.

The expanded European Corridor alone will deal with 40% of the reductions in emissions that the Kyoto agreement requires from Sweden. Where cars and planes record their carbon dioxide emissions per person in kilos, the train does it in micrograms.

This major environmental gain can be obtained without restricting the competitiveness of businesses and individual freedom of movement. On the contrary, a modern transport system that does not harm the environment increases our possibilities of protecting and developing our welfare. Large railway projects always deliver major environmental benefits.

Welfare that is sustainable in the long term

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The bottle neck will disappear

For the northern part of Sweden's railways the country's southern part has long been a bottle neck. Northern Sweden's train lines are successively merged into a single track in Central Sweden – the Southern mainline. In practice all southbound railway traffic has to pass through here. It is no surprise that there is not sufficient capacity. Instead a large proportion of exports from Norrland are loaded onto tens of thousands of lorries on route southwards.

The European Corridor will resolve this bottle neck. For the corridor does not only entail radically improved passenger services. It will also free up substantial freight capacity on the Southern Main Line (as well as the Western Main Line).

This will give trade and industry in North Sweden new opportunities, create keener competition and greater transport efficiency.

A continued development and upgrading of the lines in Norrland will provide an additional boost to the positive effects of the European Corridor.
The European Corridor, Central Sweden:

A lever for development

The expanded European Corridor will link up Central Sweden in a way that increases the benefit and efficiency of existing tracks.

In practice this will result in it being much more possible to live more cheaply and satisfactorily at a distance from large towns – without foregoing the benefits in terms of work, choice etc, that cities offer.

Stockholm (as well as Gothenburg) will become accessible for considerably more people, with no risk for traffic breakdowns and environmental collapse.

With a modern infrastructure there are also more opportunities for cooperation between different universities and colleges – something that in its turn will increase Sweden’s competitiveness in the world.

There are already firm plans in place for development of the Järna – Linköping section (the so-called Eastern Link), starting as early as 2010.

The corridor will also entail important upgrading of Stockholm’s infrastructure: the City Line that will substantially expand the railway capacity through Stockholm, which will facilitate a greater volume of more punctual traffic to and from the city.

The European Corridor will deliver a leverage effect for both the city and for individual companies and people in smaller communities.
The port of Gothenburg is the largest in the Nordic region, and our only ocean-going port. Large container ships docking here carry approx. 15,000 containers.
A loading capacity equivalent to approx. 7,000 lorries is currently required to convey these loads to their final destinations.
A proportion of this traffic already takes place on the railway – but the majority is carried by lorry to and from the port through the central districts of Gothenburg. This is clearly an economic, logistical and ecological failure.
An economic, environmentally compatible and efficient alternative exists, but has not been built: The European Corridor would replace the 7,000 lorries with 150-200 goods trains.
Gnosjö, Osby, Almhult, Hyltebruk, Mullsjö, Gislaved... These are some – of many! – places that are characterised by keen enterprise, belief in the future and growth.
For all these towns the European Corridor represents entirely new opportunities to reach new and more customers, to choose the best suppliers – and to employ skilled staff.
The European Corridor is also a part of the EU project Nordic Triangle – which has the goal of linking Stockholm, Oslo, Gothenburg, Copenhagen and Berlin and creating a growth corridor between Stockholm and Oslo.
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