



A Freight Franchise - Unorthodox but Effective

The Freight Group of Railfuture launches an innovative scoping report today;

"A Freight Franchise - Unorthodox but Effective", raises awareness of a rail freight service that has almost faded away. The focus is UK Wagonload Network Services.

Open-access competition has not provided a marketplace for moving individual customer freight wagons together, other than one operator who has a quasi-wagonload service.

To retain this limited wagonload network, and bring fresh impetus to a forgotten service, the adoption of a 'freight franchising' model is recommended. This will balance customer demand against the economics of collecting, moving and delivering single wagons.

To match lorry-sized loads in a wagonload, 'less-than-trainload' format requires a service that is easy to use as well as being punctual, reliable and affordable. This allows customers with smaller quantities to tap into the rail system.

As many traffic generators have switched back to road haulage, there are plenty of places to capture bulk loads from road to rail, by refocusing on locations that have significant heavy lorry traffic in the absence of regular single wagon connections.

This supports a radical rethink, to challenge this perilous situation of the wagonload product.

The idea is a simple one, by using a Business-to-Business or Social Franchise model to induce co-operation between many different modal companies.

By bringing together different parties, choices of efficient wagonload operations will be enhanced, with stabilisation of the current trains, attraction of lost business, reinstatement of network-wide coverage and the attraction of new-to-rail loadings.

To this end, there is scope for a more positive attitude towards less-than-trainload. In general terms, a core company would run trunk trains, with the feeder links franchised to nimble 'micro consortium' partners.

Focusing the need to combine individual wagons to mirror 'economic rail' in bulk trainload movements, target traffics promotes modal transfer of bulky, dense and consolidated loads onto the railway network.

A freight franchise system will consume less fuel, better deploy staff and reduce lorry and trailer fleet numbers, by shifting bulk customer tonnage to a different more sustainable mode, i.e. rail.

All these features are contained within the study text and supporting appendices. It is up-to-date in relation to the contemporary wagonload picture, while simultaneously reviewing the past.....with a modern twist.

This 'freight franchise' formula can overcome obstacles through partnership.

Notes to Editors:

- Railfuture is the campaigning name of the Railway Development Society Limited.
- A not-for-profit company limited by guarantee
- For further information and comment, please contact Gary Tinsey, Chairman, Railfuture Freight Committee, 01268 781820,
or Bruce Williamson, Press Officer 0117 927 2954, 07759 557389
- The report is attached, and can be downloaded at <http://www.railfuture.org.uk/dl478>

Background Information:

- A company with bulk freight business typically needs to fill a whole trainload, offering at least 500 tonnes for movement before a rail freight company will engage with them.
- This report aims to further detailed research into areas where there is insufficient bulk tonnage for trainload, but customers would like to remain on rail, or return their business to rail services.
- The substantial increase in heavy goods vehicle movements that has resulted from modal switch from rail to road comes with the associated social, cost and environmental impacts.
- We believe there ought to be a way to recapture single dense consignments from road haulage back to less-than-trainload railway services. This is difficult currently, because of contraction to a very basic system, aligned to a select client base.

- As many flows such as agricultural bulks, paper pulp, metals, and timber are moving predominately by road, the 'Trainload Product Mantra' to secure economies of scale needs to be replicated again in an aggregated railway network service.
- Substantial lorry miles are saved by combining individual bulky flows through new franchised local services that are responsive to customer needs, economical to run and give strong environmental benefits.

Summary

- The 'freight franchise' format targets daily domestic and European heavy vehicle flows, of bulk goods, that are not presently attractive to the rail freight companies, because they require aggregation.
- Motorway, Primary 'A' Routes, 'B' and minor roads are deluged with heavy lorry traffic issues. The transfer of significant freight movements to the railways would bring; safety, congestion, pollution, noise disturbance and, surface damage roads solutions.

Footnote

- The only true alternatives to trainload currently is the possible use of containers, as some liquids, powders and selected other bulk loads are suitable for intermodal conveyance. Where available, rail routes offer a multi-user container service allowing individual containers to be consolidated.
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