

Rīga 21 August 2015 No 09-01.3334

Environment State Bureau of the Republic of Latvia  
Rūpniecības iela 23, Rīga, LV-1045

Regarding Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment  
for the special plan of the European standard railway  
line Kaunas – Lithuanian and Latvian state border

Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia has reviewed Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment materials of the special plan of the European standard railway line Kaunas – Lithuanian and Latvian state border (*hereinafter referred to as the “SEA of the LT special plan”*), published in the web page of the Environment State Bureau of the Republic of Latvia (<http://www.vpvb.gov.lv/lv/strategiskais-ivn/parrobezu-sivn/?id=963>), and the “Minutes of the interstate public familiarisation (meeting) held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, 2015 in Rīga, and note to the following issues:

1. Nevertheless Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia has previously drawn attention (in the letter No 15-01/251 of 16 January 2014 sent to Environment State Bureau of the Republic of Latvia regarding the strategic environmental assessment for the European gauge railway line between Kaunas and the Lithuanian –Latvian border), the SEA of the LT special plan shows four Rail Baltica railway routes and two border crossing points. It contradicts to results of the “Feasibility study and technical studies of new European gauge line of Rail Baltica section Kaunas-Rīga-Tallinn” (*hereinafter referred to as the AECOM’s feasibility study*), which established the basis for a Declaration of Intent by the Ministers of Transport of the three Baltic States signed on 7<sup>th</sup> of December, 2011.

2. SEA of the LT special plan has insufficient information on the limiting factors, which has to be taken into account setting border points and planning continuing route in the Latvia territory. Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia held the meeting of 15 April 2015 where representatives of the Ministry of Transport of Republic of Latvia, Ministry of Environment Protection and Regional development of Republic of Latvia, Environment State Bureau of the Republic of Latvia, Bauska Municipality, Latvian Railway, Lithuanian Railway, Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania, Ministry of Transport and Communication and Lithuanian detailed study’s researchers took part. Participants of the meeting exchanged information on limiting (excluding) factors defining railway routes’ location. Representatives of the Ministry of Transport of the Republic of Latvia informed that initial public discussions within the project “Detailed technical study and environmental impact assessment of the Latvian section of the European gauge railway line Rail Baltica” has been finished and there is only one border crossing point set, according to the AECOM’s feasibility study, approved by three Baltic States transport ministers, and according to the „The Common Principles for the Rail Baltica 1435 mm Railway Spatial and Territorial Planning and Preliminary Design Study (Jointly agreed version by Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania)”, elaborated and approved by Rail Baltica Task Force. As well, representatives of Lithuania side were informed on such limiting factors and excluding others proposed alternatives as impact on Bauska regional socioeconomic development processes, inhabited places, national importance agricultural lands (Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia “Regulations of the national importance agricultural lands”, approved 28 May 2013). To create solutions for the situation technical researchers’ meeting was organized in Bauska municipality on 21 April 2015, where representatives of the Ministry of Transport of Republic of Latvia, Bauska Municipality and technical research group from Latvia agreed

with representatives of the technical research group from Lithuania, Geology Fund of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania and Lithuanian Railway on additional geotechnical and geophysical study works in border area of the Republic of Latvia and Republic of Lithuania. Geotechnical and geophysical study aim was to ascertain on potential gypsum layers, which could cause karst processes and which could impact place of the Rail Baltica crossing point, set in the AECOM's feasibility study. Results of the additional geotechnical and geophysical study showed no evidence of gypsum layers, which could form active karstic process, not Latvian or Lithuanian side in the area of Rail Baltica corridor, set in the AECOM's feasibility study.

Regarding above mentioned, we state that SEA of the LT special plan has to set only one crossing point, according to the AECOM's feasibility study. From this point Latvia section's railway corridor alternatives has been already set and started EIA. In Lithuania the point corresponds to alternative No. 1. Other crossing points has to be viewed as inappropriate for the Rail Baltica project. All alternatives, which has been elaborated inside every Baltic States, have connect to the crossing points, set in the AECOM's feasibility study.

As well, we would like to share following comments for SEA of the LT special plan:

a. Please add information about the project "Detailed technical study and environmental impact assessment of the Latvian section of the European gauge railway line Rail Baltica", which has been implemented in Latvia and justify cross boarding point on Latvia/Lithuania border (in summary of SEA in Latvian - 4<sup>th</sup> chapter where the description of the chosen alternatives is given).

b. Please add information on results of the additional **geotechnical and geophysical study**, which showed no evidence of gypsum layers, which could form active karstic process, not Latvian or Lithuanian side in the area of Rail Baltica corridor, set in the AECOM's feasibility study. This information, please, add to justify one LV/LT border crossing point. There are two alternatives in the Latvia and both comes to point, set by AECOM's feasibility study, which continues in Lithuania as alternative No.1.

c. Please note, that Detailed technical study for Latvia section, following the AECOM's feasibility study, assumes **cargo railways will run all day and night** (as well Estonian section Detailed technical study assumes for Estonia section). We would appreciate to synchronized railway operational timetable to use it in the noise level modelling, noise protection measures and appropriate railway infrastructure in following steps of EIA.

d. Please note that the technical solutions (profile) of border cross point of LT/LV are in the stage of the elaboration, including solutions for parallel roads in case of abetment of the potential accident in preborder areas. At the current stage of the Detailed study of the Latvia Rail Baltica section we foresee border crossing as railway bridge over the river Musu (Mūša); and that the accident abetment works will be taken using E57 and other roads.

Annex: Map showing EIA alternatives in Latvia and LT/LV border cross point (1 page)

State secretary

/signature/

K.Ozolins /K.Ozoliņš/

D.Dolge /D.Doļģe/  
67028030

L.Malzubre  
67028276