Only a really good travel experience can make people choose night trains before flights

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Yesterday the Swedish Transport Administration presented its final report with proposals for more daily departures by night train to Europe. The Swedish Transport Administration proposes a night train between Malmö and Brussels, starting no earlier than 2022, if the challenges of operating through Germany can be overcome.

Welcoming the publication of the report, Jonathan Riley, Business Development Manager at Serco’s Transport business, said: “Serco welcomes the Swedish Transport Administration’s final report and we are pleased to have been able to contribute our experience to the authority during the process.

“Night trains between Sweden and Europe are an important part of the transition to sustainable travel, so it is important for the countries involved to reach an agreement on this issue. Replacing air travel by train, with the service being publicly procured, is the only way to realise the big climate changes you want to achieve. In order for it to work, there will have to be a service that is attractive to business and leisure travellers.”

In 2014, the Scottish Government chose Serco to procure and develop a modern, market-driven Sleeper service between Scotland and London that put the needs of business, tourist and leisure travellers at its heart. This included an innovative ticket system, procuring 75 new carriages, and an award winning marketing campaign to increase the number of passenger journeys. During the first two years, the number of travellers on the Caledonian Sleeper service increased by 26 percent and the travel guide Lonely Planet named Caledonian Sleeper as one of the best night trains in the world.

The success in Scotland was based on a thorough analysis of travellers’ needs and market demand. Serco was able to show that many people want to travel by night train, as long as the trains and service meet the right standards.

Jonathan Riley continued: “Serco understands that there are differences between the Swedish situation and the Caledonian Sleeper but believes that our experience is highly relevant”.

“To help more people choose the train over flying, even for business trips, the Swedish Transport Administration must understand the market’s needs in depth. Serco has extensive experience in developing night train traffic,
and we are happy to help the Swedish Transport Administration and the Ministry of Infrastructure to create a service that can attract many travellers, based on a thorough market analysis.

Jonathan Riley also hopes that the Swedish Transport Administration investigates night train traffic on more routes within Europe – for example a line between Stockholm and Oslo, which is not mentioned in the report. Such a line between neighbouring countries could be easier to achieve in the next few years, and have major climatic effects.

“A night train between Stockholm and Oslo as an alternative to flights would be of great interest - it would reduce the climate impact dramatically on a distance many people travel”, Jonathan concludes.

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About Serco Transport
Serco has extensive experience in developing and operating high quality passenger traffic and the passenger in the center - from rail and ferry traffic to rental bicycles. Through close partnerships with our customers, the latest technology and fantastic employees, we deliver first-class services that also take into account economy and society.

Serco manages today:
• A 15-year contract to transform the Caledonian Sleeper - the night train between Scotland (Edinburgh, Glasgow and the Scottish Highlands) and London - into a modern travel experience
• Merseyrail, the regional train around Liverpool in the UK
• Subway and tram traffic in Dubai, United Arab Emirates
• The Djurgårdens ferries together with Strömma
• The ferries between the Shetland and Orkney Islands and Scotland
• Traffic management of road and air traffic
In 2019, Serco Transport had a turnover of 569 million British pounds (about SEK 7 billion).
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