

More parcels by rail

- DHL and DB Cargo expand their collaboration
- New routes build on existing rail transport network for parcels
- Share of DHL parcels transported by rail to rise from 2 to 6 percent
- Expanded cooperation part of both companies' ambitious climate plans

Grossbeeren / Bonn / Berlin, October 4, 2021: The world's leading logistics company, Deutsche Post DHL Group, and Deutsche Bahn AG are further expanding their existing collaboration in the area of parcel transport by rail. Tobias Meyer, CEO of Post & Parcel Germany at Deutsche Post DHL Group, and Sigrid Nikutta, DB Management Board Member for Freight Transport, today gave the symbolic starting signal for new connections through which even more DHL parcels will be conveyed by climate-friendly rail transport. This will increase the share of parcels transported by such means from 2 to now 6 percent. The long-term aim is to transport around 20 percent of national parcel shipments by rail. From the viewpoint of Deutsche Post DHL, however, certain changes are still required to achieve this, such as faster freight cars for light goods transport, the expansion of infrastructure, better rail lines including high-speed routes, simplified processes for the construction and expansion of rail connections, and faster, more cost-effective procedures for loading from truck to train and vice versa. For certain transports, customers would have to be prepared to accept somewhat longer transit times for more climate-friendly rail conveyance.

“The collaboration with Deutsche Bahn and the expansion of rapid, light freight transport by rail is an important element of our sustainability strategy. Our carbon emissions per parcel are already far lower than those of our competitors thanks in part to the progress we've already made in converting to e-mobility solutions in delivery operations,” says Post and Parcel CEO Meyer. “We want to build on this advantage and migrate long transport routes to rail traffic. This represents a further step toward carbon-neutral letter mail and parcel services in Germany.”

Sigrid Nikutta, DB Management Board Member for Freight Transport adds: “Parcels should be transported by train, and we are working with Deutsche Post DHL to jointly develop a rail network. This is a strong alliance on behalf of the environment as each DHL train reduces the carbon burden on the planet by 80 to 100 percent compared with road transport. A single freight train can transport up to 100,000 parcels.”

The first parcel trains featuring the new design (i.e. based on mountable swap bodies) took to the rails back in the year 2000 with a north-south route in Germany. Further rail links have followed in recent years. In April 2021, when Deutsche Post DHL last released information on its sustainability program, the rail transport network for parcels comprised 13 connections that nearly all operated on weekends. At the time, the company announced plans to shift further parcel volumes to rail transport, and seven further train connections have since been added that mostly operate on working days. This will enable the share of parcels transported by rail to be increased from 2 to 6 percent.

The Grossbeeren freight terminal near Berlin alone serves destinations in the Dortmund, Mannheim and Frankfurt am Main metro areas. Parcels from the surrounding DHL parcel centers are transported by truck to the respective freight terminal, where they are loaded onto the trains. From there they make their way to the destination region, where they are once again reloaded and brought by truck to the accepting parcel center. Such transport usually takes place over night and the trains are powered by sustainably produced electricity. Heading into the pre-Christmas peak season, Deutsche Post DHL and DB Cargo plan to deploy an additional 20 trains on the weekends leading up to Christmas.

To further expand more climate-friendly parcel transport by rail, Deutsche Post DHL would also equip selected parcel centers with rail sidings. This would reduce the number of transports to the terminals, speed up the loading process and enable even greater volumes to be transported through climate-friendly rail traffic during the available time windows. The Cologne parcel center is to be the first site in the program, with the expansion and construction of a direct means of access to the adjacent Eifeltor container terminal planned in the coming years. However, Deutsche Post DHL's experiences in the planning of new rail sidings and the upgrading of existing facilities in Germany have been sobering to date, says Post and Parcel CEO Meyer, explaining that such plans are complicated by numerous building codes and regulatory requirements, and entail years of preparation.

Up to 100,000 parcels can be transported on each train. By using rail conveyance, Deutsche Post DHL already achieves carbon savings amounting to some 1,000 metric tonnes each month compared with road transport.

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Deutsche Post DHL Group is the world's leading logistic company. The Group connects people and markets and is an enabler of global trade. It aspires to be the first choice for customers, employees and investors worldwide. To this end, Deutsche Post DHL Group is focusing on growth in its profitable core logistics businesses and accelerating the digital transformation in all business divisions. The Group contributes to the world through sustainable business practices, corporate citizenship and environmental activities. By the year 2050, Deutsche Post DHL Group aims to achieve zero emissions logistics.

Deutsche Post DHL Group is home to two strong brands: DHL offers a comprehensive range of parcel and international express service, freight transport, and supply chain management services, as well as e-commerce logistics solutions. Deutsche Post is Europe's leading postal and parcel service provider. Deutsche Post DHL Group employs approximately 570,000 people in over 220 countries and territories worldwide. The Group generated revenues of more than 66 billion Euros in 2020.

The logistics company for the world.

DB Cargo AG is the freight transport division of Deutsche Bahn and the leading rail freight company in Europe. More than 30,000 employees transport some 20,000 trains through 18 European countries and China each week. The annual operating output replaces up to 22 million truck journeys per year. In this way, DB Cargo already saves seven million metric tonnes of CO₂ with its freight trains.

Around 60 percent of rail journeys cross at least one national border and thus operate on a pan-European basis. DB Cargo has the highest transport performance and the most customer connections in Europe, at around 4,200. With some 78,000 freight cars overall and about 2,700 locomotives, DB Cargo operates Europe's largest rail fleet.