

Report

on the presentation of a working string transportation model at the exhibition timed to the Global Ministerial Environmental Forum in Malme, Sweden, 29-31 May, 2000.

Presentation of the outcomes of the UNCHS (Habitat) project: "Sustainable Development of Human Settlements and Improvement of their Communication Infrastructure through the Use of a String Transportation System (STS)" was arranged by Director of Habitat Executive Bureau in Moscow Mr. V.K. Storchevus and Project Manager Mr. A.E. Yunitsky upon the invitation by Under Secretary General on Human Settlements (Habitat) Mr. K. Toepfer in the course of the Global Environmental Forum which brought together 98 ministers of environment from the UN member-states. The focus of the presentation was on the demonstration of a STS model at 1:10 scale operating under various working regimes (such as acceleration, breaking, stable speed) and moving along a horizontal section of a track structure and at sections with up to 60° slope.

The demonstration took place at Scania Convention Centre in the city of Malme, exhibition hall 1A-1B, i.e. immediately at the entrance to the assembly hall. The pavilion was attended by more than 300 visitors with 130 of them having been provided with detailed explanations and answers to the questions. Among the visitors there were 22 heads of the delegations from Western Europe, Australia, Asia, Africa, North and Latin America.

Ministers from 11 countries - members of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environmental Programme expressed their opinions and made proposals towards further promotion of a STS as an environmentally sound alternative to motor transportation in large and largest cities, in zones of higher residential densities and historic parts of human settlements. They also noted a STS potential for the use in resort and tourist centres, national parks and areas of outstanding natural landscapes.

As to the use of a STS for inter-settlement, inter-regional and international passenger and freight traffic (including the so-called "creta" multi-modal transportation corridors) all visitors agreed that in order to investigate this area of transportation it would be appropriate to have a full-scale STS designed and tested at proving grounds in various parts of the globe.

Valuable comments expressed by Dr. K. Toepfer who had an opportunity to get acquainted with the operation of a STS model were also aimed at the system improvement. In particular, he stressed the importance of a more thorough investigation of all STS components responsible for the safety of passenger and freight trips for users who are in the face of changed psychological perception of transportation "at the second level". In his opinion a STS should become "an absolutely safe mode of transportation".

In the course of the presentation the system was discussed with Deputy Minister for Natural Resources of Russia Mr. I.F. Glumov and Ambassador of the Russian Federation to Sweden Mr. A.L. Nikiforov and an agreement was reached which, in particular, envisages that Ministry for Natural Resources of the RF (which is also responsible for environmental management) will render its assistance in promoting a STS in Russia, inter alia, through wider involvement of the RF Ministry of Transportation and Ministry of Economy in providing their financial support to the construction of a testing ground and the first STS line in the area of Bolshoi Sochi.

Negotiations were also conducted with Director of UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics Ms. J. De Larderel as a result of which the parties came to the following agreement: it seems reasonable to prepare proposals for the GEF investigating a possibility for initiating a Habitat-UNEP project for Russia with a view to carry out design and survey works and to build a STS line in the city of Sochi with the financial support provided in the ratio 50%:50% by the GEF and the Russian side. At the same time Ms. J. De Larderel suggested that a working meeting of experts should be arranged in Moscow or in Paris to discuss the proposed project under the direct leadership of Energy and Ozone Action Unit (Unit Head Mr. M. Radka).

Discussion arranged with the representatives of Mayor's Office of Goeteborg (Sweden) was centered on a possibility of using a STS to serve the historic core of the city. It was agreed to promote relationships between the Habitat Executive Bureau in Moscow and Goeteborg Administration in this field using appropriate contacts within the framework of the Russian/Swedish Cultural Society.

In its turn, close contacts with the leadership of the Society established in the course of the STS presentation at Scania Convention Centre seemed to be effective in attracting potential investors from Sweden for financing of construction of a testing ground.

The major conclusions are as follows:

1. Presentation of a working STS model in the course of the Global Ministerial Environmental Forum in many respects proved that it is feasible to further promote and test a STS to bring it to industrial sample. A STS could become an efficient full-value environmental and economic alternative to motor transportation in urban areas appropriate for the use for a wide range of passenger and freight traffic.
2. Deep interest in further search for transportation alternatives and their wider introduction expressed by professional environmentalists proved the need in launching the second stage of the Habitat project (in collaboration with UEP) implying design and survey works and construction of a testing ground equipped with appropriate labs and infrastructure and located within the land plot allocated by the City Administration of Sochi.
3. Habitat Executive Bureau in Moscow together with "Yunitran" Corporation and UNEP Centre for International Projects is requested to formulate proposals for the European Branch of the GEF with a view to initiate a Habitat-UNEP project aimed at solving the aforementioned problems and preparing project documentation for a pilot testing ground construction in the city of Sochi.
4. Participation in the Global Ministerial Environmental Forum held under the auspices of UNEP demonstrated achievements of Russia in the field of new transportation technologies and proved that similar events are fruitful for the attraction of potential foreign investors and fund raising to facilitate development and introduction of knowledge-intensive technologies in the national urban economic practice.

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