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The journal Zheleznodorozhnoe Delo [Railway Business] in 1910 reviewed in detail the discussion in City Duma [Council] of St. Petersburg on the report of the Commission of the Ministry of Railways, that suggested the project of comprehensive development of rail transport in the city. Using more modern terminology the discussion touched upon the aspects that are still of interest nowadays, comprising impact on urban planning and traffic jams in the downtown, private public partnership, mobility of population, system development of urban and suburban transit, possibility to use railways for intracity travels and relevant fares, prospect for construction of metro.

Kew words: city transport, urban and suburban railways, commuter trains, mobility, St. Petersburg.

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On Improving the Conditions for Passenger Traffic on Suburban and Urban Railways of Petersburg Junction

In the Petersburg List of May 6, this year the following message has been published, not devoid of interest, according to its specific character:

Yesterday, on May 5, in the darkened Nikolayevsky hall Mr. Taburno read to the general presence of the council a report on his project for arrangement of suburban trams with a direct connection through city roads.

This report was attended by the mayor I. I. Glazunov, his deputy, members of the council, many public officials, representatives of the Ministry of Railways and Ing. Gorchakov, the chairman on this subject of the Government Commission.

Mr. Taburno accompanied his report with light pictures on the screen and said that all the work would cost about fifty-four million rubles.

The speaker set out in great detail the project, including the type of rails, track crossings, etc.

Mr. Taburno reported to the meeting about the proposed routes and in passing only mentioned that the city will receive a reward for the traffic on its territory.

Although there was no debate on the report, the audience, having entered the neighbouring Alexander hall, seemed to be divided into two parts.

Some, for example, member of the town council N. N. Pertsov, argued that sooner or later such a road should be arranged, that it would resolve the housing crisis in the central parts of the city, help populate the urban outskirts, raise profitability of real estate in these outskirts and, consequently, raise the citywide estimate levy on real estate.

This group of members of the town council referred to the example of Berlin, where with a similar type of road, city tram traffic increased eight and a half times in just twenty-five years.

Opponents objected that the population of Berlin had more than doubled in twenty-five years.

In addition to the suburban trams, there were many reasons that increased Berlin tram traffic.

The most important thing in these cases is abundance of city tram lines.

And if we had trams of the second and third stages [of earlier planned], the traffic on the first stage would also quadruple.

In general, it must be confessed that the attitude of the members of the town council

to the project of Mr. Taburno was rather sour.

— There is no doubt that a suburban tram connected to city lines will be useful, but the question is — for whom?

Most likely, for Mr. Taburno himself, and to those who will build this tram, but in no case for the city.

The congestion of narrow streets is already very high.

And if this traffic congestion is also increased by transit traffic through the city, then no good can be expected from this.

The «Little Duma» decided upon receipt of an official draft from the Ministry of Railways, which does not coincide with the views and intentions of Mr. Taburno, to send this official draft to all publics and put the issue on the agenda of the Duma, without expressing any personal opinion, but leaving the Duma to do what it wants.

From the Editor. This message was delivered to us incidentally — and in other newspapers something similar was probably placed. As hastily written, it is not accurate. So, for example, in the 1st and 3rd paragraphs it is said that Mr. Taburno reported «his» project, while he reported not his own project, but a draft drawn up by the Commission, the chairman of which is named in the 2nd paragraph; he did not even report on the technical side of the project: engineers Belago and Rudnitsky, former members of the same Commission, reported on it. As for the question — to whom this project would benefit, which was the subject of the report read by the engineer Taburno himself, the reader will learn about this in detail from the following presentation of this report, to which, however, we preface article of Mr. Gorodsky, published last autumn. It seems to us to be one of the most deliberate newspaper articles on this issue.

In conclusion, we quote from addendum No. 5 to Izvestia of the Meeting of Railway Engineers No. 26 dated May 8 this year, that «the Ministry of Railways submits for preliminary consideration of the Council of Ministers the issue of permission to conduct surveys and drafting a project for electrification of suburban areas of the North-West Railways with arrangement of a central power station on the river Volkhov, as well as subject to an experimental survey the question of the best method for arranging a high-voltage

transmission line in the current 1910 and opening of a special loan for this subject in the amount of 125 thousand rubles, and in case of their insufficiency — on the balances according to the general list of income and expenses for the same year».

Probably, the employee of Petersburg List had this project in mind, calling it in the last paragraph of his note that it did not coincide with the views and intentions of Mr. Taburno, in fact, of the mentioned Commission. But this project will affect the interests of the city only to a small extent, and the City Duma is unlikely to find anything to say against it.

I. Article of Mr. Gorodsky entitled «Petersburg Metro»

The government again returned to what it had refused seven or eight years ago: to the metro.

Then an engineer Mr. Balinsky was the author of the project and the initiator. Ministry of Finance headed by Mr. S. Yu. Witte warmly supported the idea of the metro. Representatives of other ministries were also sympathetic in the special Commission for construction of this city railway enterprise.

But the metro project had two strong opponents: Petersburg city public administration and the then all-powerful Minister of the Interior Mr. Plehve.

As a result, the opponents of the metro prevailed over the current favourable for this enterprise: the project was rejected...

And now, already on the initiative of government agencies, a new project has been developed, the work of Mr. Balinsky was undoubtedly its prototype.

And again, among the opponents, we see St. Petersburg city administration.

The views of other stakeholders have not yet emerged.

The city puts forward the same arguments as before, the same arsenal of arguments against the metro.

But most of all, our Duma is offended by the fact that the Ministry of Railways, from the depths of which the project came out, did not reckon with the city as with the public authority, which disposes of the rights of the owner in the capital.

One cannot but agree that even when solving problems of state benefit and importance, nevertheless, if these problems



violate or affect the interests of city management, the city could not be ignored.

But the Commission of Active State Councillor Gorchakov invited representatives of the city to participate in the meetings. They took part in one of the meetings and spoke out against the metro project.

Here, in essence, there was a twofold mistake: in such serious matters it is necessary that the Commission should have a deputy from the Duma, supplied with appropriate directives, and not members of the city council who spoke on their own behalf. The Duma's point of view on creation of metro in St. Petersburg is still unknown. Let's say more: the Duma does not even know the essence of the project, its main parts and goals.

It has only private information at its disposal: the road will be constructed using electric traction; will pass through the centre of the capital – Litovskaya Street along an overpass, cross Nevsky Prospect, go out onto the Neva, here it will cross a special bridge to Vyborg side, connect with Finlyandskaya road and the freight station of Primorskaya road, etc.

The purpose of metro is to unite all the stations and to promote the correct resettlement and thinning of the capital's population by attracting it to the outskirts and summer cottages located on the railway lines.

Here is everything that is known about the metro in the city government.

Even with such fragmentary information, one cannot but sympathize with the idea of a new railway enterprise. If the Duma speaks out and will speak out even more firmly against the metro, it is solely due to the fact that it is dominated by homeowners. The projected road, embracing the capital in a wide semicircle, will cause certain damage to the central household. The Petersburg tram was built in such a way that it could not and cannot free the population from the cramped and crowded life. It serves arteries and areas in which city life is in full swing and little distraction of the population to undeveloped and healthy areas. Consequently, the project of the metro, developed by the government, is fully in the interests of the poorest population, suffering from the high cost of apartments, air and soil pollution. That the city ticket office may suffer from the competition between the metro and trams is a very special issue. One

must think that the government will be able to compensate the city's losses.

It is unforgivable for the city to come out with all sorts of instruments of counteraction to an undoubtedly useful enterprise. It knows very well that it will never dare to spend 40 million to create this railway semicircle, which brings so many valuable benefits to the way of city life, it will never even come close to this idea.

Its whole task in this matter, it seems to us, should be reduced to deriving great material benefits from this enterprise. In this regard, the State Duma will probably also support it, which should authorize loans for the metro.

St. Petersburg Vedomosti, dated November 1, 1909, No. 245.

From the Editor. And this article needs some clarification. Firstly, the project of the Commission, reported on May 5, in technical respect has very little in common with the project of engineer Balinsky. Secondly, for the Commission that developed the project, the recall of the entire City Duma was not at all necessary. The Commission had to find out if the St. Petersburg City Administration was currently making up any favourable exception in their views on feasibility and profitability of such structures, and two members of the City Administration who participated in the meeting of the Commission and spoke out against the project turned out to be quite competent. Thirdly, the chairman of the Commission, according to his previous relations with the Moscow Circle Road, has long been familiar with these views and was inexpressibly surprised and delighted if St. Petersburg City Duma did not share the statements of the aforementioned members of the City Council. Fourthly, out of other interested parties' representatives of the military department spoke out against the project and, we must give them full justice, they did everything possible for them to drop the project, defending the construction of Zaokhtenskaya line currently under construction. The future, of course, will show how much this insistence of representatives of the military department costs the country and the population of St. Petersburg. In essence, they freed the project from unnecessary appendages, introduced for the sake of general economy, but increased the cost of the project itself.

II. Interests of the city of Petersburg in the project for improving the conditions of suburban passenger traffic on the roads of Petersburg railway junction drawn up by the Commission of the Ministry of Railways

Reported by a member of the named Commission P. Taburno to the City Duma of small composition on May 5, 1910 after other persons reported on the technical part of the project.

Let me, Dear Sirs, add some data and general considerations to the technical part of the project just outlined.

The Commission formed by the Ministry of Railways, which developed this project, had the task of resolving the issue of transporting passengers in suburban traffic on the railway lines adjacent to Petersburg. For these railways, this question has become acute: overcrowding of trains is enormous, suburban traffic is growing by more than 7 % a year, so that in some ten years it will almost double. If at the present time this suburban traffic is in abnormal conditions, and if radical measures are not taken to improve it, then in a relatively short period of time railways of Petersburg junction will find themselves in a completely hopeless situation. In some 5–10 years, the existing traffic will greatly increase, and in fact a 5-year period is the period by which it will only be possible to implement those measures that are most likely to be able to streamline and bring suburban traffic into proper form. Therefore, it is natural that the Ministry of Railways is now taking care of drawing up a rational plan of appropriate measures. The Commission, which was developing the interpreted project of resolving the problem of satisfying suburban traffic from Petersburg and to Petersburg, of course, had to touch the interests of the urban population, both of the population itself and of the urban economy, because, in essence, the issue it resolves concerns almost exclusively urban residents. But regardless of the fact that, in resolving the intended issue, due to technical conditions it was necessary to touch on urban interests, the Government, as the supreme manager over the entire state, cannot be alien to the interests of large urban centres, especially the capital of the Empire, in relation to both economic, and hygienic living conditions of the population.

It is unlikely that anyone would dispute that the inhabitants of the Russian capital, due to

unfavourable, mainly climatic, and, in part, hygienic conditions, need more than residents of any not only European, but also Russian city, in living for some seasons in more favourable conditions. Meanwhile, residents of St. Petersburg use their dacha life in very limited quantities. Judging by the statistics of passenger transportation in suburban traffic, less than 10 % of St. Petersburg residents have the opportunity to use their dacha life for 3–4 summer months. This percentage is very low, and not only the Government, but mainly the self-government should have sought all kinds of measures to promote spread of dacha life, even if these measures required some sacrifices on the part of the city treasury, since these direct sacrifices would indirectly pay off by improving health and reinforcement of the body, if not all, then part of the population, which is achieved by staying for several months in fresh and healthy air. The main obstacle to development of dacha life should be considered inconvenience of travelling, because not one, not two or three times a month a summer resident needs to come to Petersburg and leave Petersburg, but every day. Every extra half hour spent on travel is very expensive for the middle and low-income class of the population. Only rich people have the luxury of not reckoning with waste of time; the poorer is a person, the more expensive is each minute, and that is why the main conditions should be considered: speed of movement and minimum loss of time while waiting for transportation. Both conditions in existing commuter vehicles are far from satisfactory. The project developed by the Commission, which we are talking about here, should be considered the most satisfying these two conditions — speed of movement and maximum density of dispatched and arriving transport units.

The Commission that developed the project, reported to you here, came to the conclusion that the only way to properly function from the technical side of operational conditions is not only the transition of suburban railways to electric traction, which gives traffic maximum flexibility, but also construction of one, and subsequently two, three lines, crossing the city and designed in such a way that they form a continuous ring along which trains would move without any manoeuvres.

With implementation of the project outlined by the Commission, as it is clear from



detailed calculations, suburban traffic, which is now unprofitable for state-owned railways, can become profitable not only without an increase in transportation fees, but even with a decrease in it. Thus, implementation of this project promises urban inhabitants an improvement in the means of transportation for summer cottage life, and, consequently, its development, and on the other hand, material benefits for the state treasury. Hence the conclusion: both the Government, as a guardian of state property, and public administration, taking care of the interests and conveniences of the urban population, must converge on this path and jointly contribute to implementation of appropriate measures in this matter.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that implementation of the Commission's project, proposing, on the one hand, electrification of suburban railways, and on the other, their penetration into the city, is not only expedient, but also necessary in the interests of both railways and the urban population, and this conclusion can hardly be disputed.

The Commission's proposal on penetration of railways into the city is, in my opinion, not something new, but only a reasonable application of the measures taken in the large population centres of America and Europe, which were in the same conditions of traffic as Petersburg meets now. To highlight the issue, it will be interesting to trace what discussions preceded implementation of these measures in European and American major centres and what results were obtained after their implementation. From the large centres of Europe, the cities of Berlin and Vienna are closer to our conditions. In the spheres of public city administrations of these cities, they feared that penetration of railways into the city would cause significant damage not only to the city economy, but also to city private property. It was said that railways laid through the city, not limited to satisfaction of suburban traffic, would no doubt carry out purely urban traffic along the way and would distract a certain number of passengers from city trams, which would reduce income of urban transportation enterprises. On the other hand, they feared that convenience of movement, facilitating resettlement of residents of the capital in the suburbs, would lower apartment prices, and this would affect not only homeowners, but also the

city treasury, which taxes real estate in proportion to profitability.

This is what the statistics of the city of Berlin answers to these fears. In 1885, at the beginning of opening of the circle city railway, were transported by:

Circle city railway – 15,2 mln passengers,
Trams – 85,5
Omnibuses – 16,1
Total – 116,8

In 1902 already 91,7 mln passengers were transported on circle city railway.

Trams – 362,6
Omnibuses – 78,7
Total – 533,0

that is over 17 years the number of tram passengers increased by 277 million, and in 1907 were transported by:

Circle city railway – 148,9 mln passengers
Trams – 504,8
Omnibuses – 140,6
Total – 794,3

that is over five years, the number of tram passengers increased by 142,2 million. These data clearly prove that construction of Berlin city railway not only did distract passengers from trams, but, on the contrary, it contributed to an increase in the number of travels by tram, and omnibus, and in general, an increase in all travels around the city, for in Berlin in 1885 82 trips fell per inhabitant, and in 1907 265 trips per inhabitant. Such a strong growth in both tram and omnibus traffic should be attributed mainly to implementation of the circle city line, which made it possible to avoid crowding in the central parts of the city and move some of the inhabitants to the outskirts of the city. Trains of the circle and city railways are a collecting apparatus from remote parts of the city, delivering mass of the population to the central parts of it, from where it is sent by trams and omnibuses to places of work or trade. If, perhaps, the circle city railway distracts some of the passengers, then only travelling exclusively over long distances. For short distances, it cannot distract passengers, at least for a purely tariff reason, because for short distances the tariffs of city railways are much higher than of the tram. But on the other hand, it increases the number of tram passengers for short distances, and those passengers are more profitable for the tram industry.

Vienna in 1895 had no urban railways, and trams carried 70,5 million passengers; in 1902



city railways carried 33,8 million passengers, trams – 145 million passengers, omnibuses – 17,8 million passengers. In 1907, city railways carried the same number of passengers as in 1902, trams carried 216,9 million passengers, and omnibus traffic dropped to 13,9 million passengers; thus, the number of tram passengers over 12 years increased by 146,4 million. And here we notice the same picture as in Berlin: construction of the city line contributed to development of tram traffic, and by no means to its reduction. I could cite similar data for many other cities, but I will confine myself to data from Vienna and Berlin, as cities that are closer in terms of conditions, as well as in terms of their population, to Petersburg, as well as of the percentage growth of population (Vienna in 1907 had about 2 million inhabitants, an increase of about 4 % per year; Berlin had about 3 million and an increase of about 5 % per year).

As for the second fear – that urban roads, contributing to resettlement of urban residents in the suburbs, will cause a drop in prices for urban private real estate, I think that it would not be worth stopping at this, because one can hardly agree with this situation, which would sacrifice the interests of masses of the population in favour of a wealthy minority living off those masses. I do not think that any of you here would join the voice of those citizens of Vienna and Berlin who opposed implementation of the city desires there for fear that the rent for apartments will fall. You, of course, would like to cover this part of the issue, since it refers to the possibility

of reducing the income of the city treasury, allegedly from the fall in the value of urban private real estate. Neither in Berlin nor in Vienna since the construction of the city railways, the prices for apartments in the central parts of the city did not fall due to settlement in the outskirts, while on the outskirts of the cities, on the contrary, they increased greatly, gave a large increase in taxation of urban real estate. Perhaps prices for premises in the central parts have stopped rising with astonishing speed with which they had risen earlier. Here in the housing issue, normal conditions have come, and the growth in apartment rent has followed the curve of the general growth in the general cost of living. If we turn to the budgets of the city administrations of these two cities after construction of urban railways, then we will not see a fall in the budgets, but on the contrary, we will notice a faster growth in income. The city budget is based on the well-being of the mass of the population. If this mass saves on rent, then it will use this savings on something else that improves life, and a share of these additional expenses one way or another ends up in the city treasury in no less proportion than the tax on real estate.

Returning to the project, which is being reported here today, it is necessary to compare the conditions that will be created in urban traffic in the event of penetration of suburban roads into the city with the currently existing means of urban transportation.

It can hardly be recognized that the existing cultural means of transportation, i.e., trams in



the city, are able to fully satisfy the needs of urban movement. We see that during busy hours of travel – in the morning, when office and trading establishments open, and in the evening, when they close, trams are overcrowded to unacceptable sizes, and passengers have to wait for a long time at stopping points; we see that the population of St. Petersburg, due to inability to use trams due to their inadequacy, is forced to use expensive cabs. The city administration is currently concerned with finding funds to unload central tram lines, because overloading them, among other things, harms the tram economy itself. It is impossible to restrict oneself to those lines that have already been built – it is necessary to continue implementation of the entire network; the lines constructed make up a smaller part of this city tram network. If there is such an overload at present, then what will it be when the lines of, say, the second stage start operating. After all, these new lines will increase the flow of passengers to the central lines, since the main traffic is directed to the central part of the city, where government, public and commercial institutions are located. The situation may become critical, and it seems to me that we should not start building the trams of the next stages before funds are found to unload the existing lines.

With such a position of urban transportation means, it seems to me, there can be no place for the question of diverting passengers by projected city lines from city trams; if such a distraction could take place, then this should only rejoice.

Another matter is the question of participation of the city in implementation of the city lines outlined by the Commission.

The Commission that developed the project, in order to ensure the unity of the economy of operation, considered that the implementation of the entire project will be carried out by the treasury, which, with a few exceptions, owns almost all the lines adjacent to St. Petersburg. True, in Berlin, and in Vienna, and even in Paris, the roads of the projected type were carried out by the treasury. Personally, I disagree with this opinion of the Commission, but in the Commission this issue was less debated. I think that on the issue of building railways through the city, even if only with the overriding goal of regulating suburban traffic, since these roads perform functions of

purely urban traffic, in no way can the city's right to operate transportation facilities be ignored. It is virtually impossible to restrain the projected roads to the function of carrying commuter passengers only, and it would be unreasonable to deprive the urban population of convenient transportation. On construction of a line for urban movement, priority rights belong to the city, and the city has the initiative to implement city lines, whether by implementing them at its own expense, or by giving them to concession use, and in this case, the concession should be urban, not governmental, and the right of redemption should belong to the city in the same way as the right to transfer the road to the city free of charge at the end of the concession period. As for joint movement of urban lines with sections of suburban railways, there are literally no technical obstacles in this respect: trains of suburban railways, without any paperwork or other manipulations, can enter and move along urban railways. The point is only in accounting for a purely economic nature, which is very easy to be implemented.

Thus, we came not to deny feasibility of implementing city lines, but to the question of how to implement them.

According to the Commission's calculations, operation of the planned urban roads is a profitable undertaking. But given vastness of the urban economy, such lines are unlikely to be successfully operated by the city itself. It would be more correct to build such lines with city funds and transfer them on favourable terms to private companies for operation.

But if, for one reason or another, or consideration, the city began to delay implementation of the required high-speed city lines, then the Government cannot be blamed if it undertakes their implementation, despite the city's priority rights: after all, this is not only on regulation of traffic on the railways adjacent to the capital, but also on measures without which in the near future railways will not be able to carry out the increasing traffic at all. The Government cannot and should not make traffic safety and the interests of the state and urban residents dependent on extraneous considerations.

(Zheleznodorozhnoe Delo [Railway Business], 1910, No. 28, pp. 151–155) ●