About the attractiveness of combined transport for shippers

The Baden-Wuerttemberg Cooperative State University Loerrach and the Bundesverband Materialwirtschaft, Einkauf und Logistik (BME; Federal Association for Materials Management, Purchasing and Logistics) e. V. carried out a special survey on combined transport (CT) in September and October 2011. A total of 189 companies from all sectors, about three-quarters of them shippers and a quarter transport and logistics service providers, took part in the Internet survey.

On the basis of 16 possible reasons, with multiple answers allowed, more than 50 per cent of the shippers who currently do not use CT today give speed of CT as a reason; however, a distinction must certainly be made in this respect between continental traffic and less time-critical seaport hinterland traffic. Speed is still more important than the too short distances or the lack of CT-affinity of the transported cargo (see figure 1). Railways and operators have to face the question of how they will manage to speed up CT systems as a whole.

Nearly three-quarters of the service providers would use the combined rail-road transport if the shippers were willing to accept longer transport times. But it would seem that only about one third of the shippers are willing to do so. Therefore, some efforts still need to be made to convince them in this respect.

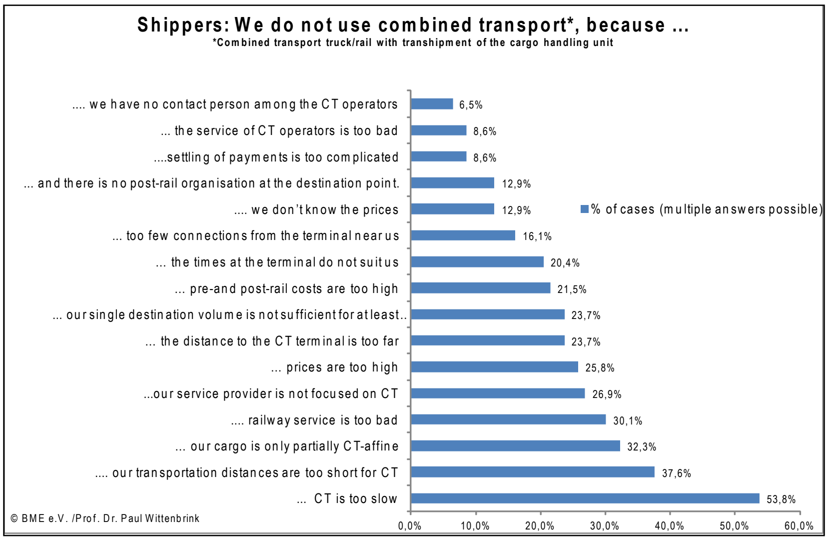

Figure 1: Reasons against CT for shippers

Transportation service providers insufficiently focused on CT

Nearly a third of the shippers also complain that their own transport and logistics service providers demonstrate insufficient focus on CT. Service providers are asked about this, especially as freight for CT has to be bundled, since many shippers do not have the required single destination volume of at least one swap body. Many service providers who do not use CT declare that their customers do not ask for CT (45.5 per cent) or do not want CT (36.4 per cent). In any case, the subject of „CT“ should be more on the agenda.

Price does not play a central role

Even though the railways are rated much worse than the operators, they are nevertheless in demand. Ama-

GR: PROF. DR. PAUL WITTENBRINK / PHOTO: HUPAC AG zingly, the price plays no central role. It only discourages about a quarter of the companies from using CT. Its price-performance ratio therefore cannot be so bad. Other obstacles are long distances to the nearest terminal, the associated pre- and post-rail high costs, and times and connections at the terminal.

Price attractiveness of CT

85 per cent of shippers using CT declare price as a reason, which strengthens the above assumption that CT has no pricing problem. CT is a very interesting alternative in seaport hinterland transport In particular, especially as in general the latter is less time-critical. As this option is not relevant for all respondents, it can be regarded as more important, as nearly 40 per cent of respondents indicate it as a reason for CT (see figure 2). Price attractiveness is closely followed by environmental friendliness. In times of increasing emphasis on „green logistics“ environmental friendliness seems to be of high relevance to shippers.

Payload, planning and reliability

CT has a key advantage in the transport of heavy goods, because 44 tons total weight can be utilised both in pre- and post-rail hauls to the terminal. On the way to the terminal, (small) gigaliners have long been a reality. For almost as many companies, good planning and reliability

Terminal in Antwerpen

provide another reason to use CT.

Few vehicles – large cargo volume

In addition, just under three quarters of service providers using CT declare that CT allows them to move large cargo volumes with fewer vehicles and drivers. If, as about 43 per cent of these service providers say, CT system costs can be reduced by good pre- and post-rail organisation, this could develop into a competitive advantage.

Lack of flexibility, information and capacities

CT users currently complain about insufficient information concerning shipment status and punctuality, in addition to the lack of flexibility, which is one disadvantage of the system. Many of the service providers using CT also complain that there are often not enough tracks available in the desired time slots (81.8 per cent) and that they do not receive sufficient firm capacity commitments (45.5 per cent).

Asked about future activities, nearly 40 per cent of the companies plan to expand their CT activities. This suggests that despite all challenges, CT still has a great future. ■

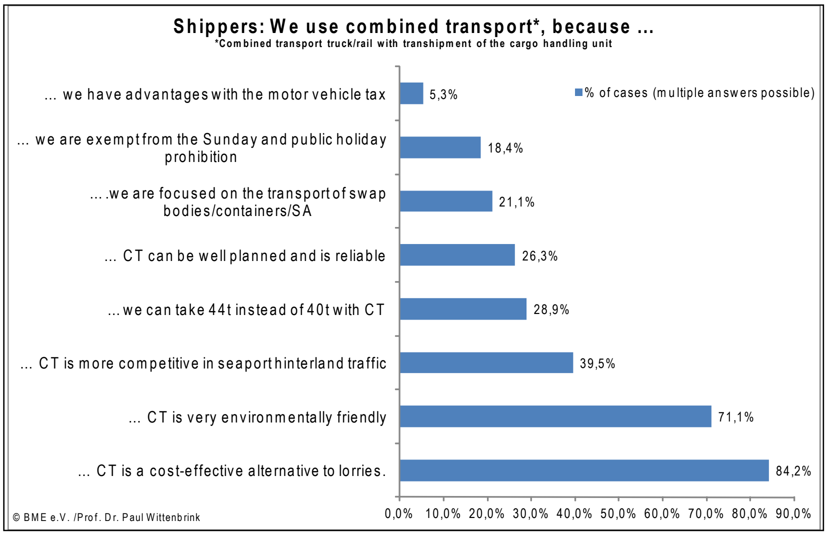

Figure 2: Reasons for CT for shippers

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