

Lille, July 12, 2005

Press release

I-Trans awarded industrial cluster status

France highlights leading-edge technology in rail systems and innovative transport

I-Trans, an initiative bringing together major French players in rail technology and innovative transport systems, was today awarded industrial cluster status under the French government's pôles de compétitivité program. It is one of 15 of a total 105 proposals nationwide granted "world-class status", as announced by the Comité Interministeriel d'Aménagement du Territoire meeting July 12. Northern France welcomes official recognition of this key sector and its scope for development worldwide

French expertise leads international markets

Clusters selected by the French government will shape the country's industrial strategy for the three decades ahead. By naming I-Trans as a standard bearer, the authorities have confirmed the key role of innovative transport systems, specifically railways, in the years to come, while highlighting a store of expertise that has already won international recognition for France.

With Northern France already a regional leader in Europe for the rail, automotive and logistics industries, I-Trans will have a strong foundation on which to build tomorrow's transport systems and meet the needs of emerging markets.

Past and present — a track record that speaks for itself

Northern France has been a strategic player in transport from the start, with a tradition of excellence and innovation in railways serving early industry. Key breakthroughs in technology happened here — in rail, automotive and logistics — as reflected in the major names still operating in the region, backed by a host of research centers.

Today the rail, automotive and logistics industries are pillars of the regional and national economy, representing over 120,000 jobs. All three are at the forefront of progress, contributing to the emergence of

innovative transport systems.

Regional authorities have put their full weight behind development, starting with the Regional Council which has responsibility for rail transport. Examples range from VAL, the world's first fully automated metro system, designed and developed for Greater Lille, to the Channel rail link and double-decker TER train carriages. These projects and others made Valenciennes-Lille the natural choice as home for the new European Railways Agency, announced recently by the European Union. Just as the unique body of resources available in Northern France made I-Trans the obvious choice as France's industrial cluster for rail technology. I-Trans was in fact the sole candidate in rail technology in the pôles de compétitivité program.

The challenges ahead

As an official industrial cluster, I-Trans must now meet the challenges posed by an exponential rise in demand, with the focus on leveraging options that combine different types of transport, and promoting truly compatible systems.

Against this backdrop, the objective is to build Europe's number one cluster — a world-class contender — for rail infrastructure/equipment and innovative transport. This will by definition require large-scale initiatives including the development of the Europe's largest test center for railways and a raft of innovative technologies. With a total budget of €270 million, the project will invest to ensure significant growth in all three component sectors, aiming for a doubling in revenues over the next ten years.

I-Trans brings it all together

In moving towards these goals, I-Trans will draw on the support of its initiators — business and research leaders in rail and transport— as well as local and regional authorities that include Regional Councils of Northern France and Picardy, Conseils Généraux, and councils heading towns, cities and urban areas. Spearheaded by Transports Terrestres Promotion, the initiative counts 41 partner businesses representing 15,000 jobs, plus 19 research and training institutions representing 600 researchers from both the public and private sectors, with over 2,000 students directly involved. As the cluster takes shape, new players are expected to join, creating new jobs.

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President, I-Trans Support Committee
President, Conseil Economique et Social
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Appendix

What is an industrial cluster?

The industrial clusters defined under France's *pôle de compétitivité* program bring together businesses, institutes of higher education and research centers — both public and private — to work together on innovative projects in a given geographical area. The synergies that result from combining public and private resources serve all stakeholders by encouraging productive partnerships within a common market.

I-Trans participants:

Rail:

Arbel Fauvet Rail, Alstom, Bombardier, Centre d'Essais Ferroviaire, Certifer, Delos, Enersys, Ermewa-Saty, Faiveley, Infodio, Neu SF, Odice, Railtech, RATP, RFF, SNCF, Sambre et Meuse, Sofanor, Stratiforme, Valdunes, VTG

Automobiles, logistics and intelligent systems:

Acteos, Archimed, Atos, AUTF, CETIM, CRIIT M2A, Digiport, Durisotti, ESI Group, Eurotunnel, Gecom, IP4U, NFTI.o.u, Port Autonome de Dunkerque, Renault, Saint Gobain, Valéo, Valutec, VB2S, Vibratech, Vistéon, Walan

Research centers and institutes of higher education/universities:

Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Lens and Valenciennes; CNRS, CREPIM, Ecole Centrale de Lille, Ecole des Mines de Douai, Ensam centre de Lille, ENSCL, HEI, ICAM, INRIA, INRETS, Universités de l'Artois, des Sciences et Technologies de Lille, du Littoral et de la côte d'Opale, de Valenciennes et du Hainaut-Cambrésis, Universités de Picardie Jules Verne et Technologie de Compiègne.

For more information on I-Trans:

- resources, services, members and news
- major projects (updated regularly)
- presentation of surface transport in Northern France and Picardy

www.i-trans.org

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