

Fifty-Year Program Inspires Denmark

by Our Copenhagen Bureau

This Fall, an infrastructure commission appointed by the Danish government has to present a list of major infrastructure projects that should be considered for the coming 30 years. Meanwhile, the Danish Schiller Institute—which during the past year has distributed three programmatic newspapers in runs of 50,000 copies each (in a population of 5.5 million), with the demand that the pessimistic/hedonistic “68er” culture be replaced with big infrastructure projects and a Danish maglev network—is gathering support for transforming the infrastructure discussion from “what are the next repair projects to be undertaken” to a comprehensive 50-year development perspective, based on building three major bridge projects, along with the first parts of a Danish maglev network, over the next decade. That would mean tripling the annual Danish infrastructure budget.

In the aftermath of the recent agreement to build the Fehmarn Bridge (*EIR*, July 20, 2007), an intense public debate has taken place regarding the need to investigate a 46-km Kattegat bridge project linking Zealand directly with Jutland via the island Samsø. All the major newspapers have been discussing the possibility of combining this with the first Danish high-speed train route to connect the two biggest cities, Copenhagen and Århus. This discussion is now broadened to include the general lack of investment in rail and road infrastructure in recent decades.

Present Plans Are From 1936

On July 15, the biggest Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten* (*JP*), had a feature on how Danish road traffic is jammed up due to lack of long-term planning and investment. The paper outlined how the evolution of the Danish highway system has followed a script from 1936, when the so-called H-plan was proposed. It involved highways going north-south in Jutland and Zealand, with a connecting highway over Fyn completing the H. The plan included the Great Belt Bridge, the Fehmarn Bridge, and a bridge to Sweden. The time has now come, the article argued, for putting a new vision on the table for development of the highway system.

On July 17, *JP* had a second feature, accompanied by an editorial, on the sad state of affairs for the Danish railroads. The feature reported that while other European countries are building high-speed rail, sections of the Danish railroads are slower today than they were 40 years ago—simply due to lack of investment. The next day, *JP* reported figures from the Union of Construction Engineers that Denmark would have



next 50 years. A foundation which can be completed piece after piece, and further built upon.” This is the second recent op-ed *JP* has printed by Gillesberg. The first one was on the need for a Danish maglev network, which was prominently published on June 21.

After referring to *JP*’s series on the lack of long-term planning, Gillesberg continues, under the subhead “Maglev”: “Therefore, it is important to choose the right foundation. In a little more than ten years, the Great Belt Bridge and the Øresund Bridge [both now in use] ought to have been supplemented by a series of new bridges: the Kattegat connection, the Fehmarn Bridge, and a bridge between Helsingør and Helsingborg. These three projects, which have to be built anyway, should be completed as fast as possible, so the coming infrastructure projects can be planned accordingly.

“At the same time, we have to build a brand new rail connection between Århus

to invest 100 billion crowns (about \$17 billion) over the next 30 years—simply to keep the rail system functioning. A more ambitious policy, improving the railroad, would require 200 billion crowns.

The traffic policy spokesmen for the various political parties were then interviewed. Magnus Heunicke from the opposition Social Democratic Party thought that those 200 billion crowns had to be spent, while the Social Liberal Party thought 100 billion for 20 years would be more reasonable. The government parties, on the other hand, wouldn’t even consider that amount of money for rail infrastructure. The traffic spokesman for the Liberal government party added, that he thought high-speed trains would be irrelevant for a little country like Denmark. The worry in the government is whether the present limited infrastructure budget should be spent on improving the railways or the highways. The solution to that paradox is, of course, to change the underlying flawed axioms and massively expand the Danish infrastructure budget—a change that, with the present budget surplus, seems like an obvious thing to do.

Op-Ed by Schiller Institute’s Gillesberg

That point was brought home in an op-ed entitled “Bridges Are the Foundation for the Next 50 Years Infrastructure,” by Tom Gillesberg, the chairman of the Schiller Institute in Denmark, in *Jyllands-Posten* on July 30. The Schiller Institute, which operates internationally, was founded by Helga Zepp-LaRouche. The prominently placed op-ed calls for a visionary 50-year perspective, and *JP* highlighted a quote: “The task which the Infrastructure Commission and the Danish politicians are faced with is to decide the overall visionary plan which can lay the basis for the development in the

and Copenhagen via the future Kattegat link, which gives us a unique chance of establishing the first part of a new Danish high-speed rail network. This should be a maglev train connection between Copenhagen and Århus, which with a speed of 500-600 km/h would make it possible to traverse the distance between the two cities in 25 minutes, and thereby replace the car as the Danes’ preferred means of transportation. The maglev net will then, of course, be expanded nationally and internationally, and over time will also come to play a major role in freight transport. We will be first with the new, instead of being the last with the old!”

The op-ed also argues, that even though Denmark, with the building of a maglev network, will avoid having to spend fortunes on trying to transform an outdated railroad to a high-speed rail network that would have to be replaced by maglev in the coming decades anyway, we still will have to spend significant amounts on improving existing, neglected rail infrastructure. All in all, we will have to triple the combined annual budget for infrastructure spending, compared with what has been the rule the last two decades. That, however, is not a frightening proposition. Such an investment will, as the result of increased productivity and creation of wealth, return with compound interest. With the building of the maglev and those three new bridges, there is a vision for Danish infrastructure development to further build on.

Gillesberg ends by stating that “other infrastructure projects should fit into this larger plan, with the Kattegat/maglev project as the rotation point for the next 50 years, and therefore the starting point for the work the Infrastructure Commission and Danish Parliament will take up after the Summer break.”