PRESS RELEASE

Deutsche Bahn Takes Whisper Brake a Stage Further

“EuropeTrain” tests LL block • new type of brake block halves rail noise and can be retrofitted to current rail freight fleet at low cost

(Berlin, April 8, 2011) Deutsche Bahn is speeding up the Europe-wide introduction of whisper brakes: the “Europe Train”, which has been traveling throughout Europe since December, arrived today in Berlin after putting a new type of whisper brake – the LL block – through its paces before it goes into series production. Made up of various types of freight car, carrying all kinds of cargo and commissioned by several European rail operators, the test train, which is being monitored by engineers and technicians, will have covered a total of 200,000 kilometers before the test program comes to an end at the beginning of 2012. It has been through the icy cold of a Scandinavian winter, and now the hot summer temperatures of Italy lie ahead. At the same time, the effects of different topographic conditions are also being tested.

The LL brake block has the potential to halve rail noise produced by conventional freight trains. Unlike the K block, which also reduces noise levels by half, the LL brake block can be retrofitted to an existing fleet at significantly reduced cost. “Noise reduction in rail freight is at the top of our agenda,” says Dr. Karl-Friedrich Rausch, Member of the Management Board of DB ML AG responsible for Transportation and Logistics. “We are counting on continuous growth in rail freight transportation. Acceptance on the very busy corridors requires that we also provide active noise control at the source.”

Professor Klaus-Dieter Scheurle, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Development, emphasized at the presentation of the Europe Train: “Noise is one of the biggest problems for the acceptance of traffic. The quantities of goods transported on rail are increasing, but in many places people living along the lines are at the limit of what they can take – or have gone beyond the limit. We take the people’s concerns seriously and are investing in more noise control on both the tracks and the freight cars. We are funding the “Quiet Freight Traffic” pilot project, for example, by equipping freight cars with noise-reducing brake systems at a cost of 20 million euros. That is one step on the way to achieving our goal of reducing noise by 50 percent on severely affected routes by 2020.”

At the initiative of DB and under the overall responsibility of the “Union internationale des chemins de fer” (UIC), around 30 European rail operators and several partners from industry are involved in this test program. DB Systemtechnik in Minden is responsible for the technical implementation. The entire European planning, test runs and monitoring of the Europe Train is coordinated by DB Schenker Rail in Mainz.

The freight carrier DB Schenker Rail is already equipping new freight cars with the quiet K block. Retrofitting existing cars with the K block, however, due to the extensive modifications required to the brake system, is very time-consuming and therefore expensive. This would jeopardize the competitiveness of rail freight. In the less expensive LL block, which requires no modification, the UIC by contrast sees a way of solving the problem for the existing European fleet, which includes around 600,000 freight cars. “The UIC, together with its

members, is fully committed to making rail transport the most efficient, safe and sustainable transport mode, and to serving customers and society. The UIC manages complex technical projects in the field of sustainability on behalf of the international rail community, thus supporting the work of political railway associations with regard to European institutions and the ERA," said Jean-Pierre Loubinoux, Director General of the UIC.

Both the LL block currently being tested and the K block that has been approved since 2003 differ from conventional cast iron brake blocks in that the running surfaces of the wheels do not become rough, and thus rolling noise is reduced by approximately ten decibels, which is perceived by the human ear as a halving of the noise level.

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