A rail shuttle connecting the ports of Marseille Fos and HAROPA - Port of Le Havre with French-speaking Switzerland will be launched in March

The joint efforts of the two major French seaports (GPM for 'Grands Ports Maritimes') made it possible to bring a project expected for long by the professionals of logistics and transport to a successful conclusion and realization: the Port of Marseille Fos, HAROPA - Port of Le Havre, in association with the French operator of combined transport Naviland Cargo, is going to launch a new rail shuttle as from mid-March 2018 which will link three times a week, each of the two French ports with the terminal of Chavornay, situated near Lausanne in French-speaking Switzerland. The new connections will be served from Marseille/ Fos and Le Havre directly via the terminal of Dijon-Gevrey in Burgundy to Chavornay.

This is actually the willpower towards international growth of both major shipping marketplaces which is concretely expressed in this innovative connection, enabling the hinterlands of both ports to carry on extending, beyond the domestic market. This strategy and these initiatives are totally and rapidly in line with the wish expressed by the French Prime Minister, Edouard Philippe, in his speech delivered during the 'Assises de la Mer' congress last November. In the course of it, he reminded the objective of the ports of Marseille Fos and Le Havre to extend their catchment area beyond their current hinterland, beyond the borders of our country, especially owing to consolidated modes and means, with the purpose to be confirmed as major stakeholders in cargo trade with all the European area.
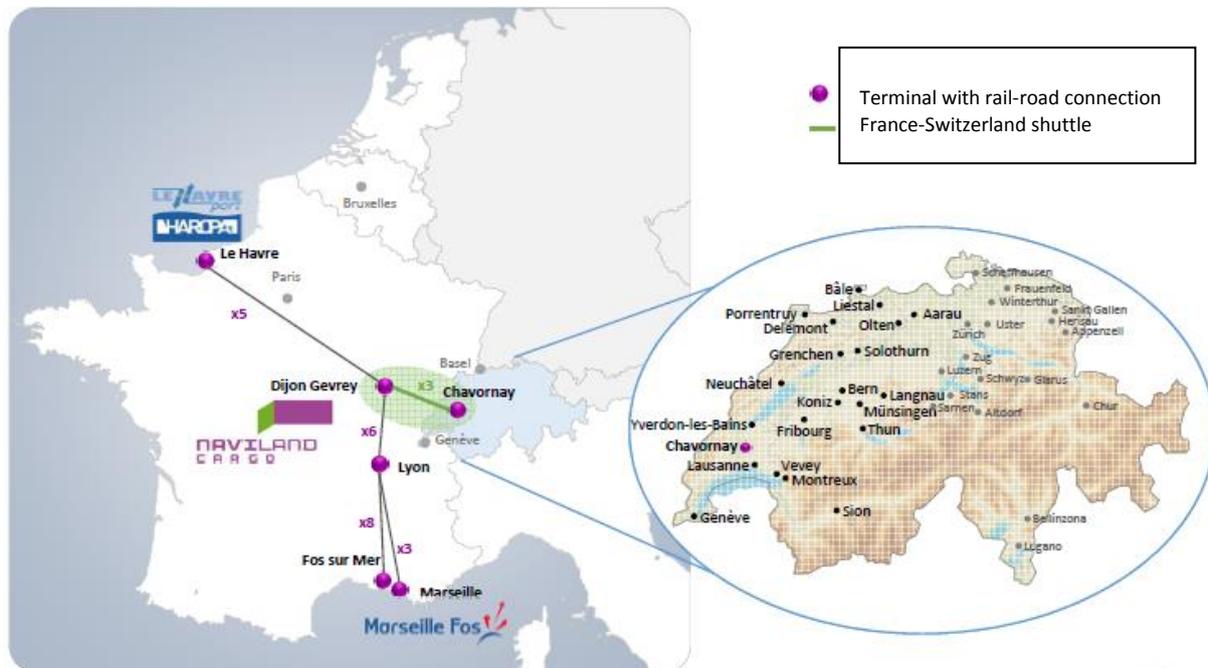
The potential Swiss container market is estimated at 350,000 to 400,000 TEU per year. Today, only a marginal part of this traffic goes through French ports. The coming-on-stream of this shuttle should make it possible to catch a significant part of these volumes.

For Marseille port community, the implementation of this shuttle is the result of the very strong commitment made by the GPMM with UMF towards European Authorities to extend the North Sea-Mediterranean European rail corridor, from Fos towards French-speaking Switzerland. Owing to the rail connection with Marseille and Fos, goods to and from Switzerland will be offered the opportunity to reduce transit times to the markets of the Mediterranean and the East of the Suez canal.

For HAROPA, this first regular connection to Switzerland meets the strategic objective to extend the hinterland towards the East. After launching in 2016 of a service to Ludwigshafen, HAROPA confirms its ambition to strengthen consolidated service with this new connection and to catch new markets in partnership with the federation of the port communities of the Seine corridor (FCPAS).   With the rail connection to Le Havre, goods to and from Switzerland will find there the opportunity to reduce transit times to the USA/Canada and South America, especially.

The new French-Swiss line strengthens the position of Naviland Cargo as the leader on maritime combined transport in France and clearly meets the strategy of development beyond French borders. Resorting to rail transport for containers is going to alleviate congestion of the highways to Switzerland, while offering the equivalent transport capacity of 12,000 trucks per year and thus strongly reducing the carbon footprint of such transport.

The Regional Council 'Provence Alps Côte d'Azur' and the Regional Council of 'Normandy' have expressed their high interest in this project and plan to bring their financial contribution to the initiative.

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