Hit Rail announces 'Interoperability in Practice' Workshop for European railway industry

Brussels event on 9th October 2014 to tackle issues of ICT interoperability for passengers, freight and infrastructure

Utrecht, 21 May 2014 – A key workshop on Interoperability within the rail industry is set to take place in Brussels in October this year. Run by Hit Rail, one of the leading players in the railway industry's drive towards interoperability, the event will take the form of a practical workshop to review and discuss the issues of ICT interoperability within the railway environment. It will tackle issues around railway IT infrastructure, passenger reservation systems and freight handling.

Aimed at senior representatives of Europe's railway companies, and members of international railway associations with an interest in the subject of railway ICT infrastructure and interoperability across borders, the event will be hosted at the headquarters of Infrabel, the Belgian railway infrastructure management company. Keynote speakers include representatives from the major international railway organisations such as the Community of European Railways (CER) and the European Railway Agency (ERA), plus others from the main European railway undertakings and infrastructure managers.

Antonio Lopez, Hit Rail's Managing Director, commented: "Interoperability is one of the major issues facing our railways today as more and more transactions are performed digitally and online and we look to increase efficiency and productivity whilst keeping tight control on costs. This workshop will take an exciting and practical approach, discussing the issues, showcasing solutions and highlighting success stories that will inspire the industry to take further steps towards greater interoperabilty."

The objectives of the workshop include:

- To showcase and take stock of successful examples of interoperability implementation by railways in Europe
- To discuss challenges and opportunities for putting interoperability into practice, including identification of barriers and possible means to remove those barriers
- To debate and define practical ways of collaboration among the European railway stakeholders in order to achieve the goals of the EU's Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSI)
- To explore additional concrete measures to accelerate TSI implementation across Europe.

One highlight of the event will be a presentation of the recent success story of Swiss railway undertaking Rhätische Bahn which was the first rail organisation in Europe to become interconnected to all other European railways using Hit Rail's new HEROS web services and message interoperability. HEROS provides translation services for fast and seamless communication between "old style" reservation messages and new IP-based platforms.

Rhätische Bahn is famous for its "red trains," including the Glacier Express and Bernina Express, transporting passengers through some of the most spectacular scenery of any railway in the world. The company has recently implemented a new reservation system and wanted this to be compatible with the existing and legacy systems of the other railway organisations. Hit Rail was able to support Rhätische Bahn by providing its HEROS translation service, allowing older style reservation messages and the modern XML version to interoperate. This has enabled Rhätische Bahn to improve productivity and reach new sales channels.

Helmut Grohmann, Chairman of Hit Rail, will give the opening address and speakers are expected from many rail transport and freight companies across Europe, including Belgium, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and UK. The Workshop will also include strategic sessions on Infrastructure, Passenger Systems and Freight Issues. Further details of the event will be announced shortly.

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About Hit Rail b.v.
Hit Rail b.v. is a private Dutch company created in 1990 and owned by 12 European railway companies. Its purpose is to help European railway companies to carry out international projects in related fields of data communications and information technology. Hit Rail is responsible for managing international private data communications infrastructure and message brokering services on behalf of its shareholders and customers. Its services are used by some 40 railway companies from 21 countries. All Hit Rail customers' data centres and company networks are interconnected by a pan-European IP-based VPN (Virtual Private Network) named Hermes VPN, which is supplied by British Telecom (BT) and managed by Hit Rail. In 2013 the company launched its HEROS message interoperability service which aims to enable interoperabilty across disparate platforms in railway companies across Europe.

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