

European-format train

City lines launch new format of Belarusian Railways' passenger transportation, to improve speed, comfort and convenience of railway transport, with regional, commercial and international lines also developed

By Vladimir Bibikov

In Europe, it's common to commute to work by train, covering 100-150km. Belarus is now joining the trend, as Minsk — with two million residents — is reaching its ultimate capacity for expansion. It's high time that satellite-towns be developed, connected to the centre by reliable and quick transportation. Already, railway lines are being laid to Zaslavl, Kolyadichi and Smolevichi — although building work is yet to be fully completed.

Belarusian Railways tells us that city electric trains are unrivalled for speed, comfort and value for money. Encouraging commuting will ease the burden on the capital's road network and on public transport, while improving the quality of air.

Swiss Stadler is providing ten modern electric trains to Belarus. Some have already arrived while others are to be dispatched in the first half of 2012 (six for city lines and four servicing regional routes). Each comprises four carriages — able to transport 606 passengers, at a speed of 160km/h. Interestingly, this is quicker than the metro, significantly reducing travel times, while providing spacious and comfortable seating, rivalling that seen in Europe.

Longer routes are to be serviced by regional and inter-regional trains, with an even greater degree of comfort and speed, offered at a reasonable price; economy and business classes are to be available. The first such regional electric trains are already running between Minsk and Orsha, between Minsk and Baranovichi and between Baranovichi and Brest.

International lines will transport passengers to neighbouring states and all trains will be graded by infrastructure, comfort and services offered. Inter-regional, regional and city lines are to be equipped with air conditioning, heating and



Regular routes for electric trains, with business class offered on regional lines, is another stage in modernised passenger transportation

video surveillance as standard, with speed and size stipulated. For example, a business class train servicing inter-regional lines must travel at an average speed of no less than 90 km/h, stopping at towns with a population of over 50,000 people. To travel to a smaller town, passengers can change at hub stations, boarding an economy class train which makes stops at settlements of over 20,000 residents.

Importantly, daytime trains are equipped with comfortable chairs while those travelling at night have sleeping berths. Inter-regional trains will stop at cities with a population of over 100,000 (the Brest-Minsk route has only one such stop — at Baranovichi). This approach will reduce time travel to 3-3.5 hours, which is very important for businessmen. Journeys to Vitebsk, Gomel and Mogilev will take al-

most the same length of time (as will connection between each).

Importantly, passengers are able to identify their trains easily at stations, as they are colour coded, while also having a flower symbol and an abbreviation in letters. City lines are red, with the emblem of a carnation and the Latin letters CL. Regional business class lines are blue, with the letters RLb; inter-regional trains are green and interna-

tional are yellow.

Within five years, Belarus plans to electrify the Osipovichi-Gomel, Zhlobin-Kalinkovichi, and Molochno-Lithuanian border lines. In all, 29 electric and 20 diesel trains are to be purchased, in addition to 182 passenger carriages. Passenger train speeds will rise to 140-160km/h, while the journey from Minsk to Vilnius will take just 2.5 hours (by speedy electric train).

Good example of mutual partnership

Belarus' first railroad tanker produced at Osipovichi Wagon Building Plant

By Olga Belyavskaya

In January, the new manufacturing line will produce at least 15-17 carriages. The figure should double in February and, by later this year, 400-450 carriages will be manufactured monthly. Measures are being taken to enhance the localisation of components for wagon production, with many made on site. "We are up against tight deadlines, on domestic and foreign markets," stressed Belarus' Prime Minister, Mikhail Myasnikov, speaking at the solemn opening ceremony.

Capacities are to be expanded

at the Osipovichi and Mogilev wagon building plants, allowing us to satisfy domestic demand for freight wagons and reduce expensive imports. Mr. Myasnikov explains that the project being implemented at the Osipovichi Wagon Building Plant offers not only import substitution but export opportunities, as output will surpass the needs of the home market. Two more enterprises are to be constructed near the plant in the future; the first, manufacturing carts for freight wagons, is already being built. Plans are afoot to set up a repair and service centre too.

"An entire complex to trans-

port traditional and specialised cargoes is planned (including the movement of chemical substances and oil)," notes the Prime Minister. The construction of new enterprises in Osipovichi will bring the creation of at least a thousand jobs, with housing built for the expanded staff.

Mr. Myasnikov emphasises that the Osipovichi Wagon Building Plant is a good example of state-private partnership. "It uses state investments, injected by Belarusian Railways, and has attracted foreign investments," he explains. "In total, around \$130m has been injected into the enterprise."



First railroad tanker produced in Osipovichi