

**To:**  
Minister of Transport Jon-Ivar Nygaard  
Royal Norwegian Ministry of Transport  
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**Möln dal, Sweden 2025-07-09**

**Dear Minister Nygaard,**

We are writing on behalf of **FEDECRAIL**, the European Federation of Museum and Tourist Railways.

Established in 1994, FEDECRAIL is the umbrella organisation representing the interests of the heritage rail sector across Europe. We represent over 650 organisations in 29 countries through Europe – from national museums and accredited mainline operators to volunteer-run museum railways and technical societies.

As the **formally recognised representative body for the heritage rail sector within the EU railway system**, we are actively engaged with the **European Union Agency for Railways (ERA)** and contribute to working groups and consultations that shape the regulatory framework for railway operations across Europe – including heritage operations on the mainline.

Our mission is to preserve and promote Europe's living railway heritage – not only as static artefacts, but as operational, educational and cultural experiences accessible to the public. Among our members is the **Norwegian Railway Museum in Hamar**, home to one of Europe's most exceptional examples of working railway heritage: the steam locomotive *Caroline*.

Built in 1861 by Robert Stephenson & Co, Caroline is recognised as the world's oldest operational steam locomotive from the world's first locomotive manufacturer. She served the national railway until 1953 – 92 years of commercial operation – and since her restoration in 1996 has continued to operate regularly on the Norwegian mainline with great public interest and historic value.

**We now understand that this continued operation on mainline is under threat.**



### **Critical concern: Loss of physical rail access**

The preserved workshop in Hamar that stables Caroline and her coaches is a nationally protected heritage building. However, under current plans for the resignalling of Hamar station with ERTMS, the physical rail connection between this building and the mainline may be removed – effectively isolating the entire historic train set and reducing it to a static exhibit.

FEDECRAIL strongly objects to this outcome. Without access to the national network, the operation of *Caroline* – which has become a symbol of Norwegian railway history – will cease.

The implications are:

- Loss of operational heritage and related intangible skills
- Violation of principles under the UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Decreased public visibility and reduced international cultural tourism
- Undermining of national efforts to preserve and promote living railway history

### **Why ministerial action is essential**

The Norwegian railway sector is divided into several entities – Bane NOR, Bane NOR Eiendom, the Norwegian Railway Directorate, and the Norwegian Railway Museum. Each of these units serves its own mandate, but none appear to have the authority, capacity or clear instruction to protect this specific operational need.

We urge you, as Minister of Transport and the only authority with jurisdiction over all parties, to issue a clear and binding directive that:

1. **Guarantees continued rail access** between the heritage depot and the national network
2. Ensures that the resignalling project respects cultural heritage obligations
3. Affirms that the locomotive *Caroline* is to remain operational and accessible to the public

### **Technology must not become a barrier**

We are aware that the implementation of ERTMS/ETCS in Norway may raise concerns about whether heritage vehicles like *Caroline* can continue to operate on mainline infrastructure. However, FEDECRAIL would like to make it clear that **mainline heritage operation and ETCS are not incompatible**. Across Europe, **several countries have already granted operational exemptions or implemented practical solutions** to allow historic trains to operate safely on ETCS-equipped lines:

- In **Switzerland**, steam trains operated by SBB Historic continue to run on ETCS Level 2 infrastructure with derogations and operational coordination.
- In **Austria** and **Germany**, heritage trains are allowed on selected mainline routes without onboard ETCS, often during designated time slots and under temporary exemptions granted by the national infrastructure authorities.
- In the **United Kingdom**, a mainline steam locomotive was tested with ETCS in 2025, proving that integration is possible where required – but most heritage trains still run under waivers or alternative safety arrangements.
- In **Sweden**, heritage trains continue to access mainline infrastructure with tailored safety assessments despite progressive ETCS rollout.

The **European Union Agency for Railways (ERA)** recognises the need for **risk-based, proportionate approaches for heritage railways**, and the current regulatory framework explicitly allows **national authorities to grant exemptions** for unique, non-commercial vehicles such as *Caroline*. If the historic locomotive *Caroline* is to be fitted with ETCS, it is essential that the costs are covered by the government. As a living piece of technical heritage, *Caroline* is not an ordinary vehicle – and requirements for modern safety systems must not prevent its preservation or continued operation. Public funding is therefore crucial to ensure that our shared railway history can continue to be experienced in motion, not just behind glass.

We therefore urge the Norwegian authorities to ensure that *Caroline* – a non-replaceable historic asset of national significance – is not excluded from the mainline simply due to a technical standard that was never intended for 19th-century equipment.

Such exemptions are not unusual – they are already in place elsewhere in Europe and can be structured safely, legally and sustainably. What is required is clear ministerial guidance that **preservation of operational heritage is a valid and necessary public interest**.

### **Mainline access is part of the heritage**

The importance of Caroline does not lie solely in the locomotive itself, but in her capacity to operate as intended – in motion, under steam, and in public service. Static preservation denies the fundamental character of this heritage. Moreover, isolating the depot area from the mainline undermines the very purpose of preserving a railway building: the essence of railway heritage is movement and function.

### **A broader perspective**

Urban development pressures should not lead to irreversible decisions that impair national cultural infrastructure. Railway heritage offers long-term societal value, educational potential, and tourism appeal that far outweighs short-term financial gains from redevelopment.

We also emphasise the role that operational heritage plays in maintaining specialist skills – from mechanical to safety-critical practices – which are disappearing across Europe. Letting this capability wither would be a failure of intergenerational responsibility.

### **Conclusion and call to action**

Caroline is not just a locomotive; she is a living embodiment of Norway's railway story and part of Europe's shared industrial legacy. Her future must not be decided by bureaucratic fragmentation or short-term cost-cutting.

Only ministerial-level intervention can ensure:

- Preservation of the workshop's mainline connection
- Continued operation of Caroline and her historic train
- Fulfilment of national and international obligations to protect and sustain railway heritage

We call on you to act swiftly, decisively and transparently to secure Caroline's continued presence on the Norwegian rails.

We remain at your disposal for constructive dialogue and practical support.

Yours sincerely



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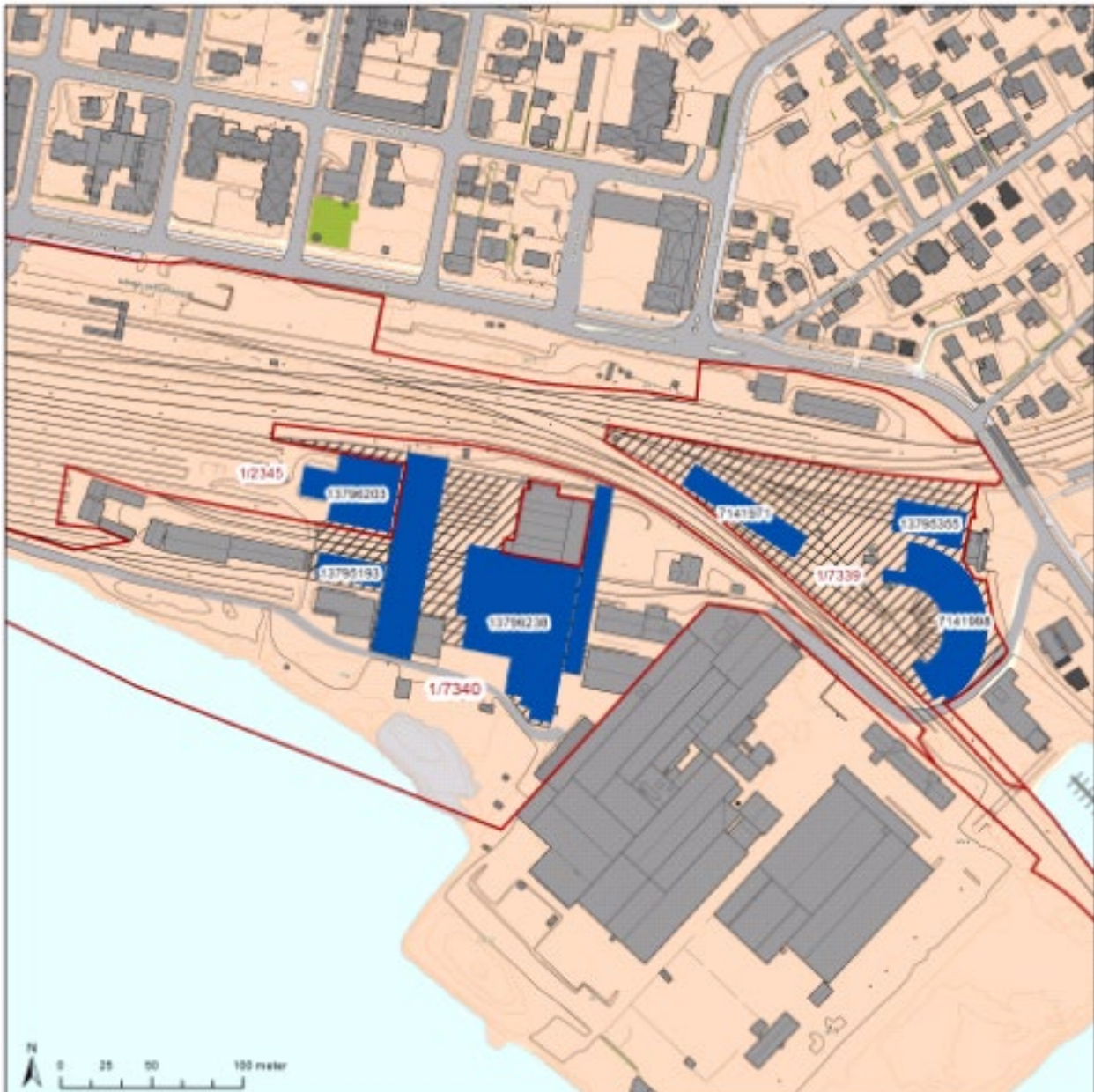
# Appendix 1

The core challenge – from the perspective of FEDECRAIL.

In all perspective common sense: There should be railway access to a historical and preserved railway building owned by the railway museum.

- 1. *There is a need to secure this railway access to the already preserved workshop building – declared as a National Heritage - at the former Railway Workshop in Hamar.***

The map below shows in red the buildings which are declared as a National Heritage at Hamar station.



2. The railway access is only possible by:

- a. A switch from the main line at Hamar station (Yellow circle on the below track map)
- b. The track from switch leading to former track 21 and workshop traverse. (shown in amber color)
- c. Preservation of the sideway traverse (marked with yellow rectangle)

