

# Marathon runs longer train

**EUROPE:** Fret SNCF, Kombiverkehr and RFF ran their first 1.5 km long freight train between Lyon and Nîmes on January 18, marking the start of the demonstration phase of the Project Marathon research programme.

Three of Kombiverkehr's regular intermodal trains between Germany and Spain were reformed as a pair of 750 m long trains, which were in turn coupled as a single 70-wagon consist with a maximum trailing load of 4 000 tonnes.

The first train was hauled by two Alstom Class 37000 electric locos, one at the front and the second in the middle controlled remotely using distributed power technology. The locos were provided by SNCF's leasing subsidiary Akiem, but the partners intend to test diesel operation using a pair of Vossloh España Euro 4000s.

Partially funded by an EU FP7 research grant, the project was launched in April 2011 and is due to run for three years. Building on earlier work by the New Opera programme, the aim is to reduce operating costs by 30% and increase the capacity of key



As well as Fret SNCF, RFF and Kombiverkehr, the 16 project partners include Swedish infrastructure manager Trafikverket, Alstom, Vossloh, Faiveley responsible for the train braking, Schweizer Electronic and Cretech which developed the radio control system.

freight corridors.

The project partners hope to validate the technical feasibility of long train operation in a European context, so that it can be rolled out for commercial applications by 2016. Little investment would be required other than installing the remote control equipment on sufficient locomotives and lengthening some freight loops to take the longer trains.

'We are working with RFF toward commercial operation, and we hope that these double trains will be running on major European freight corridors within two years', said Fret SNCF Director Sylvie Charles. ❏