

VareseNews

“Lombardy is ready for the Alptransit challenge”

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✘ It is not a question of pride, but if you wanted an Italian reply to the Swiss neighbours regarding the queen of the European infrastructures, that is, the **Alptransit**, this came during the international conference organised jointly by the Chamber of Commerce in Varese and by the Swiss Chamber of Commerce in Italy.

The regional councillor in charge of infrastructure, **Maurizio Del Tenno**, certainly knows the saying “every promise is a debt”, because stating that “what happened on the Arcisate-Stabio must not happen again”, and that “by the end of the year, the agreement will be ready, as will the other Italian works, that connect to the Alptransit, will have to be ready in time,” is equivalent to a promise that cannot be broken, especially as it was made at such a gathering.

In rail freight transportation, Lombardy, with its **20 terminals and 500 intermodal trains** per week, is an **important gateway** for the **Italy-Switzerland corridor**, which, in turn, connects to the **Genoa-Rotterdam** corridor, one of the nine railway routes considered strategic for the European Union. The study, which was presented by Lanfranco Senn, the director of CERTeT (Centre for Research on Regional Economics, Transport and Tourism) at the Bocconi University, spoke in detail about the costs and benefits of producing the Italy-Switzerland multimodal corridor.

Senn explained, “When we talk about multimodality, we are talking about a system of lines which expands and multiplies the effects on the areas involved. If we make our railway system more efficient, we can handle the traffic generated by the terminals in Lombardy, which today goes to ports in North Europe, rather than to ports in Liguria.”

At the moment, according to the study, 35.2 million tonnes of goods transit every year through the Simplon and the Gotthard Passes, and 63% of these goods go by rail. The construction of the **AlpTransit Gotthard (NTFA)** will allow cost savings and longer trains (750 m, compared to the current 550 m) that can transport up to **2000 tonnes of goods**. In case of activation only (so to speak) of the NTFA, the **expected growth in 2030 will be of 20.1 million tonnes of goods**. With the construction of the **4-metre Corridor** (for trains with a 4-metre profile), additional market segments would open along the entire Gotthard axis, with an expected growth of **25.2 million tonnes of goods transported in 2030**. Senn explained, “If the **4-metre corridor** were activated, in 2020, **Luino** would see an increase, on its unaccompanied combined transport line, of **660,000 shipments** per year.”

The **saving** in transport costs would be up to **€1.475 billion** for the NTFA alone (€1.953 billion, if the 4-metre corridor is built), and the saving on **environmental costs**

will be **€383 million** (€688 million with the 4-metre corridor).

So, what would happen if the necessary investments were not be made in Lombardy?

“There would be a crisis in the capacity of the Lombard terminals, which would have to handle **420,000 more shipments** than they do now,” said Senn. But although **Hupac** and **Ambrogio**, the terminals in the towns of **Busto Arsizio** and **Gallarate**, are able to take the new freight, the same cannot be said for the **Milan sorting** terminal. This “funnel” would create problems also in Canton Ticino, and it may also be for this reason that the Swiss have signed a declaration of intentions with the Italian government, in which they agree to adopt similar measures to fund this infrastructure; furthermore, the Swiss have agreed **to take on the interventions in which Italy cannot guarantee the agreed funds and delivery times**. This is a very important specification, as the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in Varese, **Renato Scapolan**, explained, at the beginning of the meeting. “Let’s not forget we’re talking about the **Bellinzona-Luino-Gallarate** section.” He said this to emphasise that Italy’s clear interest in the development that the **Alptransit will bring** corresponds with Switzerland’s interest in building infrastructure for which great interest was expressed in a referendum in 1992, against the wishes of the Swiss government at the time.

In any case, of the €520 million necessary for the work of adapting the 4m corridor, **88% is covered**. In contrast, only **38%** of the work on the terminals is funded. There will be no backing for adapting the capacity of the **Simplon section between the cities of Novara and Arona**, but there will be limited backing (36%) for the **Gronda Est Seregno-Bergamo** section, **south of the Gotthard Pass**.

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