

Ten million euros needed to eliminate level crossings from AlpTransit

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AlpTransit will change the face of freight transport, but will also provide an opportunity for passengers, for accessibility to Lake Maggiore, and for tourism, starting with the economic resources.

The news came during the **conference organised by the association Alta Capacità Gottardo and by ALDAI** (the Lombard association of industrial executives), in collaboration with the Italian Chamber of Commerce. The single track railway, which passes near Lake Maggiore, is still a “bottleneck”, if we consider the huge investment in AlpTransit, but it may become a resource also for the territory. “When we talk about the Bellinzona-Luino-Gallarate line, we think about freight. But, we should also think about how to improve the passenger service,” said **Renato Scapolan**, the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce, who went on to speak about an “essential choice for improving the quality of life of the residents in those areas and for bringing about positive consequences on tourist flows.” Already in 2020, the Swiss railway system **will shorten distances, reducing the journey time between Lugano, Bellinzona and Locarno to just a few minutes**, thanks to the new Ceneri Tunnel and other improvements.

The starting point is the investments, which have been made progressively. “In addition to the €120 million from Switzerland, we have €100 million of domestic resources to be used also for passenger transport,” said the engineer, **Giorgio Botti, from the Territorial Department of RFI**, the company

that manages the Italian railway network. On one side, there is work on the stations, for example, with new, high platforms to improve accessibility to the trains; on the other, the resources (a total of €30 million, allocated by Lombardy Region in agreement with Varese Province) to resolve the problematic intersections of the roads with the Gallarate-Luino and Sesto Calende-Luino-border railway lines. Starting with the **level crossings and the associated changes to the roads, for which confirmation from Lombardy Region has been received**, “the €10 million allocated by Lombardy Region to eliminate the 15 level crossings in the towns of Laveno Mombello, Luino, Ispra, Sangiano, Maccagno-Pino-Veddasca, Taino and Angera is now available,” said Francesca Brianza, the Lombardy Regional councillor responsible for Post Expo and for the “Metropolitan City” project.

Marco Magrini, the executive director of the Province, explained, “The priorities we’ve identified are Laveno, Luino, Ispra, Taino, Sangiano, where we’re going to replace 3 of the 6 existing railroad crossings, and Pino,” (the last level crossing on the line going south is in the hilly area of Gallarate). Then, there is the matter of the **sound-absorbing barriers**, “which are necessary in important urban areas, such as Gallarate, Luino, Laveno and the tourist zones.”

The request for **attention to the design solution** has also been made by the local councillors who intervened. Although AlpTransit is a great challenge, “it’s problematic from Laveno’s point of view,” Ercole Ielmini, the town’s mayor, said. “The presence of a demolition zone for 13-14 families is not to be taken lightly.” Similar concerns over the impact of this work to replace the level crossings (underpasses or overpasses), were expressed by the Mayor of Monvalle. However, local organisations have also said that **the railway should be made into an opportunity**, which was repeated by Luino councillor, Alessandra Miglio. The lake is a place where tourism is growing: **in 2014, there were 76,841 tourists**, in 2011, a little more than 70,000.

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