

Malpensa-Gallarate railway, plans by 2017

Pubblicato: Mercoledì 15 Giugno 2016



Lombardy Region and FerrovieNord have given the go-ahead for the new railway from Malpensa (Terminal 2) to Gallarate, a new link that will bring about the redesigning of the local transport network throughout the north-west of Lombardy. There was the idea, there was the preliminary plan, now they are really getting down to work, starting with the land and preparations for the application for EU funding.

Today in Malpensa, there was **the first work meeting, which was open to the municipalities and to potential stakeholders**, to assess the technical-economic feasibility planning for the continuation of the line, which, from Terminal 2 (where extension of the line is underway, and where it is expected to go into operation in autumn 2016), will join the Sempione railway line, connecting up with the Gallarate-Milan and Casorate-Domodossola lines. The work is being managed by FerrovieNord, the regional railway company (which manages the existing line to Malpensa). There were many mayors from the area present at the meeting, including those most directly affected: Dimitri Cassani from Casorate Sempione, Edoardo Guenzani from Gallarate, and Angelo Bellora from Cardano al Campo.

The Chairman of **FerrovieNord, Andrea Gibelli**, explained, “Today, the railway is a very great opportunity. All of the data shows that, when there are better connections and an ability to integrate, there are considerable benefits, also for the business world. On this work, in particular, we want to start a detailed dialogue with the local authorities and the economic and social system, to build the route together.”

Pietro Modiano, the Chairman of SEA, explained the new logic of the links. “The problem is not the high speed, but **making Malpensa a hub on which to converge frequent links.**” The current links to Milan (fast and local) will be “exploded” onto a series of lines that go from Malpensa **also to Varese, Canton Ticino, Brianza and Turin.** This will help the new T2-Gallarate link road, and resolve problems of capacity of the Gallarate-Milan line (which is extremely busy, with trains that travel at all speeds, from the Eurocity to the suburban trains, which stop every 2 km).

So far, 50% of the planning has been paid for by the European Community, and the aim is to complete the rail connections from the north, making both of the airport stations “railway links”: the station at Terminal T1 opened in 1999; that at Terminal T2 is currently being completed and will be operational in December.

FerrovieNord is coordinating studies and doing the preliminary planning, through its engineering company NORD_ING. The studies have contributions from a number of specialists, including, in particular, experts from the Bocconi University and from Milan Polytechnic. The planning is being done in close collaboration with technical facilities of RFI, the company that runs the railway network, for the connections with the Sempione line.

SEA is taking part in the planning, by contributing, above all, to the new surveys on demand, in identifying the service scenarios to **extend the airport’s area of influence** and in defining where the section of railway should go inside the airport, technical solutions, but also a study of the service models planned. To this end, they are also studying the various transport systems at a number of European airports.

The intention of the promoters of the project (which came out during the first meeting) is to give a great amount of publicity and to seek the greatest possible agreement with the design choices, among all of the players involved (the line goes into the Ticino Park, weaving between built-up areas, into a densely populated area). The consultation with the area affected will include formal times with the municipalities, which will begin in the next few weeks with the so-called scoping phase of the Environmental Assessment procedure, and continue on to the Service Conference.

The aim is to complete the preliminary planning (in the new code, it is called Technical-Economic Feasibility Project) and the Environmental Impact Study **by the end of this year**, in order to be able to complete **final planning by the end of 2017**. The planning budget (from the studies to the final plan) is expected to be about €4 million (of which a little less than 90% will be paid by FerrovieNord, and the remainder by SEA). The co-funding provided by the European Community is up to 50% of the planning costs.

The costs are currently being estimated. At the moment, the budget variation indicated by the European Community, **either €170 or €250 million** depending on the configuration adopted (in fact, a relatively cheap technical solution has been chosen) **is being kept**. The time necessary for the building work is of the order of 3 years, but first, it will take at least 3 years to complete the approval procedures, to obtain funding and to call for bids. So, if the assessments and the financing decisions are positive, the aim is **to have the line operational in 2023**.

These are the forecasts for the future. However, in the meantime, work on the T1-T2 rail link is continuing at full speed, at both ends: the station in Terminal 2 (which is the responsibility of SEA); the new line and the railway systems are the responsibility of FerrovieNord. At the moment, the lines and points are being assembled. This work should be completed by the end of September, so that testing can begin in October, and the regular service should begin with the change in timetable, in December.

di Roberto Morandi Translated by Prof. Rolf Cook

