

Alptransit, “Work has already begun to make it safe”

Pubblicato: Martedì 28 Marzo 2017



The inconvenience due to the passage of longer trains, and more of them than at present, for which two level crossings are disappearing from the town, was discussed during the council meeting, yesterday evening, together with another burning topic, that of **safety**.

The pretext was the **last point on the agenda of a “river” territory commission (three hours)**, during which the three-year plan for public works was discussed.

The discussion was heated, and, in fact, a continuation of last week. **Now, the attention of local politicians (but not only) is focusing on the work of adaptation** required for the passage of goods, namely the continuation of the Swiss high-speed train (Alptransit), which will probably begin to run after the end of work in the “Ceneri” tunnel, after 2020.

The town is getting ready for the closure of the line, from June to December 2017, for the work, which will be carried out by the company that runs the Italian rail network, RFI, with funds provided by the Swiss railways.

And now, here is the first item of news, from the councillor with power of attorney, Antonio Palmieri, who gave a brief account of a **meeting that took place on Tuesday, with the owners of businesses in the areas affected: Via Voldomino and Via San Pietro**, where the level crossings will disappear. “We discussed the points linked to road traffic. We’re going to meet the business owners again, next month. We listened to them,” he said.

Then the topic of safety was discussed. Firstly, Palmieri announced that **some work on the line has already begun**. “A number of **rock-climbers** are working on the **rock fall protection kits** and are cutting plants away from the line,” in preparation for the more major work, which will be carried out during the summer (this includes adaptations to the shape of the tunnels, as confirmed by RFI “**work to replace 15 level crossings** on the Gallarate – Laveno – Luino-Pino and Laveno – Sesto Calende lines”).

Mayor Andrea Pellicini, who was present for part of the discussion, returned to the question of safety, and explained that they are still waiting for the response forwarded to the Ministry, concerning the need to carry out an **environmental impact assessment** of the line. “We still don’t know **who’s responsibility it is. Is it the State’s? Or the Region’s? Will someone, in Milan or Rome, please tell us, and quickly?**”

On the delay in the administration’s involvement in the solution to the problems linked to the arrival of Alptransit (**a question raised above all by the Five Star Movement**), Pellicini said “**We’ve been interested in this matter for years, also for the other municipalities along the line.**”

In the end, a point that is even more important to safety: **the new fire station**. The area has been identified, and the agreement approved by the town council, but when will the long-awaited fire station be built to replace the current one, which, incidentally, **goes under water whenever the River Tresa floods**? The question was asked by the minority councillors, Erica **Nogara** and Pietro **Agostinelli**.

“The timing depends on the State, we’ve already been lucky to be in the fast-track, with the former provincial fire chief (Oliviero Dodaro, *ed.*). Now, we have to wait,” the Mayor replied.

It is difficult, therefore, to establish the “when”. The funding to complete the project is expected to be available in 2018. Then, the times will depend on the allocation of resources for the building: **it might be late to combine cutting the tape with the passage of the new super trains**.

Moreover, Pellicini admitted, “I’d sign if the new fire station were ready by 2021 ...”

This lack could be made up for with an agreement between countries, **if Switzerland were asked to use a special train** that could soon cross the border into Italy, which is what Councillor Giovanni **Petrotta** has requested.

However, for this reason, too, it might be necessary to ring the bells at the Home Office or at the Foreign Office.

di [Translated by Prof. Rolf Cook](#)