

Pedemontana free of charge: this is possible, but not today

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Pedemontana free of charge? This is a realistic objective, but certainly not today.

The report of the inclusion of the Varese and Como bypasses in the new regional road management company has aroused the enthusiasm of motorists. Now, it is even more important to understand the precise timing with which it can happen.

“It can be done in a few months,” according to Antonio Di Pietro, who is stronger than a bulldozer,” commented the President of the Lombardy, Roberto Maroni, on his Facebook profile. It was in answer to an interview with the Chairman of Autostrada Pedemontana, Di Pietro, published today in *Il Corriere di Como*.

The idea of the bypasses being free of charge **was announced by Maroni on Friday**. “Although they aren’t provincial roads, they’ll become part of the state network, so you won’t have to pay a toll to travel on them,” Maroni said.

Speaking of timing, Maroni explained that **a workgroup would be set up within a month**, that brings together Lombardy Region, the national road board ANAS, and Provinces, to define the single corporate vehicle, the organisation that will manage Lombardy’s new network; here, **the additional resources necessary for the ANAS plan for state roads in Lombardy will be brought together**. The goal is to have the structure operational by the end of this year. **“By the end of 2017**, as stipulated in the agreement, the parties agree on the objective of **having the new system of managing the network**

operational.” And once the company has been launched, its job will be to make travelling on the two bypasses free of charge. Some have said it is only a matter of “a few months”.

In any case, the toll will not be removed from the A36, the “real” Pedemontana, which runs further south, essentially to the edge of the metropolitan area of Milan.

In recent months, the company **Pedemontana Lombarda** has acknowledged **how difficult it will be to fund the work: traffic forecasts below project estimates, the level of toll evasion (which is considered to be substantial)**, a section that is still incomplete and is limiting the potential of the work (the completion of which is still valid goal, says Di Pietro). And above all, the **lack of ability to attract private investment**, with **banks pulling out of the undertaking**, which no longer seems so profitable (and there is already **the precedent of the Brebemi**).

Help for this embarrassing situation comes in the form of public funding, with new, additional resources. Now, with the two bypasses returning to public control, the company Pedemontana might see a reduction in its difficulties: **the toll disappears, and resources come from the taxes of the Italians**. This model was already contested a few months ago **by part of the political world**.

di Translated by Bassetti & Romagnoni (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)