

The new route to Malpensa? Without the third railway Gallarate-Rho it is not worthwhile

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“A study that has never been displayed or is perhaps hidden”, accuse the critics of the project

It is not worthwhile to construct the railway Gallarate-Malpensa before the railway to Milano is enhanced: “the advantages expected from the project” are unable “to offset the costs connected to it.” This is one of the conclusions of the “socio-economic assessment of the preliminary draft backdrop” carried out (for FerrovieNord, customer) by Politecnico of Milano.

The estimated expense of the new route could arrive to 200 million euros, just to build the infrastructure, the two new tracks from Gallarate (Ronchi area) to Terminal 2, with a “branch” also to the North, towards Casorate and Sempione (here an explanation of the layout). And this without taking into account the addition of new potential routes, whose operational chart is not yet very clear.

Let's return to the study commissioned by FerrovieNord: the document handled by Paolo Beria and Alberto Bertolin examines various scenarios. Among these the first is the one that resembles the most to the reality of today: “What would happen if the connection Malpensa T2 – Sempione was realised before the completion of the project of the four-track update Rho-Parabiago?”.

The analysis results costs/benefits – is the conclusion of the study is that the data “shows how the expected benefits of the project are unable to offset the costs connected to it.” And here, in the calculation of the costs it refers to both the investment needed to build the route but also the additional

management costs. “These results are a direct consequence of the impossibility to fully exploit the work potentialities due to the level of saturation of the primary network in addition to the airport.” This means that, the element that also other external observers highlighted (we mentioned it in various articles): the Gallarate-Milano route is nearly saturated and already is “suffering”, since it has to absorb goods traffic, long distances (also international), regional, and suburban trains to Luino, Varese, Arona, Domodossola.

The conclusion of the study is that “this connection, in order to be effective, cannot avoid the four-track update of the Rho-Parabiago.” An expected intervention, has still to be said, but still to be realized, which will require the insertion of new tracks in a highly urbanised territory, above all in the area of Legnano. The times of the Milano-Gallarate are still not certain, but meanwhile the Gallarate-Malpensa T2 proceed quickly.

It has to be said that the study hypothesises other scenarios. A second scenario asks, for example, “what would happen if only the project of the four-track update Rho-Parabiago were realized and without editing the project of the connection Y.” The connection Y is the branch which from Legnano FS could allow leading into the existing route to Malpensa, guaranteeing anyway the connection between the FS line and the airport.

The scenario supposes that a “Malpensa Express” route could pass every hour “coming from Milano Centrale to the trajectory of Sempione” (it is the theory often mentioned by those that are against the new route beyond Gallarate). The study also says that “this service may cause disturbance in the time of other services”, because the trains which lead to and from Malpensa interrupt the traffic of the trains which instead continue towards Gallarate. This is because the crossroads between the lines is “clear-cutting”, which oblige also to cross the binaries in the opposite sense (simplifying: like intersections with a traffic circle, compared to a release where flows do not intersect). The study says that from the economic point of view this theory works better, because “the theoretical benefits expected from the project are much greater than the costs related to it.” But there is still the problem of the intersections among trains from and to various destinations to Legnano.

The study (here you can download the full version, if you want to go deeper) has been announced from the Legambiente Gallarate and the Comitato Salviamo la Brughiera, it means two critical voices of the activity. “It is really suprising, that for the new route, of the estimated value of 211 million, it wasn’t publicly presented – or it was intentionally kept hidden – the study costs/benefits” conclude Legambiente and the Comitato. They reiterate that the activity has no just impact, but it also doesn’t work from the economic and utility point of view.

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