

VareseNews

Antonio arrives in Varese and makes peace with the Arcisate-Stabio railway line

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Antonio Canonica had made a promise, and less than one week after that unfortunate Monday, when he was **forced to spend the whole night at Induno Olona station, in his wheelchair**, this morning, he got onto the train in Mendrisio once more, to travel to Varese, on the new Arcisate-Stabio railway line.

Together with our colleagues from the German-Swiss newspaper, **Blick**, we followed him on his journey, setting off from the station of Mendrisio.

Antonio Canonica's journey started at 4 a.m., when he left his house in Sementina (near Bellinzona), to travel by train, first to Lugano, and then to Mendrisio, where he had an appointment with the journalists.

In Mendrisio, the station was perfectly accessible, there were no architectural barriers and all of the platforms could be reached, using the handy ramps. "But there's no toilet for disabled people." Antonio wanted to point out. "Even Switzerland isn't perfect, although here, we can get around perfectly well."

Getting onto the TILO trains is no problem, and neither is getting off at Induno Olona station, where **the carriages and platforms are in line**. This time, there was no problem, even with the lift, which was out of order on Monday. It has been repaired, and this morning, was working perfectly.

However, Antonio did identify two faults, one serious: the iron gate that closes the station's emergency ramp, which is the only alternative to the stairs if the lifts are not working, was **still locked**. The other "fault" could be regarded as venial, albeit inexplicable: at 8.30 a.m., the waiting room was still closed, as was the station bar.

Antonio had just enough time to say goodbye to the councilor, Cecilia Zaini, who had tried to help him on the evening of his misadventure, before setting off again for Varese.

This time the train was not the TILO, but the RegioExpress, which goes from Porto Ceresio to Milan. The carriages were different, the floors were not in line, and Antonio needed help from the guard and the engine driver, who were very kind, to overcome a little difference in height, which prevented him from getting onto the train on his own.

We arrived in Varese on platform 3, but here, too, station personnel had to intervene; **a mobile access ramp**, which is carried on the train, had to be put in place, to allow the wheelchair off the carriage.

Finally, we got to the destination, and it was time to celebrate with a hot cappuccino in the station cafe, which is reached along a somewhat tortuous route (that is not marked), between the platforms.

But Antonio's happiness could not be complete. Evidently, his presence was not appreciated: although he was in a position that allowed the people to enter and leave the bar without any problems, after a while, the barman invited us, in not so many words, to move because his electric wheelchair was in the way. This was immediately followed by a rather unkind woman, who asked him to move the "thing".

Antonio was not discouraged; he hid his humiliation and did not reply. But it makes you think that, maybe, it is easier to demolish the architectural barriers than the barriers in the hearts of some, so-called, "able-bodied" people.

di Translated by Cordone, Lettini & Schiraldi (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)