

Still in time to set Transalpine conditions right

An undesirable impact will result from the planned changes to the commercial conditions that are to apply on the Transalpine routes once extensive upgrades to the three main crossings (Lötschberg, Gotthard and Brenner) are all completed - this has been found in a study carried out by TransCare for UIRR.

Both countries that manage the important North-South transit routes through the Alps, Switzerland and Austria, have committed significant resources to enhance the rail infrastructure of these crossings with a view to reinforce the attractiveness of railway services:

- The new Lötschberg base-tunnel, complemented by the Simplon tunnel,
- The new Gotthard base-tunnel, complemented by the Ceneri base-tunnel and the 4m corridor on its approach lines, and
- The reconstruction of the Brenner-line in Austria.

UIRR and the entire European Combined Transport sector strongly welcomed these investments as essential to be able to offer competitive road-rail CT rail services.

While the parameters of the planned infrastructure upgrades were well known in advance, the changes to the commercial conditions for accessing these new pieces of infrastructure were only announced recently. European Rail Freight Corridor 1 (Rhine-Alpine) is the most important axis of European CT, therefore UIRR commissioned a study by renowned logistics consultants, TransCare of Wiesbaden, to prepare a thorough analysis of what will be charged to the users of the upgraded lines in the two countries that operate them.

The results uncovered by the consultants are alarming in the case of Switzerland, where the **enhanced operating efficiency offered by the improvements** (faster timetable speeds and lower energy consumption) **will be more than offset by the foreseen phasing out of CT subsidies and the announced new track access charge regime**. So much so that avoiding these routes by taking a 150km eastward detour through the Brenner line appears to become an attractive and desirable alternative.

Fortunately there remain enough time for the decision-makers in Switzerland to take the results of this study by TransCare into account, which UIRR urges in earnest, and then to implement the necessary adjustments in order to make the new, high performance rail infrastructure also commercially competitive. This is especially important when comparing to the conditions that the competing trucking industry faces when using the parallel highways and in view of the expressed desire of the population to conduct even more of the Transalpine freight transports on rail.

The study can be found here: <http://www.uirr.com/en/media-centre/press-releases-and-position-papers/2015/mediacentre/712.html>



Ralf-Charley Schultze

"UIRR has been promoting the implementation of necessary upgrades to the strategic European rail infrastructure to help facilitate the desired shift of long distance trucking to ecologically and economically competitive Combined Transport; this can only work, however, if the new infrastructure is available under competitive commercial conditions." - highlighted UIRR Director General Ralf-Charley Schultze on the occasion of publishing this press release.

Who is UIRR?

Founded in 1970, the **International Union for Road-Rail Combined Transport** (UIRR) represents the interests of European road-rail Combined Transport Operators and Transshipment Terminal Managers.

Road-Rail Combined Transport (CT) is a system of freight forwarding which is based on efficiently and economically inserting electric rail into long-distance (road) transport-chains through the use of intermodal loading units (ILU).

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