

Media Release

Interruption of the railway line at Gotthard

Rail freight actors join forces to overcome emergency

Bern/Olten/Chiasso, 13 June 2012 The suppliers of rail freight traffic via Switzerland can handle a large proportion of the transit demand by diversions via Lötschberg/Simplon. Close, constructive collaboration of all involved makes this possible.

"Make more from less" – Switzerland has mobilized additional capacity in line with this motto after the Gotthard line was blocked for several weeks due to a rockfall. An adaptation of the schedule **increased capacity via Lötschberg/Simplon**. The available route capacity must be used optimally. Combined transport operators and rail companies are pooling their volumes and resources to this end.

The Rola operator RALpin has reduced its existing offer via the Lötschberg axis so that more trains for unaccompanied shipments can travel it. These shipments are absolutely dependent on rail transport. BLS Cargo is making all rail company pushing services available on the alpine routes for the order of the infrastructure managers SBB/BLS. SBB Cargo International is providing additional shunting teams at the borders. Hupac is controlling the traffic volume, so that maximum capacity utilization of the trains is achieved. Hazardous goods transport is given priority on Rola to limit an increase of hazardous good shipments on roads.

Collaboration with railways in other countries is being pursued intensively. All routes via Lötschberg/Simplon have to find a connection in Germany and Italy; otherwise they remain unused. The international interface of the rail systems in Domodossola presents a bottleneck. Under direction of the Italian infrastructure operator RFI, a pool of locomotives and train drivers was created for shunting work to handle the critical point. Customs authorities have also adapted their work to the increased demand on the Lötschberg/Simplon axis and are working around the clock.

The interruption of the Gotthard route is creating high costs for all involved in the intermodal transport chain. The companies in the rail sector expect losses in the ranges of millions. However, the indirect costs of a loss of customer trust are substantially higher with a possible shift back to the roads. As a result, the **close, constructive collaboration** of all involved on the complete traffic corridor is that much more important over the coming weeks.

The interruption of the railway line at Gotthard has demonstrated that the rail system needs sufficient **reserves and redundancies**, so that it can remain operational in emergencies. Freight transport must at least in part be able to switch from one route to another. Sufficient reserves

ensure the stability of the total system. Insofar the orientation of NEAT to two axes (Gotthard and Lötschberg) has been proven to be the right strategy. The expansion and capacity increase of all three transit axes through Switzerland, i.e. the Lötschberg, Luino and Chiasso axes, is imperative for traffic relocation.

The operators of rail freight traffic also see a need to act in the area of **construction site management**. International construction site coordination has to be considered for all routes crossing the Alps with the goal of maintaining sufficient transport capacity when there are unforeseen incidents. Simultaneous construction work on several central transit axes, such as in this summer with partial complete blocks of the Simplon and Brenner routes, presents an intolerable risk, as has now been demonstrated. Postponements of construction work must be an option in the case of emergencies.

Finally, the interruption of the Gotthard route makes the necessity of **internationally coordinated infrastructure management** extremely clear, especially in the sensitive region of the Alps. This would enable optimum harmonization of the different requirements of national networks. Interoperability also remains an important topic. Different line profiles, electricity and train control systems complicate the moving of transport considerably from one axis to another.

Customer trust in rail freight must be won again each day. SBB Cargo International, BLS Cargo, Hupac and RALPIN want to thank all their partners in the transport chain for their dedication to overcoming the current emergency. The employees of infrastructure operators, railways, terminals and public authorities are doing outstanding work to keep traffic rolling at least in a limited fashion.

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