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The Swiss Transport Policy and its main features

The Swiss Transport Policy and the Modal Shift

The Swiss population wants to protect the sensitive Alpine region from excessive traffic load, while ensuring efficient transport of goods and passengers between the North and the South.

Since the 1980s, Switzerland pursues a sustainable transport policy, with at its core the shifting of as much traffic as possible from road to rail.

The Swiss population has confirmed this policy in several occasions through political referendum. In 1994 in particular, it adopted the so-called Alpine Initiative, according to which the heavy traffic through Switzerland should take place on

the rail. Practically, this means that by 2018 no more than 650,000 lorries per year should cross the Alps.

Switzerland has taken various measures to reach this target. These include:

- The distance-related Heavy Vehicle Fee and the financial schemes and facilities supporting the freight transport by rail.
- To enhance the capacity of the railway network in particular, Switzerland is building the *New Railway Link through the Alps* (NRLA) with three base tunnels through the Lötschberg, Gotthard and Ceneri.

Thanks to these measures, rail freight through the Alps grows steadily. The market share of rail has increased from 66.1% in the second half of 2013 to 68.6% in the first half of 2015, the highest level since the introduction of the HVF and increase of the weight limit to 40 tonnes in 2001. At the same time, the annual number of trucks' journeys has dropped from 1.4 to 1 million.

Yet, the ambitious target of reaching a maximum of 650,000 lorries per year is not to be achieved by 2018. To narrow the gap, the Federal Council adopted a series of incentives to be implemented from January 2017.

The New Railway Link through the Alps (NRLA)

The *New Railway Link through the Alps* (NRLA) is a project of the century. With three new base tunnels and by building their access sections, Switzerland brings the north and the south of Europe closer together. Travelers will save time and transport of goods will be more

sustainable and environmentally friendly thanks to the new flat rail line. The Lötschberg base tunnel is in operation since 2007 and the Gotthard will be opened on June 1st, 2016. As for the Ceneri Base Tunnel, its opening in 2020 will mark the completion of the NRLA.

The NRLA increases the attractiveness of transalpine rail freight for which it provides additional capabilities. In doing so, it contributes to the implementation of the constitutional article on the Protection of the Alps.

Construction costs

The final costs to the NRLA amount CHF 18.2 billion (1998 prices). It is fully supported by Switzerland. The overall NRLA credit was adapted by the Federal Decree of 16 September 2008. It amounted to CHF 19.1 billion, including

reserves. The credit encompasses investments for the base tunnels at Gotthard, Ceneri and Lötschberg, developments in the Surselva, developments in the rest of the Lötschberg and Gotthard axes of the

network, urgent developments between St. Gallen and Arth-Goldau as well as project monitoring. Considering the inflation, the VAT and capitalised interest charges, the NRLA will likely cost a total CHF 23 to 23.5 billion (current prices).

Financing schemes and facilities

The railway infrastructure programs (incl. NRLA) are fully funded through the Rail Infrastructure Fund (Bahnhofstruktur- und Infrastruktur-Fund BIF) created through the FABI national referendum in 2014. Since January 2016, the financing of operation and maintenance, renewal and modernization as well as of the further development of the railway infrastructure is exclusively provided through the BIF. To ensure its function, the BIF draws on following sources:

- 2/3 at most of the net revenue generated through the distance-related Heavy Vehicle Fee (HVF);
- 1 per thousand of the revenue generated from VAT;
- 2% of the revenue generated from direct federal tax on natural persons;
- CHF 2.3 billion from the general federal budget, subject to annual adaptation according to the yearly evolution of the real GDP and inflation;

- Cantonal contributions in the amount of CHF 500 million every year.

In addition, the following resources are temporarily allocated to BIF:

- an additional VAT per thousand (from 2018 until not later than 2030);
- 9% of the net revenue of the tax on Mineral Oil (until full repayment of the advance on the FinöV Fund), but to a max. of CHF 310 million (2014 prices).

Promoting combined transport

Since 2000, Switzerland is actively promoting combined transport in order to facilitate modal shift from road to rail. Annual contributions are allocated to support combined transport in transalpine rail freight. The planned budget for 2016 is about CHF 155 million. In June 2014, the Swiss Parliament extended the programme until 2023.

Then, combined transport should no longer depend on subsidies and be self-supporting; mainly due to efficiency gains linked with the new rail infrastructure projects like the Gotthard Base Tunnel.

After its opening, the financial funds will be slowly reduced from year to year. Since the mid 1980ies, Switzerland is

also supporting the construction of terminals for national and international combined transport. The budget for the next four years amounts to CHF 200 million.