

Media Release

Transport Forum "NEAT, Alptransit, an opportunity for the economy"

Terminals in north Italy: development strategy signed

Lugano, 11.5.2012. The Gotthard Base Tunnel will generate the expected benefits for the Rotterdam-Genoa corridor, provided the existing gaps in the infrastructure in Switzerland and abroad can be overcome. European intermodal traffic operators, meeting in Lugano for the 45th General Meeting of Hupac, emphasised the need to place freight at the very centre of the railway infrastructure development strategy. A first tangible step is represented by the strategy for terminals in north Italy, signed by Gruppo FSI, Cemat and Hupac during the Forum.

Transport companies are prepared to give the railway a chance provided it proves competitive and efficient - this was the quintessential point emerging from the Forum organised by Hupac in Lugano on its 45th anniversary. **Bernardino Regazzoni**, the Swiss Ambassador to Italy was the first to appear on the platform. He was followed by the National Advisor **Fabio Regazzi**, a member of the Transport Commission, and Raffaele **Cattaneo**, Minister for Infrastructure and Mobility for the Lombardy Region who for many years has supported intermodal transport to improve the mobility of freight and passengers. Then the awaited intervention by **Mauro Moretti**, the CEO of Gruppo FSI and President of the Community of European Railway and Infrastructure Companies, who is strongly committed to reinvigorating the rail industry at national and international level.

The Forum was introduced by **Hans-Jörg Bertschi**, President of the Board of Directors of the intermodal operator Hupac, founded 45 years ago in Chiasso and today ranked second in Europe. "Our network extends throughout the whole of Europe and in recent years we have also expanded into emerging markets in Russia and China. But our core business remains transalpine traffic: two deliveries out of three by Hupac have their source or destination in Italy. For these reasons, recently we strengthened collaboration with our partner Cemat: combining our strengths to develop traffic on the traditional north-south axis and on new routes towards the east", reported Bertschi. The Gotthard Base Tunnel which will become operational in 2017, represents a great opportunity of which the full potential must now be realized. It is essential to adapt the access lines along the entire corridor to enable intermodal trains to compete with road traffic and transfer goods transports from road to the railway. **"The key to success resides in productivity of the system"**, explained Bertschi, "we need a rail infrastructure capable of handling trains 750 meters long, weighing 2000 tonnes driven by a single locomotive, capable of loading modern trailers 4 meters high. In a few years the subsidies paid by Switzerland to intermodal transport operators will run out and we must be ready to compete on the market thanks to our strengths". The difficulty is scheduling works on adapting lines which today are far more modest, limited to trains 575 metres long with a profile of 3,80 metres. According to Hupac, improvements to the Bellinzona-Luino-Novara line which handles 80% of intermodal traffic via Gotthard and serves major terminals to the west of Milan, must be carried out by 2020; the project calls for works on a modest scale, some of which are already programmed. A bigger challenge is increasing capacity on the route via Chiasso, providing for construction of the Gronda Est Seregno-Bergamo to bypass the Milan node; the works will be finalised only after 2030. "We must clear up one area of ambiguity: both lines must be adapted. **The Luino line is more urgent, whereas the Chiasso line is more important because it will handle greater volumes in the future**", concludes Bertschi, and he issued a warning: "Let us not make the mistake of concentrating on the major projects of tomorrow and forgetting the minor improvements we should carry out today".

The Forum was organised by Hupac for the purpose of bringing representatives together from both Switzerland and Italy, to discuss the thorny issue of infrastructure strategy for the Rotterdam-Genoa corridor.

Coordination is being carried out by the Swiss Embassy in Italy, represented at the Forum by **Bernardino Regazzoni**. "We welcome the signs from intermodal operators, international and regional institutions and the railway industry, and we will make every effort on the basis of contributions from stakeholders to draw up a scheme offering tangible and generally endorsed responses" declared Regazzoni. The first stage is preparing a terminal strategy for northern Italy to service the anticipated flow of Alptransit traffic. "It is right to start with the terminals to define the access lines", explained Regazzoni, "and this is valid both for the existing terminals, such as Busto Arsizio or Novara, and the new terminals to be constructed according to our laws, including in Italy, provided we operate in a context of reciprocal agreement and responsibility. Today a **Memorandum of Understanding will be signed for terminal projects in Milan, Brescia and Piacenza** by the FSI Group, Cemat and Hupac, an essential cornerstone in the edifice of European freight transport. We are confident. Step by step we will then achieve other goals benefiting both Italy and Switzerland".

The National Advisor Fabio Regazzi, a member of the Transport Commission of the Swiss Parliament and President-elect of the Swiss Shippers Council also requested concrete measures in support of goods transport. The transfer of freight traffic from road to rail is an important national mission but we must overcome ideology and confront reality in a concrete and pragmatic way. "Road and rail are complementary and must progress with synergy and without distortion or false expectations", emphasised Regazzi. The programmed transfer objective must be translated into tangible measures in line with the market requirements. "Freight requires our attention. In this sense it is the duty of politicians **to draw up an infrastructure development strategy for the Swiss Federal Railways and to remain vigilant regarding its implementation**", concluded Regazzi. "We must aim for investment in infrastructure which increases the productivity of freight transport rather than in subsidies that do not contribute to productivity progress in logistics chains".

In Italy the opportunities offered by Alptransit are clearly perceived. "Lombardy is one of the main European economic areas and naturally has ambitions to establish better connections with the north", emphasised **Raffaele Cattaneo**, Minister of Infrastructure and Mobility for the Lombardy region. Intermodal transport is a specific choice, adopted twenty years ago which has produced tangible results. The terminals at Segrate, Busto Arsizio, Gallarate, Mortara and Sacconago were created thanks to significant contributions from the Lombardy Region. "But that is not enough. Considering that of the 400 million tonnes shipped each year in Lombardy only 24 tonnes is carried by rail, it becomes obvious we must meet the challenge above all in terms of further development of the infrastructure network". Works are now being expediting by the "Regional Round Table for Freight Transport" which brings together transport and terminal operators, railways and railway infrastructure managers with a view to combining forces on the most urgent improvement works. In anticipation of opening the Gotthard Tunnel, the capacity of the Chiasso-Milan line will be increased by technological improvements by 2020 and construction of the Gronda Est Seregno-Bergamo during a subsequent phase. The intermodal terminals remain the core issue. "The terminal strategy endorsed by the FSI Group, Cemat and Hupac is an important development. **The Lombardy Region will play its role in implementing the projects**", assured Cattaneo. But we must not forget the existing terminals clustered around the outlet of the Luino line between Lombardy and Piedmont. "They are a major economic factor, both for competitiveness of Italian export and jobs in the logistics industry. The existing lines must not be abandoned, but rather its performance improved by minor intervention works", concluded Cattaneo.

The new modern railway infrastructure throughout Switzerland promises excellent prospects for the freight system, since for the first time the traffic under management will prove competitive with that of other carriers. According to **Mauro Moretti**, CEO of the FSI Group, a results-oriented entrepreneurial strategy is essential for the railway industry, with abandonment of the subsidies-led approach which for years characterised the European rail sector. "**NEAT is an opportunity to revitalize the rail freight system which today is operating under extremely difficult conditions given its lack of competitiveness**", affirmed Moretti who in February was for the third time appointed as the President of the Community of European Railways (CER).

In the same vein is the re-positioning of Cemat, the combined transport operator of the FSI Group. Moretti outlined the future objectives: entry to combined maritime transport from and via the Mediterranean ports by absorption of Italcontainer traffic, establishing of new services between Italy and Eastern European countries and enhancing the commercial offer between Italy and the main European countries in conjunction with historic partners, including the shareholder Hupac. The FSI Group declared it was prepared for its appointment with Alptransit. "To respond efficaciously to the increase in traffic projected by 2030, we will deploy technological solutions to increase capacity of the Chiasso line. During a subsequent stage we will construct the Gronda Est. In addition we will instigate development of infrastructure and terminal services to the east of Milan to guarantee adequate capacity." Projects identified today, with the support of Gruppo FSI and Hupac, provide for the construction or increasing the capacity of terminal facilities in the Milan, Brescia and Piacenza areas. Italy and Switzerland are an integral part of the same corridor and so they must adopt the necessary measures in tandem, as Moretti pointed out. "We note the Swiss priority for the four metre corridor. We are ready for a comparison on the timescales and necessary projects, always bearing in mind the priority for high-capacity routes".

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