Railway axis Lyons–Trieste–Divača/ Koper–Divača–Ljubljana–Budapest–Ukrainian border

A new transalpine base tunnel will increase capacity on the congested Franco–Italian crossings and make rail competitive with air and road travel on these high-density passenger and freight routes. The extension of the axis to Slovenia and Hungary makes it one of the key east–west routes in the TEN-T.

What is the axis?

This axis with a total length of more than 1 400 km up to the Ukrainian border includes about 750 km of new high-speed lines – including a base tunnel of about 52 km under the Alps – designed for speeds of 250–300 km/h (plus sections of upgraded lines, mainly in Slovenia and Hungary). The new axis will be used by both passengers and freight. It will link the French and Italian high-speed networks.

What are its expected benefits?

The project will bring major reductions in travelling time for both passenger and freight services. Between Milan and Paris the travel time for passengers will decrease from six and a half hours to just over three and a half hours. Capacity will be more than doubled on the entire axis, more than ample for future needs. Greater capacity, and improved service quality is expected to enhance the competitive position of rail and increase its market share on this corridor, in particular for freight traffic.

A pilot shuttle service for lorry transport (rolling road) is currently operating. In the long term, this could take some 15 000 trucks off the roads every week. Once the axis is completed, the capacity will be over 40 million tonnes of freight per year. It will play a significant role in reducing the number of trucks crossing the Alps.

The new axis will also free capacity on existing, saturated railway lines, helping indirectly to improve freight, and local and urban passenger services.

What is its current status?

For the Lyons–Montmélian section, traditional financing is foreseen, and the project is currently in an intermediate study phase.

The French–Italian intergovernmental commission coordinating the international section is considering several possibilities for the financing of the project, including a private–public partnership scheme. France is also looking at a specific financing structure from the dividends of toll motorways.

TAV, a subsidiary of FS (Italian State railways), is managing the development of the Italian high-speed network, in particular of the Turin–Padua section. For the Italian sections, the State will provide 40 % of the funds with the remainder in bank loans. Financing has already been secured for the Turin–Milan, and Padua–Venice sections, whilst a law of December 2001 provides for the completion of the whole Turin–Trieste axis.

The new Venice–Trieste line is at an advanced stage of study. A feasibility study for the cross-border Venice–Trieste–Ljubljana section was completed in 2000, while a technical study for the Ronchi–Trieste section is currently under way.

The studies showed a need for in-depth studies of the alignment, particularly in view of the geological problems in a karst region, which could inflate the construction costs. Nonetheless, the project is included in both governments' infrastructure plans.

Preliminary designs and preliminary investment plans have been prepared for the Divača–Koper section, with detailed design to be completed in 2006, allowing work to be completed by the end of 2012.

The Ljubljana–Hodoš (Hungarian border) section requires modernisation of signalling and safety devices, and upgrading of the line. Preliminary design work is under way, with work due to get started by the end of 2006.

In 2001, the new Hungarian–Slovenian rail line (Hodoš–Zalalövő) was opened for traffic. Reconstruction of the Zalalövő–Zalaegerszeg–Boba line was started in 2002 and will be finished in 2007. As part of these works, the European train control system (ETCS) that has been put into operation on the rail connection between the border and Zalalövő (in Slovenia) will be extended further into Hungary.

On 20 July 2005, the European Commission designated Ms Loyola de Palacio as European coordinator for priority axis No 6.

Priority section	Type of work/status	Distance (km)	Timetable [1]	Total cost as of end 2004 (million EUR)	Investment up to 31.12.2004 (million EUR)	TEN-T contribution, including studies, up to 31.12.2004 (million EUR)
Lyons–St-Jean-de-Maurienne	Rail (new)	140	2007–15	6 250	0	3.2
Mont Cenis Tunnel (including access)	Rail (new tunnel)	70	2004–18 (2017)	6 700	200	117.6
Bussoleno–Turin	Rail (new)	47	2002–11	2 375	0	0
Turin–Venice	Rail (new)	384	2002–11 (2010)	14 994	1 700	0
Venice–Ronchi Sud-Trieste–Divača	Rail (new)	178	2008–15	6 200 [2]	0	3.6
Koper–Divača–Ljubljana	Rail (upgrade and new track)	135	2006–12	376 [3]	5	5.5
Ljubljana–Budapest	Rail (upgrade)	528	2000–15	760	19	3.5
TOTAL		**1 482**		**37 655**	**1 924**	**295.4** [4]

[1] In brackets, completion date listed in the 2004 guidelines, if different from the date notified in 2005 by the Member State.

[2] The costs for the Trieste–Divača section are not included as no decision on the alignment has yet been taken.

[3] The costs given only cover the Koper–Divača section.

[4] Note that the total TEN-T contribution includes EUR 162 million, which has been allocated for infrastructure improvements in general and therefore cannot be associated with a specific section of the axis.