

New vehicle tunnels for goods traffic: a dead end



Tunnel portal at the Gotthard: hauliers are demanding tubes in both directions. This will not increase safety, however, says the Swiss Advisory Board on Accident Prevention.

Traffic chaos in the Alps: this summer the most important transit axes are being closed to rail traffic. Haulage associations are thus again demanding new road tunnels. But the Alpine regions have decided that the solution to the traffic problem lies elsewhere.

Rail traffic through the Alps in late summer is to be heavily reduced or even halted. This is

because the most important connections for goods traffic will be closed, with building works on the Lötschberg-Simplon section, the line blocked at Domodossola from mid-August to September and repairs at the Brenner Pass that will mean complete closure for 50 days, with no piggyback transport. Meanwhile, it is expected that no goods trains will cross the Gotthard, the most important Swiss transit route over the Alps, for a whole month owing to yet another rockslide. On the last occasion the motorway was also affected.

Gotthard and Fréjus: hauliers demand a second tube

This has resulted in the Canton of Tessin and the Swiss hauliers' association ASTAG once more demanding the immediate building of a second tube for the Gotthard autobahn tunnel. Coincidentally, at the same time the International Committee for the Monitoring of the Safety of the French-Italian Motorway Tunnels has announced the possible opening to regular traffic of the Fréjus safety tunnel. A project is being developed with this aim. Construction is due to last five years, after which it is intended that the Fréjus tunnel will be able to compete more effectively with the Mont Blanc tunnel. This could however mean an additional 600,000 trucks per year rumbling through Savoy, warn environmental organisations.

The frequently deployed argument that a second tube increases traffic safety has nevertheless been disproved by a recent study from the Swiss Advisory Board on Accident Prevention, at least as regards the Gotthard tunnel: "The extra traffic caused by a 3% (i.e. 500-vehicle per day) increase on two carriageways will negate the safety gain of a twin-tube tunnel".

Alpine regions: stronger policy for a modal shift to rail

Those Alpine regions affected by transit routes see things very differently from the hauliers. They have agreed to an active and ambitious policy to promote a modal shift to rail. In a resolution adopted in Lyon on 31 May, they call for rail traffic to become more attractive and more efficient. They also demand an Alpine transit exchange or an equivalent emissions exchange system. This should for example achieve a halving of truck journeys over the Brenner Pass by the year 2030. Currently two million trucks per year use the autobahn.

Source and further information: www.tt.com/%C3%9Cberblick/Politik (de), www.nzz.ch/aktuell/panorama (de), www.regione.piemonte.it/notizie (it), www3.lastampa.it/torino/sezioni/cronaca (it), www.imonitraf.org/DesktopModules (de/fr/it), www.bfu.ch/German/medien/Positionspapiere/PP (de)

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New solidarity between the Alps and metropolitan areas



The Italian metropolis of Milan: a new solidarity is needed between the Alpine region and the major cities at the edge of the Alps.

Various political actors are pushing for the development of a macro-region for the Alps. CIPRA also says yes to an Alpine macro-region - but only within a clear framework. This offers the opportunity to make the rest of Europe aware of the issues facing its Alpine regions. The Alpine Convention has led to the establishment of committed networks like the "Alliance in the Alps" for communities. Yet the Alpine Convention is inadequately implemented in the individual states. Now a train is rapidly approaching with the vague destination of a macro-region for the Alps. The proposal comes from the European Union: a macro-region is aimed at helping areas without firm political and administrative borders to address their common challenges. No new institutions, funds or laws will be provided.

Nobody wants to miss the train to the Alpine macro-region. But where exactly is it ultimately heading, who decides how fast it is going, and what will the tickets cost? Numerous questions remain unanswered. CIPRA is taking a stance and actively joining the discussion: a macro-regional strategy may be an opportunity to make Europe aware of the issues facing its Alpine regions. The problems facing the Alps also concern the surrounding metropolitan areas. A new solidarity is thus required between those involved, both inside and outside the Alpine arc.

The Alpine Convention must be among those on board the train heading towards the Alpine macro-region. The values acquired by means of this unique international treaty must be applied as a minimum standard to the protection and sustainable development of an extended Alpine region.

Source and further information: www.cipra.org/en/press/press-releases

Alpine Convention: Italy says yes but Switzerland still says no



More environmentally-friendly transport by rail, a central requirement of the transport protocol of the Alpine Convention.

Italy, surprisingly, has ratified eight of nine protocols of the Alpine Convention. Only Switzerland has yet to sign up. We do not need the protocols, stated the Swiss Federal Council recently - Swiss policy is, in its view, more sustainable than in any other Alpine country. Up until now the community of Alpine states has contained two black sheep: Italy and Switzerland. For 20 years they have managed to sidestep ratification of the protocols to the Alpine Convention. Since 5 May, however, eight of the nine protocols have been implemented in Italy. The transport protocol, meanwhile, was set aside owing to successful lobbying by the haulage industry, which claims that a prohibition on building new motorways in the Alps would mean that repairs to existing roads might no longer be possible. A safety risk and, not least, an economic one. The transport protocol would also supposedly mean an

enormous competitive disadvantage, as Italy is the only country that has to transport its goods over the mountains to reach the rest of Europe. The transport protocol would in fact have helped provide Italy with a political basis for shifting traffic from road to rail. It is currently pushing ahead with costly railway projects such as the Lyon-Turin link or the Brenner Basis Tunnel. There is neither the political will nor a clear strategy for actually getting goods onto the rail network.

Switzerland has just such a strategy: its transport policy sets the benchmark even at European level for goods traffic crossing the Alps. This, at any rate, was the position repeatedly stated by the Federal Council on 23 May in answer to a parliamentary question: Switzerland thus has no need to ratify the protocol. The question, then, is what is to prevent the exemplary Swiss from proving their credentials and implementing all of the protocols.

Source and further information: www.umwelt.bz.it/presse/alpenkonvention, www.alpconv.org/de/newsevents/press, www.parlament.ch/d/suche/seiten/geschaeft (de), <http://trasportocommerciale.it/2012/03/26> (it), www.anita.it/news_dettaglio.asp?id=771 (it), www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2011/11/05 (it)

Alp Week: a place for youth



Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention: sustainable development means getting the future generation involved in determining their Alpine habitat.

Politics, science, NGOs. All the usual suspects are there at the 2012 Alp Week in Poschiavo. This time, however, there is a special place for young people. Here is an overview of the programme. What are the resources on which people will build their future in the Alps? Can climate change in fact be an opportunity? Alp Week, held from 5-8 September 2012 in Poschiavo, will investigate the question of just how renewable the Alps are. Such renewability strongly depends on the opportunities that youth have in helping to determine the future of the Alps. CIPRA is therefore giving young people from six Alpine countries the space and the tools to put forward their own views.

CIPRA is organising a session on the topic of youth on both 5 and 6 September: how can organisations integrate young people into their work and what formats do they need to do this? Young people will at the same time be showing how this is to be done: their hopes and visions, but also their demands, with for instance theatre sequences and video clips to be produced from this year's Youth Parliament of the Alpine Convention. The cultural high point is a joint concert of young musicians and disabled people from two "Alpine Cities of the Year", Idrija in Slovenia and Chambéry in France. The premiere will be held on the evening of 7 September.

Source and further information: www.alpweek.org/2012 (de), www.cipra.org/de/netzwerke (de), www.ypac.eu (en)

The future of farming in the mountains

The European Union is negotiating the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). If the "Alliance for Agriculture and Nature Protection in the Alpine Regions" has its way, farming in the mountains will be given particular consideration. The alliance has now submitted its catalogue of demands. Mountain farmers have previously lost out as regards European Union agricultural support. Funds are for example paid out according to surface area, not according to the effort involved, with serious consequences for species diversity in the Alps. Land that is difficult to work is abandoned, while traditional cultivated landscapes disappear along with animal and plant species. This is the claim of the Alliance for Agriculture and Nature Protection in the Alpine Regions, an alliance consisting of 20 environmental protection and farmer's associations mainly from the German-speaking Alpine areas.

The Alliance demands that the CAP, due to be revised from 2014, should give greater consideration to the special accomplishments of mountain farmers in order to help ensure the long-term maintenance of the unique species diversity existing in the Alps. Subsidies should among other things be linked to nature conservation, incentives created for the maintenance of typical Alpine usages and consideration be given to the increased workload required in mountain areas.

Source and further information: www.euronatur.org/fileadmin/docs

In summer cool, in winter warm

The European Union Directive on the energy performance of buildings takes effect from July. Low-energy buildings will be mandatory as from 2021. The community centre of Saint-Jean-d'Arvey already meets these criteria. The building, made of regional wood, will open at the end of June - a first. Socrates is supposed to have said: "The ideal house is warm in the winter and cool in the summer". The fact that this is also possible today without conventional heating systems has now been proven by the municipality of Saint-Jean-d'Arvey. On 23 June it is opening its new community centre, complete with kindergarten, library and town hall - built as a low-energy building from regional wood. It is the first public building in the French Alps made from wood with the certificate of origin "Bois des Alpes". This renewable building material comes exclusively from the French Alps and the wood will be used to build another 40 dwellings to the low-energy standard in this municipality of 1,500 people in Savoy.

Energy-efficient building will become mandatory by 2021 at the latest. Newly constructed buildings must have practically zero or very low energy requirements, with the necessary electricity and heating coming substantially from renewable sources. Public buildings must meet these criteria as from 2019, specifies the European Union directive on the energy performance of buildings, which comes into effect in member states on 9 July.

Source and further information: <http://batimentboislocal.blogspot.com> (fr), [http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32010L0031:en:HTML), http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/internal, www.territoiresforestiers-rhonealpes.eu (fr)

Agenda

UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio +20.
20.6.2012 – 22.6.2012. Rio de Janeiro, Brasil. Organisation: UNCSD
Secretariat, New York/US. [More »](#)

Final Conference - EU project MANFRED on Alpine
Forests. 28.6.2012. FAO, Rome, IT. Language: en. Organisation:
Mountain Partnership Secretariat, Food and Agriculture Organization of
the United Nations (FAO), Rome/IT. [More »](#)

ALPINE POWER - Step by step together. 1.7.2012 –
10.10.2012. Alps. Language: de, en, fr, it, sl. Organisation: CIPRA
Internationale Alpenschutzkommission, Schaan/FL. [More »](#)

Adaptation Strategies for European Cities. 11.7.2012.
Aalborg (Denmark), Burgas (Bulgaria) and Ancona (Italy). Language:
en. Organisation: ICLEI European Secretariat, Freiburg/DE. [More »](#)

Conference / Congress: DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE IN THE
ALPS: Evolving with the needs of people. 26.9.2012 –
27.9.2012. Kranjska Gora. Organisation: Hochschule für angewandte
Wissenschaften - FH München, Fakultät für Tourismus, München/DE.
[More »](#)

Strange but true!

... the bears in Trentino have finally gone
too far.

One of them has even recently managed to
kill three donkeys. That's quite enough,
says Lorenzo Dellai, leader of the northern
Italian province of Trentino. Until now a
model in the management of these large
predators, the area now seems to be at its
wits' end. Besides, there are elections
coming up, which is when the fur will really
start to fly. The proposal is that the Life
Ursus programme be stopped forthwith, with
half of the 50 bears living in the Trentino
transferred to other lands. But where to? It
is possible that South Tyrol, the
neighbouring province to the north, would
be interested. First in April, then in June,
two bears were struck and killed by vehicles
there: "M14", the first victim, provoked
controversy as to exactly which museum
may now put him on display, stuffed.
Perhaps Switzerland could also take in a
bear. Swiss trains are almost as good at
getting rid of bears as Italian cars.

Source and further information: www.zeit.de/2012/21/Alpen-Braunbaeren (de), <http://trentinocorrierealpi.gelocal.it/cronaca/2012> (it), www.montagna.tv/cms/?p=40910 (it)