



The TEN-T Priority Project No 6 Lyon-Turin, between popular struggles and economic crisis

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European Parliament, Strasbourg
Room F01101

Is it possible to increase the traffic of goods along the present railway Lyon - Turin, bulky goods included?

The works for the modernization of the Fréjus railway tunnel

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The answer is “Yes” as the present capacity is about 24 million tons while traffic has greatly diminished and it has been going down for many years now.

The “historical” railway (along which 2.4 million tons traveled in 2009¹) was able to carry about 12 million tons before the last works were done in the Fréjus tunnel, the works that had been planned by the First Prodi’s Cabinet and were both part of the agreement between Italy and France and of the CIG Intergovernmental Committee’s programme.

Since 2003 different modernization works have been done along the present railway Turin-Lyon. These works followed the addition of a new rail along the mountain trait between Bussoleno and Salbertrand and in some critical points in the 80s. These works, which ended in September 2011 with the opening of the historical Fréjus tunnel with a lowered top of rail, lasted nine years and cost a little less than 400 million euros to Italian and French taxpayers.

In the Turin-Lyon Observatory Volumes they make discordant traffic predictions between those who are for and those who are against the new 57 km long base tunnel. These predictions vary from 17.5 million tons (Noël Belin, Head of South-Europe SNCF) to 32 million tons (Andrea De Bernardi, Polinomia): the minimum-maximum gap is conditioned more by the quantification of the maintenance periods, that is to say by the actual days of full use, rather than by a different evaluation of the line knots. The capacity of the present “historical” railway might be sufficient forever if the decrease of the traffic, which has been going on since the 80s, continues for the next 45 years, in the case the Project supporters’ “pessimistic” forecasts become true; for the next 30 years in the almost impossible situation where the “optimistic” forecasts are proved real.

In the remoderned Fréjus gallery combined traffic P/C 45 ((Lmax 2500 mm and Hmax 3750 mm) is admitted only as far as the border between Italy and France.

To establish the operating methods in the area under the French jurisdiction, checks on the compliance with the security standards are currently carried out, in the meanwhile the admitted gauge is still the P/C 30 (2500 x 3600 mm); this gauge limits the admissible height: to overcome the restriction, either a system monitoring the track's geometry in real time should be adopted, making possible less binding prescriptions to the circulation of the more bulky modalhor, either there should be a more demanding procedure, such as chiselling the tunnel's rock faces, as it was done on the Italian side. These works could be carried out without impairing the circulation, that is ever decreasing by road and by rail.

The gauge or gabarit represents an established (scale of) value. In the adjustment project for the historical Fréjus tunnel the reference gauge is the GB1 (in order to permit the transport of wagons and large size

¹ See the data of 2009, the last year surveyed:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road/doc/2010_12_annual_report_observation_trafics.pdf

containers), which is in current use in the southern European network; while in Northern Europe the reference gauge is generally the GC, as here there are no mountain chains to be drilled through. But the Combined Transport's admission regulations make reference to prescribing charts that might be more or less binding, depending on the characteristic of the unit loading containers or semi-trailers or the whole lorry (the motorway travelling along lowered wagons and small diameter wheels projected by the German or the French patented modalohr).

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² Why wasn't the project change applied simultaneously on both boundary sides? Moreover, why was it performed so late and so differently on the French side compared to the Italian side? Should we infer that size and gauge different than the existing ones are likely to undermine the already weak reasons supporting the project? Is it true that the problem was discussed at a IGC (Inter-Governmental Committee) meeting and that some French Railway representatives have admitted several inconsistencies stemming from the project documents, very different to each other since the very beginning? Are there any minutes of the IGC meetings accessible to citizens? If not, why? Have the Courts of Auditors of both Countries been involved in the assessment of a potential and macroscopic inappropriate use of public money? Was the PP6 European Coordinator, Mr. L.J. Brinkhorst, informed during his recent visit in Modane about the real reasons the existing line has been judged technically unsuitable, in spite of the improvement works and 400 million €in the last 9 years? Finally, it cannot be disregarded that the present Torino-Lione line is suitable to the transport of all commodities that presently need the railway transportation modality, thus undermining all the reasons in support of the proposed energy and money intensive rail highway.