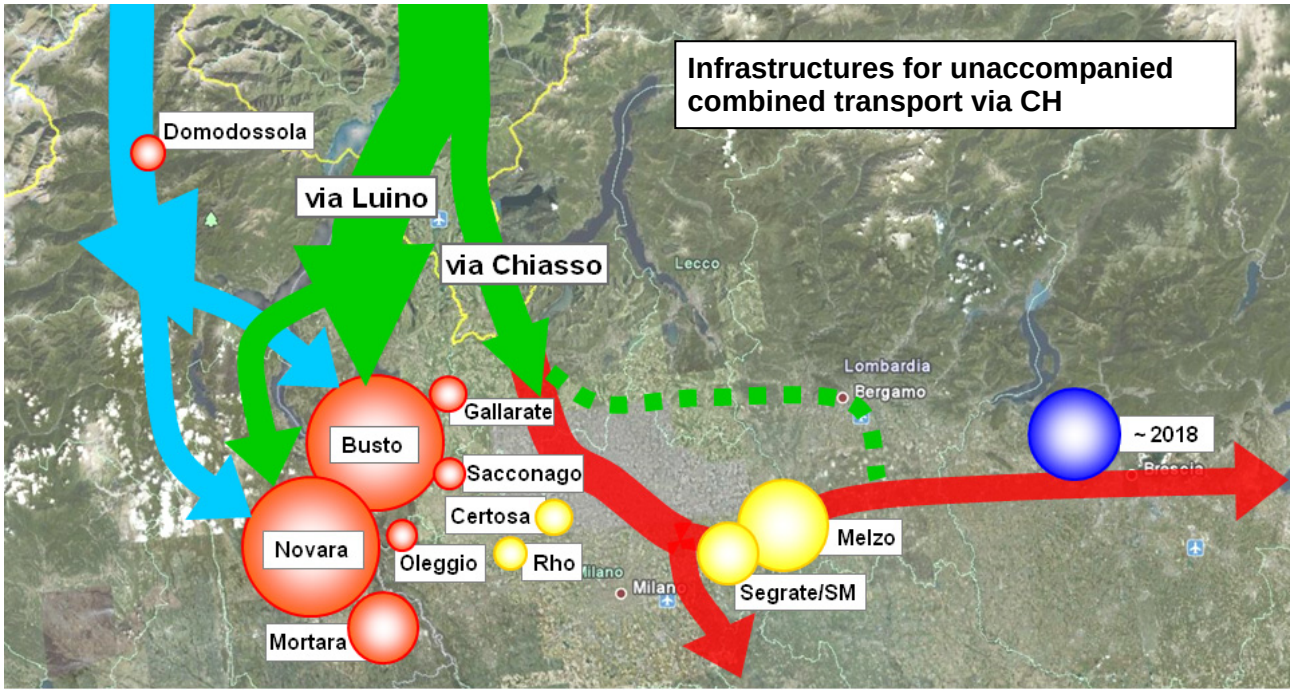
Achieving the greatest benefit with modest means

Modal shift will come to a halt without the Luino line.



In brief

The Luino line is the main route for unaccompanied combined transport (UCT) through Switzerland and a key element in the Rotterdam-Genoa freight transport corridor. So it is all the more astounding that international infrastructure development is increasingly ignoring it.

The strategic development of combined transport must consider various factors: the suitability of the railway lines to carry freight, the track capacity and quality, as well as the available terminal capacity. In the ongoing coordination process between Switzerland and Italy, a number of important aspects seem to have been disregarded.

The focus on the Chiasso line that can be seen among influential governmental and railway circles today is limiting the development prospects of the existing UCT system and pushing the intended benefits of the NEATinto the far distance. This is devaluing the investments already made in combined transport and calling modal shift policy into question.

Both are needed:

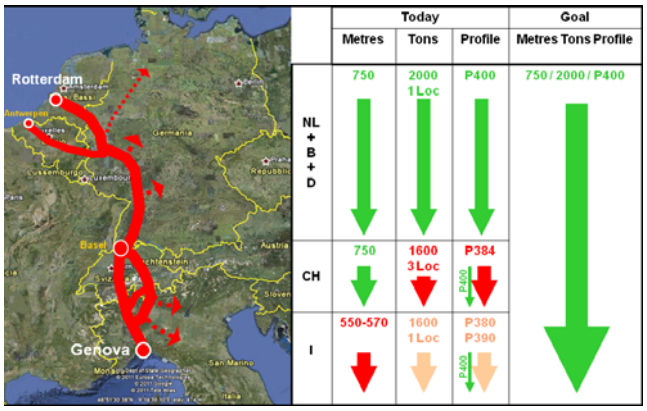
> moderate expansion of the **Bellinzona-Luino-Novara** line for existing traffic in the first phase

> and the establishment of a freight transport corridor via **Chiasso-Seregno-Bergamo** for future traffic in the second phase.

The arguments

The NEAT is supposed to create competitive infrastructure for rail freight transport on the North-South corridor. Yet the restrictions on the access routes remain.

Train lengths of 750 metres and train weights of 2,000 tons are key requirements if rail freight transport is to be made productive and competitive. For the important semitrailer segment, modal shift also requires expansion to the four-metre profile. These factors must be implemented along the entire corridor so that combined transport can operate commercially without subsidies. The existing lines on the south side of the Alps via Domodossola, Luino and Chiasso remain a bottleneck factor.



As the Gotthard and Ceneri base tunnels enter service, the current restrictions on the south side of the Alps remain.

80% of UCT via Gotthard is carried on the Bellinzona-Luino-Novara line.

The Luino line has been systematically expanded for freight transport over many decades. Despite being a single-track line, it is an important element in the Italian concept of "gronde" (edges) to bypass Milan. Many international directives and treaties position the Luino line as a priority route for combined transport, for example the Alpine Transit Resolution of 1990, the "European Agreement on Important International Combined Transport Lines" of 1991, the FinöV bill of 1997 and the "Piattaforma Luino" agreement of 2001.



RFI's long-term strategy includes a ring of bypass routes ("gronde") to ease freight traffic in the Milan metropolitan area.

The major terminals in northern Italy are connected to the Luino line.

It is no coincidence that many transhipment terminals such as Busto Arsizio-Gallarate, Novara, Oleggio and other smaller terminals are located at the intersection of the Luino and Lötschberg lines. These terminals can only be reached via Chiasso with great effort, if at all.

The Luino line is set to be the only flat railway through Switzerland.

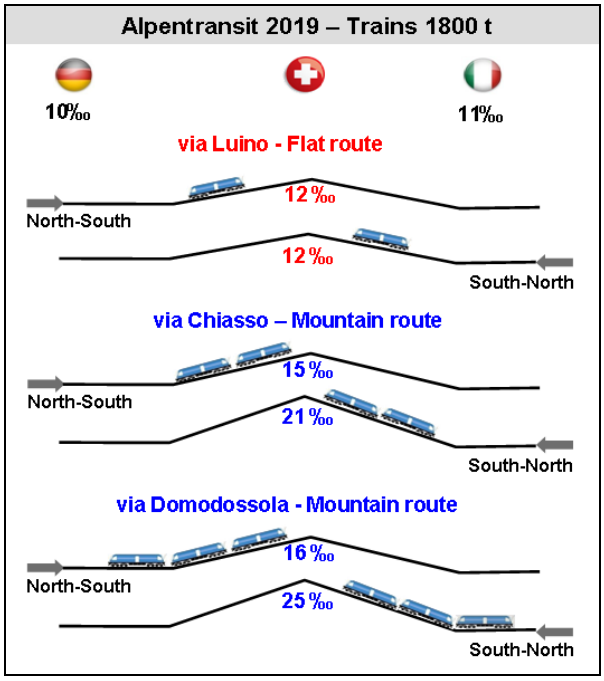
There is another reason why the Luino line is an ideal freight transport route: with a maximum gradient of 12‰, after the opening of the Gotthard base tunnel it will be the only truly flat railway route on the Rotterdam-Genoa corridor. In future it will be possible to run 1,800-ton trains via Luino with just one locomotive. On the Chiasso line, by contrast, there are still gradients of 15 to 21‰ around Mendrisio. This means that freight trains will still need to use complex, cost-intensive double traction in future despite the Gotthard and Ceneri base tunnels.

The Milan area is a bottleneck for combined transport via Chiasso.

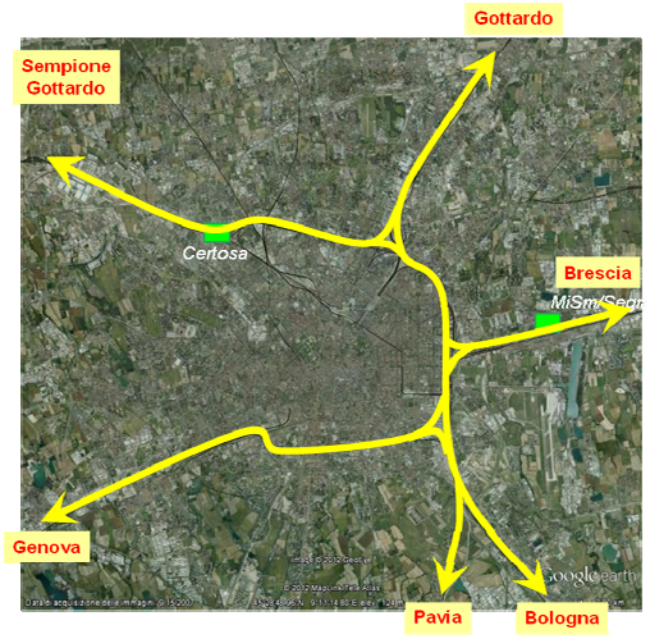
Freight transport concepts that involve passing through Milan are out of touch with reality. With 2,000 passenger trains per day, the Milan metropolitan area is already stretched to the limit today. Freight trains via Chiasso can only run at night in a few time slots and at very high track prices. The density of population imposes severe restrictions on the transportation of dangerous goods. Expanding the routes for train lengths of 750 metres in the metropolitan area is unthinkable.

Expanding the NEAT access routes via Chiasso will only be effective in combination with the Gronda Est via Seregno/Bergamo.

The "Gronda Est" between Seregno and Bergamo is designed to ease traffic on the route via Chiasso/Milan. However, this ambitious new route is unlikely to be built until long after 2025. Until then, all freight trains via Chiasso must run on the existing lines with their severe capacity and productivity restrictions. This endangers modal shift and jeopardises the productivity target for combined transport.



Steep gradients on routes make freight transport far less economical: they restrict train weight or necessitate expensive multiple traction.



The Milan metropolitan area offers no capacity for the establishment of a high-performance freight transport corridor.

Terminal capacity in the Milan area along the Chiasso axis has been exhausted.

Smaller existing transhipment terminals in the Milan metropolitan area are going to be removed to create capacity for passenger transport. New terminal capacity to the east of Milan can only be built up in the medium term, for example through the terminal projects for Brescia (Hupac in collaboration with Trenitalia) and Treviglio (Trenitalia). Until far beyond 2025, however, the eastward connection will run through the Milan hub with the restrictions mentioned above.

Conclusion

- A strategic shift from the Luino line to the Chiasso line would have serious consequences for unaccompanied combined transport.
- The Bellinzona-Luino-Novara line must be moderately developed so that the existing volume of traffic can be handled efficiently and economically.
- Urgently required smaller-scale expansion work that has been agreed to for years, for example the extension of overtaking tracks ("Piattaforma Luino II"), should be tackled swiftly.
- The first priority must be to boost the efficiency of the existing Bellinzona-Luino-Novara line.
- The second priority should be to begin the creation of a CT corridor via Chiasso and the "Gronda Est" between Seregno and Bergamo.
- The long-term goal must be to balance the operation of combined transport across the three existing lines via Luino, Chiasso und Domodossola.

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