

Press release

20 year' anniversary of the Freiburg–Novara rolling highway: accompanied combined transport maintained continuously across two national borders during the COVID-19 pandemic

Rolling highway trains took the Freiburg–Novara route on 11 July 2001 for the first time. As a pioneering user of the 4-metre Simplon intermodal corridor, RAlpin has since switched over 1.7 million heavy goods vehicles from road to rail, relieving the Swiss Alps of heavy traffic and almost 600'000 tonnes of CO₂. In the 2020 financial year, transport volumes fell by more than 35% due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Accompanied combined transport across two national borders was still maintained throughout the whole year.

After a successful start in January 2020 until the first lockdowns' implementation, the rolling highway had achieved occupancy levels of over 80%. The pandemic hit RAlpin hard: to ensure the health and safety of truck drivers travelling in the sleeper cars, occupancy of the compartments in which they spend their statutory rest periods has to this day been reduced and additional sleeper cars have been used. The result was a significant 35% drop in transport volumes compared to 2019. Thanks to restructuring measures agreed with the shareholders and a non-refundable grant from the Swiss Confederation, the annual loss was limited to CHF 0.9 million.

After a lengthy preparation period, a complete realignment of the rolling highway has been examined in 2020. Under the project name "RAlpin 2021+", the timetable change in December 2020 saw a new service concept launched, which also aimed to make up for the reduced government subsidies from 2019 onwards:

1. **Demand-oriented timetable:** 96 trains per week leaving the terminals at attractive departure times between midday and midnight.
2. **Longer trains:** following a change in the approval procedure in Italy, all of the rolling highway trains will have two additional low-floor wagons added during 2021. This will allow to carry up to 24 trucks per train following the high demand for trains departing in the evening.
3. **Investment in punctuality:** rail companies BLS Cargo and SBB Cargo International operate trains on behalf of RAlpin. They have developed a joint locomotive pool featuring BR186/Re486 engines, which, thanks to the approval, move the trains non-stop between Freiburg im Breisgau and Novara. Therefore, locomotive changes at the border are no longer necessary.
4. **Optimisation of the organisation:** With the goal to lower customer- and service provider-facing costs, administration at the company headquarters in Olten has been streamlined and duplications eliminated.

The effects are already visible: almost no trains have had to be cancelled as a result of delays, and the cost optimisations are proving to be realistic; the new business plan has not yet been

fully implemented due to the reduction in capacity of the sleeper cars. One thing is certain: without this realignment of the service, the rolling highway would have been facing an existential crisis in 2021 and following years. Once the pandemic allows the restrictions to be lifted, the rolling highway will once again be in a position to demonstrate the valuable contribution it makes to Switzerland's alpine protection policy and transfer up to 100,000 heavy goods vehicles to rail annually.

Further information can be found in our annual report at <https://www.ralpin.com/appl/file.php?id=1325> (available in German only).

Olten, 28 June 2021

RAIpin AG at a glance

Headquartered in Olten, RAIpin AG operates the rolling highway (Rola) between Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany and Novara, Italy. Every year, the company transfers around 90,000 goods vehicles from road to rail. Under the rolling highway system, drivers embark their vehicles onto low-floor trains at the terminals and accompany their loads in a sleeping car. RAIpin's rolling highway service makes a significant contribution to the modal shifting of traffic from road to rail and to protecting the sensitive Alpine region.

The shareholders of RAIpin are BLS AG, Hupac SA and SBB AG.

Contact: Ludwig Näf, CEO Ralpin AG, ludwig.naef@ralpin.com | +41 58 822 88 88