



RailCom – News No 6

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Editorial

Dear Reader

Switzerland has one of the most intensively used rail networks in the world. Work is carried out on numerous construction sites every day in an ongoing process of renewing and gradually expanding the railway infrastructure. Unrestricted use of the rail network is now the exception rather than the rule, and interval planning has become a key component in capacity planning. It is a huge challenge organising construction activities in such a way that construction sites can operate efficiently while causing minimum disruption to rail traffic. In view of these conflicting demands between construction and operation, interval planning can rightly be said to square the circle.

We are currently focusing on the issue of interval planning and how to deal with the associated capacity restrictions in our market monitoring processes. RailCom works to ensure that the infrastructure managers inform the network users about the planning process adequately and in good time, involve them on an equal footing and resolve any conflicts fairly. We held a symposium on this topic at the end of November. You will find more information about this on the following pages.



I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter.

Patrizia Danioth Halter, President

Non-discriminatory interval planning

Planning time windows (intervals) for construction work on railway infrastructure is a very complex process. As network access is affected by capacity planning and specifically by interval planning, the latter are subject to the non-discrimination requirement and thus fall within RailCom's supervisory competence. In 2021/22, RailCom is focusing on how infrastructure managers carry out and involve transport companies in the process of interval planning. It held a symposium on this issue at the end of November 2021.

Background

The intense utilisation of the Swiss rail network brings with it enormous planning and organisational challenges. Construction activities must be carried out in such a way that construction sites can operate efficiently while causing minimum disruption to rail traffic – both passenger and freight. There is a three-step process for infrastructure managers (IMs) (see diagram), who define the need for construction on their networks based on rail expansion projects and the maintenance requirements of existing facilities (e.g. overhead contact lines, railbed and track, safety installations). They then finalise the details of the various projects and roughly define the schedule and scope of the construction activities. This allows capacity planners to plan the construction intervals, evaluate the extent of the restrictions on network capacity and draw up substitute measures such as slow routes, rerouting and bus replacement services.

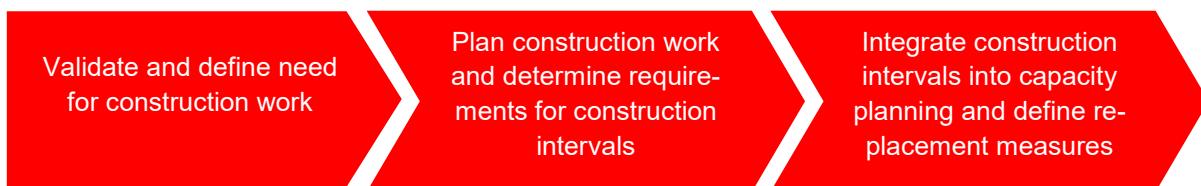


Figure: Schematic implementation process for construction work on railway infrastructure.

Non-discrimination and RailCom's mandate

As an independent authority commission, RailCom is responsible for monitoring non-discriminatory access to the railway infrastructure.¹ In Switzerland, the principle of non-discrimination applies to access to the railway infrastructure (network access).² Interval planning is part of network access capacity planning. This means that the IMs must avoid discrimination when planning the intervals and capacity restrictions and when drawing up replacement measures. Discrimination occurs when stakeholders or situations are treated differently – favoured or disadvantaged – without sufficient grounds. Grounds are considered sufficient if they are objectively justified, reasonable and comprehensible. For example, discrimination would occur if repeated line closures on an intensively used line section always resulted in the same railway undertaking (RU) experiencing disruption and having to transport passengers with replacement buses.

As part of its focus on market monitoring, in 2021/22 RailCom is analysing interval planning and how replacement measures are determined. Based on analyses so far, it has identified three key principles:

- **Transparency:** For example, all RUs affected by construction work are informed in good time and in the same way about the resulting rail traffic capacity restrictions and what alternative measures are planned.
- **Participation:** For example, all affected RUs can have an active say in the planning of replacement services and, if necessary, make their own proposals.
- **Fairness:** For example, the same processes, standards and conflict resolution procedures apply to all RUs in the event of conflicts in interval planning.

¹ Art. 40a^{ter}, Railways Act

² Article 9a of the Railways Act in conjunction with Article 10 of the Rail Network Access Ordinance

Transparency, participation and fairness are crucial to the entire planning and implementation process. This is particularly true when the IM, together with the RUs, tests and validates the replacement plans. RailCom thus reviews the interval planning processes applied in the light of these three principles, among others.

Symposium: Non-discriminatory interval planning – utopia or reality?

On 26 November 2021, RailCom held a symposium on the topic of interval planning. The 70 or so participants included IMs, RUs and contractors as well as cantonal, national and international authorities. RailCom presented its interval planning activities. Representatives of SBB Infrastructure then explained how they manage construction and capacity planning ([Presentations](#) in German). SBB Infrastructure plays a major role in interval planning for a large number of standard-gauge lines in Switzerland.

The presentations were followed by a panel discussion in which the following persons participated:

- Seraina Flury, SBB Infrastructure
- Joachim Joos, BLS Passenger Mobility
- Ulla Kempf, SBB Cargo International
- Franz Marty, SBB Infrastructure
- Hans Ruedi Rihs, Canton of Aargau
- Philipp Wegmüller, railCare
- Ursula Erb, RailCom (moderator)

The panel discussion focused on the issues central to ensuring non-discrimination: transparency, participation and fairness. The following key messages emerged:

Transparency

- All panellists acknowledge the IM's achievements and those of the bodies specially created to jointly manage replacement plans (e.g. capacity management steering meeting). It is vitally important to provide transparent and early information about all planned capacity restrictions.
- As contractors of services in regional passenger transport, the cantons are involved in the issue via their local RUs. Their priority is to ensure uninterrupted transport chains. They therefore need to be made aware in good time of any replacement plans that will have a major impact and may disrupt rail-bus connections in the various hubs.

Participation

- The IM welcomes suggestions from the RUs for optimising existing approaches or even developing alternative plans. The focus is on planning solutions that minimise the implications for passengers/freight and the transport companies concerned, while at the same time maintaining a robust and stable timetable.
- Evaluating the steadily growing number of replacement plans (2021:150, 2022: 200, 2023: 270) is important for the RUs concerned, but involves considerable staff and time resources.
- Going forward, the IM is considering a new approach to the planning procedure that focuses on network stability and implementation of replacement measures. The RUs see further potential for optimisation in the creation of joint digital platforms.

Fairness

- The IM assesses the impact of each replacement plan on the individual modes of transport and on the RUs, but does not currently monitor the implications for the individual RUs.
- The RUs call for fair 'victim symmetry', i.e. the impact of individual capacity restrictions is spread fairly among all affected RUs and modes of transport.
- The capacity allocation body TVS is especially involved in the process of approving substitute measures, whereby it ensures that all stakeholders are equally included and their needs adequately considered.

Outlook

RailCom will continue to analyse the interval planning processes in 2022. Taking actual construction sites as examples, it will show how the premises of non-discrimination are implemented in practice. Based on these analyses and the findings from the symposium, RailCom will establish what action needs to be taken and, where necessary, define measures together with the companies concerned.

Other topics in brief

New factsheets on market monitoring

In order to monitor the development of the Swiss railway landscape, RailCom makes information on specific aspects of its mandate publicly available. As part of the reorientation of its market monitoring activities, it has prepared a factsheet on the rail network and on passenger and freight traffic ([factsheets](#) in German).

RailCom continuously updates its factsheets. We welcome your comments and suggestions (info@rail-com.admin.ch).

European Standard Contract on use of railway infrastructure

A RailNetEurope (RNE) and International Rail Transport Committee (CIT) joint task force has drafted a harmonised European Standard Contract on use of railway infrastructure for IMs and RUs. It is hoped that this standard contract will be adopted as widely as possible by IMs across Europe, thereby reducing complexity, especially for RUs operating in different countries and on tracks operated by different IMs. The standard contract is also an important step towards improving European interoperability at an administrative level. As it contains legal provisions of EU law that are not directly applicable in Switzerland, not all points can be adopted by Swiss network IMs without change. However, it should be quite possible to adapt the network usage agreement to this contract while taking into account Switzerland's specific circumstances.

Because different countries have varying circumstances and use of the standard contract is voluntary, material harmonisation will probably only be achieved in the long term.

Updated network map

Are you interested in a map of the Swiss rail network? On our website you will find an updated [map](#) showing the standard gauge and metre gauge railway infrastructure.