

France-Italy

Construction Begins On Alpine High Speed Rail Link

The French and Italian transport ministers on 19th March launched the preparatory works of the 52 km tunnel under the Alps that will allow a high speed rail link between both countries. Jean-Claude Gaysot and Pietro Lunardi drilled the first holes on three different worksites. First, these works consist in upgrading to gauge B+ the Ambérieu-Modane-Turin line to obtain a height of 4.18 m and a 1.36 m width on each side from the central track axis. Secondly, the Aiton-Bourgneuf area will be converted into a HGV hub. Lastly, the international section of the line has been inaugurated starting with the construction of the access ramps to the pilot tunnels. Italy and France have long been studying plans for the project in order to ease traffic on overburdened highways and in Alpine tunnels. The project was speeded up following the fire disaster in the Mont Blanc tunnel in March 1999, which cut off traffic for three years and showed the need for more transport options. The line will carry both passengers and freight and will cut the journey time between the two cities by more than half. The massive project is expected to be completed by 2012. Visit www.alpetunnel.com and www.transalpine.com

Iceland

Norsk Hydro May Pull Out From Karahnukar Hydro Power Project

It has been reported that Norwegian multinational Norsk Hydro has informed the Icelandic government that it wants to postpone the construction of a huge aluminium smelter capable of processing 420 thousand tonnes of aluminium per year. Norsk Hydro has not confirmed nor denied this report. The postponement would probably affect plans by the Icelandic government to build the 700 megawatt Karahnukar hydro power plant, which would be used to provide energy to the smelter. If built, the Karahnukar project will be the largest hydro power facility in Europe, damming two major glacial rivers and tributaries and redirecting their courses through 78 km of tunnels. Environmental groups say the controversial project will cause great environmental damage. The direct impact area covers some 1000 sq km in the highlands north of the Vatnajokull glacier, one of the largest remaining wilderness areas in Western Europe. Construction of the dams, ditches, channels, diversions, reservoirs, and roads will affect or destroy rare oases of highland vegetation that are characterized by dense and diverse plant species.

Visit www.karahnukar.is and www.lv.is/lv.nsf/pages/index.html. Also visit www.tunnelbuilder.com, item is/14. Read E-News Weekly # 2.

World Digest Of Tunnels Under Planning

China. Legislators have rejected funding for the HK\$22 billion Route 10 project. The Legislative Council's Finance Committee overturned last month's decision by its public works subcommittee to go ahead with the design of the project. The 13 km six-lane Route 10 scheme would have run from North Lantau to Yuen Long., with the 4.1 km Lam Tei tunnel between So Kwun Wat and Lam Tei. Read E-News Weekly # 12 and visit www.tunnelbuilder.com, item cn/43.

Germany. Federal minister of transportation Kurt Bodewig, railway manager Hartmut Mehdorn, Saxony secretary for commerce Kajo Schommer and Leipzig mayor Wolfgang Tiefensee signed in Berlin on 18th March the financing agreement for the €571.6 million under the city. The Leipzig City tunnel will enable S-train connections between the central station and the Bayerischen railway station. The first

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trains should run 2007 through the tunnel. Visit www.tunnel-leipzig.de

United Kingdom. According to proposals sent on 18th March to UK transport minister John Spellar, the £6-10 billion Crossrail project could serve Heathrow airport. The project would greatly increase capacity between central London and the airport, currently served by the Underground and the Heathrow Express from Paddington station. Mainline trains could enter the Crossrail system east of London at Shenfield, in Essex, and south of the Thames at Ebbsfleet in north Kent. The trains would run overland to the Liverpool Street terminus in east central London, enter two 9 km-long twin-bore tunnels to Paddington, and then run overland to Heathrow via stops in west London, possibly at Ealing Broadway and Hayes. Trains could run westwards to Reading, Aylesbury and Watford. Detailed decisions are expected by 22nd September from a group chaired by Mr Spellar, which includes Richard Bowker, head of the Strategic Rail Authority, London's mayor Ken Livingstone, and Bob Kiley, his transport commissioner. The scheme has been developed by Cross London Rail Links, a jv owned by the SRA and Transport for London. Visit www.crossrail.co.uk

World Digest Of Bids

Australia. The Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales is inviting applications for registration of interest (ROI) from the private sector to finance, design, construct, maintain and operate the proposed Lane Cove tunnel as a privately financed tollroad. Deadline 24th April, 2002. The 3.4 km twin tunnels will link the M2 motorway at East Ryde and the Gore Hill Freeway at Artarmon in Sydney. The estimated cost is A\$815 million. Copies of the ROI document are available for inspection and purchase at the Roads & Traffic Authority, Road Network Infrastructure Directorate, Level 6, Centennial Plaza, 260 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills. Contact: Ms. Toni Fearn on +61 (02) 9218 3945. E-mail Toni.Fearn@rta.nsw.gov.au. The Environmental Impact Statement will be provided in CD format with the ROI document. A pre-registration briefing will be held on Wednesday 3rd April, 2002. Enquiries to the General Manager, Private Infrastructure, Mr. Les Wielinga on +61 (02) 9218 3945. E-mail Les.Wielinga@rta.nsw.gov.au. Visit http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/frames/business/g_f.htm?frames/business/g11&/business/g112_c.htm&Current+Tender+Advertisements&2

Germany. Restricted procedure, deadline 5th April, 2002 for sewer construction between Kraneburg Street and Gewerbe park in Bottrop-Boy. Includes, amongst other assignments, 1.6 meter i.d. pipejacking, 0.5 metre i.d. and 1 metre i.d. microtunnelling. Visit <http://ted.eur-op.eu.int/ojs/en/frame.htm>, OJ S 57, document 44466-2002 or contact Emschergenossenschaft, Essen, tel. +49 (02 01) 1042661.

Spain. Notice of work concession for the construction, maintenance and management of the toll motorway to the Barajas airport in Madrid. Section II between A10 and M40 includes 4.5 km of tunnel under Park Juan Carlos I. Deadline 11th June, 2002. Visit <http://ted.eur-op.eu.int/ojs/en/frame.htm>, OJ S 56, document 43622-2002 or contact Ministry of Development, Madrid, tel. +34 915978330 / 40.

World Digest Of Contract Awards

France. The 750 m Condamine tunnel near Nice will be constructed for €30 million by a jv of Campenon Bernard Méditerranée, Eiffage, Carillion BTP, Nicoletti Tunzini Industrie, Snef Côte d'Azur, Jean Graniou and Eurovia Méditerranée. Drill/blast method. Read E-News Weekly # 10. Visit www.campenon.com

World Digest Of Ongoing Tunnelling

Brazil. State secretary of environment André Corrêa committed to review the São Conrado Beach depollution project in Rio further to the protest of local residents and surfers who want the project to be lengthened up to Chapéu dos Pescadores, in Avenida Niemeyer. In the initial project, the tunnel that will reject waste water into the sea is 260 m in length. To date, 170 metres have been excavated. A study has been ordered to determine by how long the tunnel will be extended and for what cost.

Taiwan. Work on the 12.9 km Pinglin tunnel under Shueishan mountains, one of the most challenging road construction engineering projects in the world, were forced to stop work again, only one day after tunnelling resumed after a 10-month stoppage. The reason was again water inflow. Water has kept flooding the construction site at 150-200 litres per second. The source of the water is unknown so that the construction team had the water analysed through carbon-dating. They discovered that some of it is about 4,800 years old.

The Beiyi Freeway development team includes engineers and workers from the Ret-Ser Engineering Agency, developers from the Taiwan Area National Expressway Engineering Bureau under the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, civil engineering professors from National Taiwan University, and engineering consultants from Japan and various Western nations. The team originally planned to complete the penetration of Shueishan mountains, which divide the Taipei Basin in the north of the island and the Lanyang Plain in the east, by the end of 2000. However, in the first two years of work, there was hardly any progress as the team was slowed down by special geological formation, a series of faults and massive groundwater flooding. The designers and engineers gave up their original schedule five years later, while only about 1.9 kilometre had been completed in four years, with a US\$28.6 million TBM being swallowed by falling mud, rocks and the tremendous amount of water. It was finally decided to halt the entire development project in April, 2001. It did not restart until this year.

To tackle the most difficult parts of the tunnel, the engineering team drilled three vertical shafts, one of which was 80 storey-deep, from the surface of the mountain range. The builders conducted a thorough scanning of the geological organization of the strata of the range by lifting sonar, global positioning system (GPS) and other advanced equipment transported by helicopter to the top of the range in order to know what exactly was in the mountains that made the engineering task so difficult. However, they were only able to scan about 300 metres deep, leaving more than 100 metres deeper still unknown. Because of the delays, eight units have recently been working on an around-the-clock basis to get the task completed on schedule. The challenges and risks were so great that no insurance company was willing to provide coverage for the tunnel construction, the location, or the personnel working at the construction sites.

The tunnel is the backbone of the 31 km Beiyi Freeway connecting Taipei and the eastern Taiwan city of Ilan. If the project remains on schedule, when the tunnel opens in 2005, the journey between Taipei and Ilan will be reduced from the current two hours to just 40 minutes. When completed, it will be Asia's second longest and the world's fifth longest road tunnel. Visit www.tunnelbuilder.com, item tw/14.

World Digest Of Tunnel Renovation & Maintenance

France. Open tendering, deadline 3rd May, 2002 for waterproofing inspection of the inner lining of a 295 m tunnel on RD 902 road in Higher Savoy. The assignment also includes the inspection of the roof and the invert. Visit <http://ted.eur-op.eu.int/ojs/en/frame.htm>, OJ S 54, document 42262-2002 or contact the Higher Savoy county council, Annecy, fax +33 4 50335169.

France-Italy. Restricted procedure, deadline 15th April, 2002 for maintenance of the low and high voltage equipment of the Fréjus tunnel. Visit <http://ted.eur-op.eu.int/ojs/en/frame.htm>, OJ S 54, document 42306-2002 or contact Société française du tunnel routier du Fréjus (SFTRF), Paris, fax +33 144689955. Visit www.tunneldufrejus.com. Read E-News Weekly # 10.

Italy. Open tendering, deadline 15th May, 2002 for the modernisation of the 2 x 220 m Albiano tunnel in Aula on the Parma-La Spezia highway. Tender value €7.2 million. Visit <http://ted.europa.eu.int/ojs/en/frame.htm>, OJ S 57, document 44428-2002 or contact Autocamionale della Cisa, Ponte Taro, tel. +39 0521613731. Also visit www.autocisa.com

Spain. Open tendering, deadline 10th June, 2002 for the civil engineering works to extend the rescue gallery for the Cadí tunnel in Barcelona. Tender value of €15 million. Visit <http://ted.europa.eu.int/ojs/en/frame.htm>, OJ S 55, document 42744-2002 or contact Túnel del Cadí, Barcelona, fax +34 932057859. Read E-News Weekly # 6. Visit www.tabasacadi.com

United States. Modern Electric Co. of Casper, Wyoming has been commissioned by the Wyoming State Department of Transportation to upgrade the lighting of the Green River tunnels on I-80 for about \$2.5 million. The eastbound bore is 347 m-long and the westbound bore is 345 m-long. TIR Systems' Tunnel Light Pipe and Dual Beam products will be installed to provide high quality, uniform lighting for day and night-time vehicle traffic. The contract was awarded in December, 2001. Installation for the first bore is expected to commence in June or July of this year, completion being expected within 60 days. The second bore is tentatively scheduled for completion mid-2003. Visit www.modern-electric.com and www.tirsys.com

World Digest Of Inaugurations

Iran. The northern extension of Line 1 of the Tehran metro was inaugurated on 18th March. The 7 km line serves eight stations starting from Taleghani in the city centre to end in Mirdamad street in northern Tehran. Visit www.metropla.net/as/tehr/tehran.htm and www.tunnelbuilder.com, item ir/13.

Companies

Germany. Construction giant Philipp Holzmann said on 21st March it would file for bankruptcy if its creditor banks failed to approve a last-minute rescue plan. Commerzbank, HypoVereinsBank and Dresdner Bank rejected a €50 million proposal put forward by Deutsche Bank, which has a 19.6% stake in Holzmann and is its largest creditor. This is the second time the company is on the brink of collapse. In 1999, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder personally intervened to save the group with a €2.2 billion rescue plan. This time, the German government has ruled out similar action. Holzmann's shares plunged 23.7% to €3.80 in early trading in Frankfurt Stock Exchange on 21st March. Holzmann, which employs 24,000 people worldwide, is faced with massive debts. The collapse of Holzmann would be the biggest in Germany's post-war era. Among Holzmann's highlighted tunnelling projects is the Westerschelde tunnel in the Netherlands. Visit www.hlzm.de

China. Construction services group Gammon has announced that it has changed its name to Gammon Skanska Ltd. Gammon Skanska is 50% owned by Skanska AB of Sweden and 50% owned by Jardine Matheson. Skanska is the third largest construction group in the world with an annual turnover of US\$15 billion. Currently, Gammon is involved in the East Rail Extension in Hong Kong requiring the construction of tunnels running from Hung Hom to Tsim Sha Tsui for the Kowloon-Canton Railway Corporation. Gammon is also constructing a 2.2 km tunnel for the Hong Kong metro, as part of contract 612 for the Tseung Kwan O extension. Gammon was previously owned by Kvaerner. Visit www.gammonskanska.com