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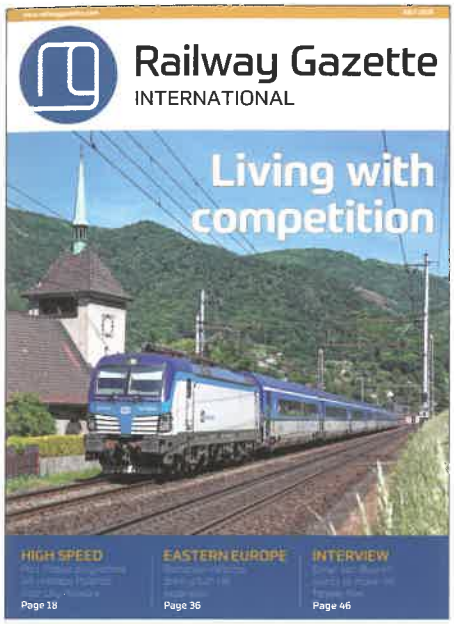

Responding to the advent of competition on the Czech network over the past 15 years, incumbent České Dráhy has invested in a fleet of 200 km/h ComfortJet push-pull trainsets from a consortium of Siemens Mobility and Škoda Group. These are deployed on domestic inter-city routes and international services from Praha, ranging as far afield as Hamburg, Budapest and Villach (p46).

CONTACT

Railway Gazette International

4th Floor Chancery House, St Nicholas Way, Sutton, SM1 1JB, Great Britain

Tel +44 20 8652 5200

editor@railwaygazette.com

See p50 for full details

www.facebook.com/railwaygazette

@railwaygazette

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48 **Commission unveils passenger package** The European Commission has proposed a package of three regulations designed to simplify the booking of multi-leg rail journeys

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Opened on May 15, Riyadh Metro's Western station is the last of 22 that Webuild has completed on the 41 km automated Orange Line as part of the Arriyadh New Mobility consortium with L&T, Nesma, Hitachi and Alstom. The 112 000 m² interchange integrates an elevated metro station, a bus terminal, underground car parking, retail areas, a mosque and a public square.

Webuild said the design takes inspiration from the colours and shapes of desert dunes. Horizontal structures emerge from the ground to define the entrances, guide natural light into the interior spaces and provide shaded areas. The roofs are supported by two large arches, spanning 115 m and rising 24 m, 'creating a monumental structure that blends into the urban landscape rather than standing out as an isolated object'.

COMMENT

Nick Kingsley, Executive Editor, Railway Gazette International
nicholas.kingsley@railwaygazette.com

Requiem for a dream

When UK Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander announced in the House of Commons on May 19 that the High Speed 2 project would undergo a 'thorough reset', it was an admission of what most observers already knew: a dream had died.

To those of us who have followed HS2 since its inception back in 2009, this was hardly breaking news. But nevertheless, the details were sobering: the ambition to build a 540 route-km network linking most of the UK's principal cities either directly or with 'classic compatible' services will be replaced by an 'Acton to Aston' shuttle from Old Oak Common to Birmingham Curzon Street, covering barely 160 km. The critical link between HS2 and the West Coast Main Line and the completion of an expanded Euston station have been deferred yet further, probably beyond 2040.

The cost meanwhile has ballooned to between £87·7bn and £102·7bn. While it is difficult to make a direct comparison with the original 'Y network' proposal, given the endless changes to the scope, this is clearly a vast overspend. No surprise that Alexander told MPs that she was 'angry' about the saga, while across both legacy and social media there were paroxysms of despair.

Various newspapers sought to blame the cost increases and delays on perceived 'gold plating'. In particular, one 'original sin' was to design HS2 for services to run at up to 360 km/h, which would (today) make them the fastest revenue-earning trains in the world. Other perceived over-specification included the adoption of slab track throughout, and an aspiration to use ATO with ETCS — something HS2 Ltd Chief Executive Mark Wild described as a 'world first' for a high speed railway (although the use of ATO itself is not).

In practice, the speed cut is modest: Alexander confirmed that the trains will still run at up to 320 km/h, while Siemens Mobility confirmed that its train control agreement specified the use of ETCS Level 2 with ATO, similar to the technology deployed as a global first in the cross-London Thameslink core.

10 trains/h

Revised throughput for the remaining sections of HS2

As well as pouring cold water on innovation, the reset confirms that — for the foreseeable future — HS2 will carry at most 10 trains/h per direction at most, a significant cut on the 18 tph envisaged at the outset. There is little clarity on how this might be improved in the (much) longer term.

Many have asked why Britain needed to have the fastest trains in the world. While a consensus seems to have emerged that this was down to pure braggadocio, there was a simple explanation: to offset the need to complete most HS2 journeys over sinuous legacy routes, high speed running on the new line was needed to ensure competitive journey times.

It is hard to see HS2 as a global outlier, even when it was being specified in 2009-13. China's astounding march towards high speed rail dominance was already becoming visible, while it was accepted that technical evolution would permit higher speeds at lower costs, helping to drive modal shift to rail. If specious maglev and Hyperloop proposals are discounted, operating speeds of 350 km/h or higher were or are still on the agenda in Italy, South Korea (p32) and Spain, while Chinese Fuxing trainsets are expected to start running at 400 km/h in the coming months. As recently as June 2025, DB and Siemens Mobility ran a test train at 405 km/h between Erfurt and Leipzig/Halle.

> 'The institutional and macroeconomic barriers to delivering major projects successfully seem to be getting higher'

What should concern rail advocates far more is the glaring spike in costs compared to the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (HS1) in the early 2000s: the difference in specification is not so significant as to explain the scale of the disparity. This surely explains why so much scrutiny of the failures of HS2 homes in on institutional and governance issues, rather than the design of the railway itself.

Sadly, casting an eye across the railway world, HS2 is not the only megaproject going seriously awry. The vision of a statewide high speed rail network in California has withered in scope (p24), while Germany's Stuttgart 21 remodelling has achieved similar notoriety; completion has recently been further postponed to 2031 at the earliest. Local rail trade associations are so fed up with the cost and delay that they openly describe it as a 'politically managed' initiative, as though it were somehow outside the control of DB InfraGO.

If the fatal flaw of HS2 was trains going 'too fast' over a route that was 'too straight', what do we make of the Australian government's decision in May to radically scale back the freight-oriented Inland Rail scheme? The reasons are wearily familiar: an independent assessment had put the cost at more than A$45bn, over three times the current budget, and found that the project could not be delivered until at least 2036 (RG 6.26 p8).

These tales of woe are not intended to excuse the obvious failings of HS2, but rather to illustrate that the institutional and macroeconomic barriers to delivering major projects successfully seem to be getting higher. It may be hyperbole to suggest that these barriers only crop up in western liberal democracies, but equally it would be unfair to castigate HS2 as a symptom of a new 'English disease', to borrow the 1980s description of football hooliganism. This is clearly not the case.

Briefing

The Surface Transportation Board has accepted for consideration a revised merger application filed by Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern on April 30. However, it has asked the two railways to provide more details of their plan to form the USA's first coast-to-coast freight railway.

The Democratic Republic of Congo has become the third African country to accede to the Luxembourg Rail Protocol, which will become effective with effect from October 1. This was hailed by the Rail Working Group as a significant milestone for rail financing across southern and central Africa.

The Spanish government is to set up an independent technical accident authority to oversee investigations across the maritime, rail and aviation sectors, under legislation approved in 2024. This will replace the national railway accident investigation commission CIAF, which is currently investigating the Adamuz crash in January.

FirstGroup's open access operator Lumo launched passenger services between Stirling and London Euston via the West Coast Main Line on May 25. It began with one train each way per day, but aims to ramp up to a full timetable from July 27.

A US$6·3m programme of works to increase capacity on the 75 km line from Hairatan on the Uzbekistan border to Mazar-i-Sharif in Northern Afghanistan was marked by the opening of a fifth freight terminal on May 21. Future enhancements will include the provision of additional capacity at Naibabad.

LTG Infra has broken ground on a €37m military mobility project at the Palemonas terminal near Kaunas which is served by both standard and broad gauge tracks. The site is to be turned into a dual-use hub for strengthening NATO rail logistics in the region.

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Performance contract set

FRANCE

The government has agreed a draft performance contract with SNCF Réseau that envisages a 25% increase in rail traffic over the period to 2033. The infrastructure manager is expected to facilitate the operation of nearly 800 000 additional passenger and freight trains per year compared to 2024, driven by passenger demand and the arrival of new entrants as well as a projected 20% increase in rail freight over the period.

The agreement comes against a backdrop of major structural reforms being undertaken under the Ambition France Transport programme. A package of legislation now being assessed by parliamentarians is intended to overhaul the management of funding for rail and public transport. This will help to bridge a chronic gap in infrastructure funding and deliver the SERM suburban rail development programme in full.

SNCF Réseau will receive €4·5bn/year from 2028 for network modernisation — a 50% increase compared to the previous contract. The annual allocation will also be indexed to inflation to ensure the sustainability of the investment level over time.

'With this draft contract, the state is setting ambitious and transparent targets for SNCF Réseau regarding network performance to ensure that passenger and freight services can operate with the highest possible standard of service', said Minister for Transport Philippe Tabarot on June 2.

Vectron X family gains digital layer

GERMANY

Siemens Mobility launched a 'digital' version of its Vectron locomotive family with an event at its expanded Rail Service Centre in München-Allach on June 10. Centrepiece of the Vectron X is a digital layer based on the company's Xcelerator software. A Smart Screen in the cab will support a wide range of app-based functions, whether from Siemens Mobility, the operator or a third party. An 'open ecosystem' with standardised interfaces and APIs will provide real-time connectivity.

High speed aspiration with Alberta network

CANADA

The Alberta provincial government is to provide C$15m over three years for the further development of plans for passenger rail services, following the completion of a master plan looking 30 years ahead.

Produced over a year by the Alberta Connexion Partners, the Passenger Rail Master Plan suggests the phased development of a 500 km network focused on the connections with the greatest potential demand and economic benefit.

This includes a 300 to 320 km/h line between Edmonton and Calgary via Red Deer, with more than one train per hour, a 160+ km/h regional service between Calgary airport and Banff, and frequent airport express and commuter rail services linking central Calgary, Calgary International Airport and Airdrie, as well as Edmonton International Airport, central Edmonton and St Albert.

Initial work is underway to examine connections between Edmonton and its airport, undertake planning for a station in central Calgary and to engage with industry to assess private sector capacity, financing approaches, business models and investment opportunities.

More than 20 000 people provided feedback to support the development of the plan, which included engagement with municipalities, Indigenous communities, passenger and freight rail stakeholders

The province said, 'Albertans strongly voiced their support for passenger rail and a preference for higher-speed rail connections with shorter travel times.'

'Major infrastructure projects don't happen overnight', said Premier Danielle Smith on June 5. 'They require thoughtful planning, strong partnerships and a clear vision for the future.'

Hellenic ETCS goes live

GREECE

Hellenic Railways has commissioned ETCS Level 1 trackside equipment on the 75 km Thessaloniki – Idomeni line, which is the main rail route linking Greece with North Macedonia.

The infrastructure manager's CEO Christos Palios said the commissioning marked 'an important milestone for the modernisation of the Greek railway'. Financed through Greece's Transport 2021-27 programme using EU Cohesion Fund resources, the project saw relay-based signalling on the single-track line replaced with ETCS, supported by digital traffic management systems at the control centre in Thessaloniki.

Working in a joint venture with Avax, Alstom has supplied its Atlas 100 ETCS equipment, Smartlock interlockings and Iconis traffic management suite under a €41m contract signed in 2022

VRR unveils battery-electric procurement plans

GERMANY

Rhein-Ruhr transport authority VRR has unveiled the first CAF Civity battery-electric multiple-unit for the Niederrhein-Münsterland network, as part of what it said was Germany's largest procurement of alternative-drive rail vehicles.

VRR and its Westfalen-Lippe counterpart NWL jointly ordered 76 two-car BEMUs in 2022 to replace diesel units on non-electrified routes serving the regional hubs of Düsseldorf, Duisburg, Essen and Dortmund from December 2027. The 140 km/h units will be supplied in two lengths: 45 m sets with 122 seats and 55 m units with 160 seats.

Bypass tendering

TURKEY

The Ministry for Transport & Infrastructure has invited expressions of interest in consultancy and project management contracts to support the development of the 127 km Istanbul North Rail Crossing Project, and has given advance notice of four tenders for construction works.

To be designed for passenger and freight operation at up to 160 km/h, the INRAIL route would provide a direct connection between Turkey's Asian and European rail networks, bypassing the Marmaray tunnel through the city centre. It would make use of the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, where the road crossing over the Bosporus was built with provision for a double-track railway.

The line will include five twin-bore tunnels totalling 36·2 km, 22 NATM tunnels totalling 23·3 km, 17 cut-and-cover tunnels totalling 3·7 km, and at least two viaducts and 40 bridges totalling 22·1 km.

Last month the Asian Development Bank agreed to provide a US$750m loan to help finance the INRAIL project, which is now estimated at US$8·3bn. The World Bank had earlier made available US$2bn, while EBRD has committed €500m. International funders are expected to contribute US$6·75bn in total, with the remainder to be covered from the national budget.

EU funding agreement to end 'years of destruction'

HUNGARY

Newly-elected Prime Minister Péter Magyar says his government has reached agreement with EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to unlock EU funding streams for investment, including rail.

The two sides announced on May 29 that a set of reforms and governance commitments were to be completed by August 31 as a condition of unlocking the funding. Of the €16·4bn expected to be released, Magyar said around €2bn would be allocated to rail. This would cover the procurement of new rolling stock for Budapest's HÉV suburban network and intercity services, as well as main line upgrading work.

The €2bn forms part of a package of EU Cohesion funds worth €4·2bn, which will be shared between transport development, healthcare and other socio-economic initiatives across Hungary.

'Resources may also be available to not only maintain existing railway tracks, but also to develop them to enable faster, more reliable and higher capacity on the most important corridors', explained Transport Minister designate Dávid Vitézy. 'After years of railway destruction, years of railway development may finally come.'

UK's biggest train operator renationalised

UK

Britain's biggest train operator was transferred to the public sector on May 31 as part of the government's nationalisation programme. The Govia Thameslink Railway Ltd joint venture of Go-Ahead and Keolis has been replaced by a new publicly-owned company, Thameslink Southern Great Northern Ltd. This is a subsidiary of the DfT's public sector rail operator holding company Department for Transport Operator Ltd.

The operator serves a large area of southern England to the north and south of London, and is responsible for one in six passenger rail journeys in Britain. GTR is the fifth passenger operator to enter public ownership under the nationalisation programme, and along with operators that had transferred for other reasons means that publicly-owned operators are now providing eight out 10 of the journeys for which the future Great British Railways will ultimately be responsible.

South Western Railway unveiled its first EMU in Great British Railways livery on May 22, as work gets underway on a national programme to roll out the GBR brand, which DFTO hopes can be delivered at 'zero marginal cost'. The GBR branded Alstom Arterio Class 701 (right) was unveiled at London Waterloo station, ahead of the first anniversary of SWR becoming the first train operator to transfer to the public sector as part of the government's nationalisation plans.

A GBR-branded Class 387 had been presented by Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander and GTR in Brighton the previous day.

Standard freight loco

SWITZERLAND

The first of the Euro DuFour electric locomotives which Swiss Federal Railways has ordered as its future standard main line freight hauler was unveiled at Stadler's Valencia factory on June 12.

SBB Cargo Switzerland ordered an initial 36 locomotives in September 2024, with options for a further 93. Deliveries of the first build are scheduled to be completed by March 2029. The first loco is to undergo testing at Velim later this year, ahead of trials in Switzerland from the end of 2027.

The 160 km/h four-axle loco is based on subsystems and components from Stadler's proven EuroDual and Euro9000 families and a lightweight monocoque bodyshell made of high-strength low-alloy steel.

Stadler is offering the modular design in AC, dual-system, electro-diesel or electric-battery variants, and with a maximum speed of up to 230 km/h. The initial order covers 14 dual-system locomotives of Class 494.0 and 22 Rea 494.2 locos which will have a 600 kW battery pack for last-mile operation on non-electrified tracks.

The Euro DuFour has been specifically designed for Switzerland's demanding conditions, with an advanced bogie incorporating an integrated self-steering system to reduce forces on curving track. The design includes provision for the retrofitting of both digital automatic couplers and FRMCS.

Stadler Deputy CEO Ansgar Brockmeyer said the axleload of less than 18 tonnes was 'even lower than had been initially hoped'.

Access agreements signed

SOUTH AFRICA

Transnet Rail Infrastructure Manager has signed access agreements with 11 train operating companies that have been awarded capacity on the national network as part of reforms to open up the rail market.

'The signing of the agreements 'represents more than just slot allocation, it signals the creation of a functional and competitive rail marketplace', said TRIM Chief Executive Moshe Motlohi. 'We have moved from policy design to practical implementation, enabling real private sector participation and investment in rail.'

The 11 train operating companies, which were selected last year from 25 applicants, are:

- African Rail Company South Africa;
- The Railway Corp;
- TLD Marine;
- Menar Ports & Rail;
- Sharp Logistics;
- Barberry;
- Grindrod;
- Minrail;
- IRACEMA;
- Motheo Logistics;
- Interlinks.

Operating alongside incumbent Transnet Freight Rail, the firms are active in sectors including coal, manganese, containers, fuel, and general freight. They are expected to introduce an additional 24 mtpa of freight capacity to the network, with the potential to scale to 52 mtpa over the next five years. This will support a national objective of increasing rail volumes from around 180 to 250 mtpa by 2030.

Menar Ports & Rail said it had been allocated a capacity of 8·6 mtpa, and had begun procurement of locomotives and wagons to transport coal, manganese and ferromanganese 'from pit to port' for its own products and other mining operations.

Tsiko Africa Logistics and Barberry Holdings have awarded Indian company Texmaco Rail & Engineering Ltd a contract to supply 30 diesel locomotives and more than 2 235 wagons of multiple types to support their entry into the market.

★ Rolling stock leasing and rail freight services company Traxtion has concluded a US$86m equity capital injection, providing funding for its R3·4bn rolling stock investment programme. This includes the acquisition of 44 diesel locos from New Zealand for R1·6bn and the purchase of 920 wagons worth R1·6bn.

Briefing

Citing a lack of capacity, Spanish incumbent RENFE is contesting a ruling from the National Commission & Markets and Competition requiring the state-owned operator to provide access to its La Sagra workshops for Iryo to undertake heavy maintenance on its Frecciarossa trainsets. A proposed access agreement had been under discussion for more than a year, but the talks broke down before a final deal could be signed,

Rail Baltica project promoter RB Rail and the three national implementation bodies have published the first version of the Network Statement setting out the technical, operational and access framework for future operators on the cross-border standard gauge line. It has been produced in line with the RailNetEurope Network Statement Framework.

Nouvelle-Aquitaine région has selected SNCF Voyageurs for a competitively tendered €965m contract to operate local passenger services on six routes in Poitou-Charentes for 10 years from December 2027. In 2025 these services carried 14 000 passengers/day on 815 trains per week, totalling 4 560 000 train-km per year.

Open-access operator Snälltåget launched a direct daytime train between Malmö, Göteborg and Oslo on June 15, providing a daily through service linking southern Sweden to Norway's capital via the Swedish west coast.

French development agency AFD has signed a €300m loan agreement to support the Transnet Freight Decarbonisation & Corporate Sustainability Programme, helping the South African incumbent operator to strengthen its efficiency and sustainability and transition to a low-carbon operating model. Unlike traditional project finance, which is allocated to specific investments, Transnet retains the flexibility to deploy the funds across a widely defined programme.

Briefing

Saarbahn has started passenger operation with its second-generation Stadler Citylink tram-trains in **Saarbrücken**. Limited approval under BOStrab regulations means the cars can only run over the city's light rail network pending authorisation to operate on DB InfraGO tracks.

The UK's **Light Rail** Safety & Standards Board has signed an agreement for Arup's Australian arm to produce a series of technical guidance notes covering operational and safety-related topics, looking to draw on international best practice and technical expertise.

CAF has completed the refurbishment of the first of 14 MAN/Siemens trainsets dating from 1983-85 which are used on **Athens** metro Line 1 and are being modernised under a €70m contract awarded by operator STASY in 2022.

State-owned metro operator **Toshkent** Metropoliteni is to be restructured as a joint stock company under measures designed to increase ridership and improve efficiency. The government hopes to grow ridership to 1·8 million passengers/day by 2030, and expand the network from around 70 km with 50 stations to 103 km and 79 stations.

The Telangana state government has agreed to buy **Hyderabad** metro concessionaire L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Ltd from Larsen & Toubro, bringing the network under state control and enabling L&T to focus on its core activities. The 69 km three-line network was developed by through a 35-year DBFOT concession awarded in 2010, and the first sections opened in 2017.

The $62m KC Streetcar Riverfront Extension in **Kansas City** was opened on May 18, running 1·1 km north to serve the CPKC Stadium.

Read the latest news at www.railwaygazette.com

Astana light metro opens

KAZAKHSTAN

President's Office of Kazakhstan

Astana Light Rail Transit Line 1 was formally opened on May 16 by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, who said the capital 'should eventually develop into a transport hub of Eurasia'.

The 22·4 km automated light metro is laid to 1 520 mm gauge and designed for a maximum speed of 80 km/h. The route is fully segregated from road traffic, with 11 stops at ground level and seven elevated.

Line 1 runs from Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport to Nūrly Jol, serving destinations including the Botanical Garden, Abu Dhabi Plaza, Astana Arena, the House of Ministries and the Grand Mosque. Services operated by municipally-owned City Transportation Systems run every 5 to 10 min, offering an end-to-end journey time of 40 min.

First proposed as a 41·8 km light rail line in 2011, the metro has been under construction since 2017, although work was suspended in 2020. A new agreement was reached in 2023 with a consortium of China Railway Group and the China Construction Sixth Engineering Bureau Co., a subsidiary of China State Construction Engineering Co.

CRRC Tangshan has supplied 19 four-car trainsets 60 m long which can carry up to 600 passengers at 6/m². The depot is located north-west of the airport terminus.

The city of Astana is planning a second phase which would add 26·5 km and 20 stations. This inclues an 8 km nine-station extension to the central Astana-1 railway station, a branch to the Zhagala residential district and an extension to the satellite city of Kosshy.

Metro-North fleet renewal

USA

New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority has issued a request for proposals for a contract to supply 252 push-pull coaches to commuter rail operator Metro-North Railroad, with options for a further 377.

The first Metro-North coach purchase 'in decades' forms part of MTA's Rolling Stock Programme, and will be funded from the 2025-29 Capital Plan. MTA Chair & CEO Janno Lieber said the RFP announced on May 21 had been designed to get potential suppliers 'to think outside the box so they can deliver faster, better and cheaper than in the past.'

The base order is intended replace coaches dating from the 1980s and 1990s that run on the Hudson and Harlem lines, and must be suitable for operation with Metro-North's existing locomotives. Three types of vehicle are being sought: driving cars with toilets, trailer cars with toilets and trailer cars without toilets. Each vehicle would have about 100 seats and two spaces for wheelchair users.

Proposals will be accepted until October. MTA expects to award the contract in early 2027, with the new fleet entering service from 2029.

Next-generation X'trapolis for Melbourne

AUSTRALIA

Alstom

The first of 25 six-car X'trapolis 2.0 EMUs that Alstom is supplying for the Melbourne suburban network has entered service on the Upfield, Craigieburn and Frankston lines. The remaining units are expected to be rolled out across the network over the next few years. Ordered by Victoria's Department of Transport under a €300m contract awarded in September 2021, the EMUs based on Alstom's Adessia platform are being built at Dandenong and Ballarat to meet a requirement for 60% local content.

The state government has allocated A$674m in its 2026-27 budget for the purchase of a further 25 units.

REM extends to Montréal's west island suburbs

CANADA

Regular services have started carrying passengers on the Anse-à-l'Orme branch of Montréal's Réseau Express Métropolitain automated metro, which adds a further 14 km and four stations to the expanding network.

Designated as route A3, the branch diverges from the northern route A4 to Deux Montagnes beyond Bois-Franc and heads southwest to serve the west of the Île de Montréal; much of the line runs on a new viaduct flanking the Trans-Canada Highway.

The line was formally inaugurated on May 15 with a celebration at Fairview–Pointe-Claire station attended by Québec's Minister of Transport & Sustainable Mobility Benoit Charette. REM services run through from Anse-à-l'Orme to Brossard on the South Shore, providing four trains/h for much of the day. This combines with a similar frequency between Deux-Montagnes and Brossard to provide an off-peak service of eight trains/h through the city centre, increasing to 16 trains/h in the peaks.

Meanwhile, test running has started on the 3 km route A2 which diverges from the Anse-à-l'Orme line to serve Marie Curie and YUL-Aéroport-Montréal-Trudeau stations. The airport branch is expected to open in spring 2027, taking the REM network to a total of 67 route-km and 26 stations.

Surveys start for Line 22

BRAZIL

Geotechnical investigations have started for the proposed metro Line 22-Marrom, which is intended to relieve the congested Raposo Tavares highway in the west of the São Paulo conurbation.

Running entirely underground, the 29 km line with 19 stations would connect the western suburbs of Cotia, Sabiá and Osasco to Sumaré on metro Line 2-Green, via an interchange with the orbital suburban Line 9-Esmarelda at Hebraica-Rebouças and Line 4-Amarela at Faria Lima. Offering an estimated journey time of 42 min between Cotia and the city centre, compared with 2 h by road, it is projected to carry approximately 650 000 passengers per day.

Worked by a fleet of 48 five-car trainsets, the line would be signalled for operation at 100 sec headways at peak times, offering a capacity of more than 45 000 passengers/h per direction.

Expected to cost around R$8·1bn to complete by 2036, Line 22-Marrom is one of three schemes totalling 75 route-km which are being developed through a network expansion programme valued at US$18bn. All three lines are expected to be delivered through 30-year PPP concessions covering construction, operations and maintenance.

Flexity trams enter service

AUSTRIA

The first eight of 31 customised Flexity trams being supplied by Alstom from its Wien Donaustadt plant have entered service in Graz. Another seven are expected to arrive by the end of the year, with all 31 to be in operation by mid-2028. Each 33·8 m five-section tram can carry up to 140 standing and 60 seated passengers.

The city council is expected to give the go-ahead this month for the purchase of an additional 24 trams to be co-financed by EIB, with the order to be finalised in early 2027 for delivery from the end of 2028.

North-south link

GERMANY

S-Bahn line S15 linking Gesundbrunnen, Wedding and Berlin Hauptbahnhof was launched on June 15 as the first phase of the long-planned S21 project to provide a second north-south S-Bahn corridor through the capital.

The 2·2 km partly underground route completed at a cost of €800m is the city's shortest S-Bahn line. Services run every 10 min, with a journey time of 5 min, and operator DB expects it to carry more than 40 000 passengers/day.

Route S15 uses existing surface tracks around Wedding and Gesundbrunnen on the north side of the S-Bahn ring, and a newly-built underground approach to Hauptbahnhof. A chord enabling trains to travel from Hauptbahnhof to Westhafen is not yet being used by scheduled trains. Services currently terminates at a temporary platform north of Hauptbahnhof.

A permanent S-Bahn station is to be built further south as part of the second phase, which would see the line extended by 1·2 km to Potsdamer Platz. DB InfraGO expects to obtain planning approval this year, and the opening is envisaged for 2036. Phase 3 would continue the line from Potsdamer Platz to Südkreuz by the mid-2040s.

★ Berlin metro operator BVG has put its first Stadler-built J-series trains into regular service on line U5, its first new large-profile U-Bahn fleet in more than 30 years. The city has ordered 344 vehicles for the large-profile lines, and BVG expects to have 170 in service by the end of 2026.

Hydrogen tram line

SOUTH KOREA

Preliminary works have started on the 10·9 km tram Line 1 in Ulsan, with full construction expected to get underway in October for opening in 2029.

Being built at an estimated cost of 381bn won, the catenary-free line will serve 15 stops, linking Taehwagang railway station in the city centre with Sinbok to the west.

Hyundai Rotem is to supply nine five-section hydrogen fuel cell trams under a 63·4bn won contract signed in March. The manufacturer displayed its prototype hydrogen tram at InnoTrans 2024 in Berlin.

Ulsan has plans for a four-line tram network. The 13·6 km north-south Line 2 would connect Bukulsan railway station with Yaeum via the city's airport.

Line 10 contract

ITALY

Regional operator EAV has signed a €238m contract for a CAF-led consortium including AET, Francesco Ventura Costruzioni Ferroviarie, MerMec STE and Leonardo to supply railway systems and rolling stock for Napoli metro Line 10.

The seven-year contract covers the first 6·5 km section of Line 10, which will link Afragola Centro to an interchange with the newly built section of Line 1 at Piazza Di Vittorio. It includes the supply of CAF's Optio CBTC for automated operation, as well as overhead electrification, substations, power supplies, data and telecom. CAF will also supply seven three-car driverless metro trainsets and maintain them for five years.

Options to equip the rest of the line would take the total contract value to more than €630m.

Being built at an estimated cost of €3·1bn, Line 10 is intended to link Napoli Afragola high speed station with Piazza Principe Umberto next to Napoli Centrale in the city centre, with 12 stations serving an area with 400 000 residents.

Briefing

Owned by BNP Paribas Asset Management Alts and Crédit Agricole Assurances, **ELL** has secured a €1·4bn long-term debt financing platform, providing capital for expansion of its fleet and maintenance infrastructure. The refinancing announced on June 2 comprises loans of seven to 20 years, placed with 14 international banks and seven institutional investors from the USA and Europe

The **Pandrol Rahee Technologies** joint venture of Indian track supplier Rahee Group and Pandrol Group has outlined a growth and technology roadmap, targeting Rs13bn in revenue over the next three years. The company said it would focus on 'next-generation innovations' for high speed, heavy haul and metro networks.

Conduent has entered into a definitive agreement to sell its Public Transit activities to Canadian group **Modaxo** for US$164m, with the transaction expected to close by the end of 2026. The operating unit comprises the Transit Fare Management and Fleet Management Solutions businesses. Conduent Transportation is to retain its road tolling activities.

Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK has signed a five-year framework agreement to continue supplying its SIL4-compliant ElectroLogIXS digital interlockings to **AtkinsRéalis**.

Polish passenger seat manufacturer **Ster Group** has appointed train interiors specialist **Grinsty Rail** as its UK agent.

North American Rail Solutions' rail infrastructure subsidiary **American Track** has acquired Tennessee-based **Queen City Railroad Construction**, which provides maintenance and construction services for industrial and short line customers.

UK-based consultancy **Steer** has opened an office in Madrid, strengthening its ability to provide transport and infrastructure clients with strategic advisory services.

MerMec diagnostics sold

ITALY

Siemens Mobility has signed an agreement to acquire key businesses of railway signalling and diagnostics technology specialist MerMec Group from Angelo Holding.

The agreement covers MerMec's Italian signalling business, and its worldwide diagnostics and data analytics activities. These businesses employ around 1 700 people, with customers in more than 70 countries and revenue of approximately €430m in FY25.

The transaction does not include MerMec's investments in Angelstar, Mont Saint Michel and its Compagnie des Signaux subsidiary or MerMec Deutschland. These will form Angel Signaling within Angelo Holding, with 800 employees and a backlog of approximately €2bn.

Closing of the transaction is subject to customary conditions and is expected by the end of calendar year 2026. Financial terms are not being disclosed.

Explaining that he had formally retired and was not in the best of health, Angelo Holding President Vito Pertosa said he had been looking for 'a very solid group in the sector, in order to guarantee a secure future' for the MerMec businesses. Becoming part of Siemens would offer them 'a global environment, strongly focused on innovation and sustainable growth'.

MerMec's employees, sites and industrial capabilities will become part of Siemens Mobility's global ecosystem, including the 'key strategic asset' of the Ferrosud site in Matera. Siemens said it expected to achieve 'meaningful synergies', especially from cross-selling and from expanding the integrated portfolio, with the transaction expected be EPS (pre-PPA) accretive by year two after closing.

'By combining MerMec's technological expertise and market access with Siemens Mobility's global presence and technology leadership, we are strengthening our capabilities in diagnostics, asset-intelligence and signaling capabilities', said CEO Michael Peter. 'This step expands our industrial footprint in Italy within our world-leading signalling business and significantly enhances our global diagnostics portfolio.'

Turnout factory inaugurated

SWEDEN

Vossloh has opened a turnout manufacturing plant at Sannahed, to replace the former SJ facility at Örebro, where turnouts for the Swedish rail network and neighbouring Nordic countries had been manufactured since 1914. Vossloh said the automated assembly line, including robotic installation of sleepers, would lift production capacity to up to 900 turnouts/year.

The plant is located between Kumla and Hallsberg, one of the country's most important railway hubs. The turnouts are set to be assembled on a conveyor belt across five consecutive workstations in a 150 m long hall. A robotic arm installs the sleepers before each turnout is built up step by step, with the automated process replacing many tasks traditionally carried out manually.

Another hall has been reserved for special-purpose production, as well as for the training and education of skilled workers.

'Sannahed sets new standards in automation, quality, and capacity', said Vossloh CEO Oliver Schuster. 'The new plant combines industrial turnout production with digital lifecycle management, for example through the use of digital twins of the turnouts.'

Wagon manufacturing joint venture

INDIA

US wagon manufacturing and leasing company Trinity Industries has taken a 32% stake in the Touax Texmaco Railcar Leasing joint venture. Trinity CEO & President Jean Savage said on June 4 that the Indian market represented 'a compelling long-term opportunity for rail freight growth', adding that the joint venture would offer 'advanced wagon designs, lease finance experience and life-cycle expertise'.

The joint venture was originally formed by Indian wagon manufacturer Texmaco Rail & Engineering Ltd and Paris-based lessor Touax. The addition of one of the largest US wagon companies is expected to strengthen the venture's access to global financing and its ability to offer modern rolling stock along with professional leasing and lifecycle management services.

'Our equity participation reflects a long-term commitment to building a best-in-class leasing platform focused on performance, safety and sustainability', Savage explained.

Texmaco said India was aiming to increase rail's share of the freight market from 27% to 45%, which is expected to create a demand for modern wagons and opportunities for private investment. The joint venture plans to offer 'best-in-class' new wagon designs with shorter production timelines, reduced maintenance costs and improved utilisation.

'This partnership marks a defining moment for India's freight rail ecosystem', said Texmaco Chairman Saroj Kumar Poddar, 'By combining Touax's leasing expertise, Trinity's global rail technology leadership and Texmaco's manufacturing and market strengths, we are building a scalable, resilient and globally benchmarked platform.'

Heads of the month

Signe Munk of the Socialist People's Party has taken over as Minister for Transport in the new Danish government led by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. She replaces **Thomas Danielsen** of the Venstre party, which is no longer part of the coalition government.

Brian Barr has been appointed Chief Operating Officer at Norfolk Southern with effect from June 1. Most recently head of the NS mechanical department and previously Senior Vice President of Transportation at Union Pacific, Barr succeeds **John Orr**, who will serve as a special advisor to NS board until June 2027 or the completion of the planned merger with UP.

Chief of Staff to Austria's Federal Minister of Finance, **Georg Ortner** is to join the Executive Board of ÖBB Infrastruktur AG with effect from December 1 2026, taking responsibility for finance, marketing and services in succession to **Silvia Angelo**. **Christina Rebernik** will join the board on January 1 as Head of Infrastructure Provision. Currently head of the New Construction & Expansion Projects Division, she will succeed **Judith Engel**. They join **Johann Pluy**, Board Member for Asset Management, Operations & Digitalisation.

BNSF has promoted **Craig Morehouse** to Executive Vice-President & Chief Operations Officer. Previously Chief Transportation Officer, he replaces **Matt Garland**, who stepped down after five months in the post.

Chief Financial Officer **Mirjam Velthuizen** will take over as interim CEO of the Dutch infrastructure manager Prorail with effect from July 1, pending the appointment of a successor for **John Voppen** who announced his resignation earlier this year (RG 4.26 p14).

Recently-appointed Alstom CEO **Martin Sion** has taken over as Chairman of the European railway industry Association Unife with effect from its annual meeting on June 12. He succeeds Siemens Mobility CEO **Michael Peter** following the completion of his three-year term.

Joel Smith has been appointed as Director-General of Swedish transport regulator Transportstyrelsen with effect from July 1. Most recently Deputy Director-General of the maritime administration Sjöfartsverket, he succeeds **Jonas Bjelfvenstam**.

Richard Kloster has been sworn in as a member of the US Surface Transportation Board. Founder and President of strategic consultancy Integrity Rail Partners, he has a background in the rolling stock leasing sector.

Previously head of DB RegioNetz in Frankfurt, **Christoph Kraller** is to take over as Deutsche Bahn's Group Representative in Bayern from July 1. He replaces **Heiko Büttner**, who was appointed CEO of S-Bahn Berlin in April.

Anglia Railway has put in place a single integrated leadership team bringing together passenger train operators c2c and Greater Anglia and Network Rail's Anglia route. Managing Director is **Jamie Burles**, Deputy Managing Director of Network Rail, Eastern Region. Greater Anglia Managing Director **Martin Beable** becomes Chief Operating Officer, while c2c Managing Director **Rob Mullen** is named chief Customer & Commercial Officer. **Chris Curtis**, formerly Director of Network Performance at Network Rail's System Operator joins as Planning & Performance Director, while Network Rail Anglia's Programme Director (Transformation) **Natalie Allen** becomes Strategy & Change Director.

Anacostia Rail Holdings has appointed **Jim McDonald** as General Manager of its Indiana-based Northern Lines Railway, succeeding **Quentin Schulte**, who served as NLR President.

Dennis Stindt has been named President of Hayange-based Saarstahl Rail, having managed the group's Ascoval electric furnace since 2025. He replaces **Nadine Artelt**, who will now focus on her role as Sales Director at parent company Saarstahl AG.

Having joined from Boston Consulting Group in April 2025, **Naomi Lutskes** has taken over as Nightjet product manager at ÖBB, replacing **Erwin Kastberger** who has stepped down after 21 years on the role.

Richard Andreski, President & CEO of Fort Worth transit operator Trinity Metro since 2022, has had his contract extended for a further seven years.

Jens-Günter Lang has been named spokesman for the Hamburger Hochbahn management board, following the departure of CEO **Robert Henrich**, who had indicated that he did not wish to renew his contract with the metro operator. The three remaining board members will cover the CEO's responsibilities pending the appointment of a successor.

Richard 'Dick' Davidson, the former Chairman & Chief Executive Officer of Union Pacific who oversaw its acquisitions of Chicago & North Western and Southern Pacific in the 1990s, has died at the age of 84.

Pointers

Poland's Centre for EU Transport Projects has launched market consultations to assess interest in operating inter-regional and international passenger services, as a step towards liberalising Poland's long-distance rail market by 2030 (p18).

Renfe President Álvaro Fernandez Heredia has told Spanish parliamentarians that he believes the national operator should be merged with infrastructure manager **ADIF**. Giving evidence in the aftermath of the fatal crash at Adamuz, he suggested that separating the management of operations and infrastructure was 'not the best decision'.

New entrant GoExpress has been conducting trials of **145 km/h intermodal trains** with a view to moving time-sensitive logistics traffic on the UK's West Coast Main Line using passenger-compatible freight train timings.

Iarnród Éireann has unveiled plans to transform **Cork**'s diesel-operated commuter services into a fully electrified, high-frequency suburban network by around 2032. New stations at Blackpool and Dunkettle are expected to open by late 2028 or early 2029, with six more to follow.

The transport ministers of **Turkey** and **Saudi Arabia** signed memoranda of understanding in Riyadh on June 9 to co-operate on improving railway connectivity, including a potential revival of the historic **Hedjaz Railway** corridor through Syria and Jordan.

CEO Stefano Antonio Donnarumma says FS Group has been evaluating alternative financing models to support a **pipeline** of rail investment projects following the ending of Italy's EU-backed Recovery & Resilience Plan. The group envisages a further €177bn of capital expenditure by 2034.