

2018 railway timetable: network usage requests successfully coordinated

21 August 2017

Over 20 railway undertakings have ordered paths for the 2018 annual timetable. During the past four months, their applications have been coordinated and aligned with the capabilities of the infrastructure. The allocation of train paths successfully concludes this intensive coordination phase.

Berne – The new timetable comes into force on 10 December 2017. Eight months previously, on April 10, a total of 21 passenger and freight railway undertakings as well as two authorised third-party applicants gave notification of the trains they want to operate in the 2018 timetable year on the networks of SBB, BLS and SOB. They submitted approximately 15,200 train path applications. A train path is similar to an airport slot: it gives a railway undertaking the right to operate a specific train on a specific part of the rail network at specific times.

Successful solution of train path conflicts

These path requests resulted in 310 conflicts, situations in which two or more applications were mutually exclusive. Despite the heavy traffic on the Swiss railway network, we were able to work with timetable planners and train path applicants to find alternatives for all the conflicts. As a result, all intended trains will be able to operate during the next timetable year. We confirmed the paths on 21 August. Agreement with a foreign infrastructure manager on border handover times for specific international freight trains is still pending, as is the final agreement on a solution for certain conflicting marshalling services.

Priority system successfully applied for the first time in accordance with the network usage plan

Train path allocation was carried out for the first time in accordance with the network usage plan's priority system. This system divides path capacity into different types of traffic by specifying for each route a minimum number of paths for goods traffic and for passenger traffic. This requirement, approved by the FOT, has to be adhered to when allocating the paths. Requests that exceed this safeguarded capacity will be handled to the best in the remaining capacity.

The system has proved successful. No serious problems occurred in practice, although some improvement is still needed when dealing with capacity constraints caused by construction work.

Renewal of long-distance traffic concessions not in alignment with the path allocation process

The present long-distance traffic concession will expire for the most part in December 2017 as per the new timetable. Railway undertakings interested in long distance traffic can submit an offer up until the beginning of September 2017. Although this conforms to the statutory provisions, it is not synchronised with the path allocation process. We received path applications for individual long-distance routes from two railway undertakings. As only one application can be considered in each instance, the successful concessionaire however will not be nominated until the end of November, the two RUs agreed that one of them should withdraw its path requests. If the remaining train path applicant does not gain the concession for these routes, it will cancel the paths in order to make them available to the other RU.

We wish to thank all the RUs and infrastructure managers involved for their constructive and solution-oriented cooperation.

For further information, please contact:

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