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Next month is due to see the start of limited revenue services through Melbourne's 9 km Metro Tunnel, served by the Sunbury and Cranbourne/Pakenham lines (p34). This is to be followed by a comprehensive timetable change on February 1, boosting capacity across the city's 1600 mm gauge electrified suburban network.

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A significant milestone in the construction of the 65 km Brenner Base Tunnel linking Italy and Austria was reached at 14.53 on September 18, with the final breakthrough of the exploratory bore being used to assess geological conditions. Of the total 230 km of tunnelling required for the project, around 200 km has now been excavated.

Forming part of the Scandinavia-Mediterranean TEN-T corridor, the base tunnel is due to be completed in 2032. It will comprise two 8.1 m diameter running tunnels 40 to 70 m apart and the 5 m diameter pilot bore which will be used for technical equipment, maintenance and drainage.

Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker said the breakthrough was an 'historic moment for Austria and Italy, but also for the European community as a whole'. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni added that the tunnel would 'revolutionise transport between Italy and Austria', and cut journey times drastically, as well as reducing congestion on the Brenner motorway.

COMMENT

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Tunnel tensions reflect SERA challenge

Safety and interoperability are fundamental tenets of European railway operations. Yet achieving one without compromising the other can be challenging — especially in the ‘VUCA era’ of increasingly unilateral policymaking that is putting pressure on multinational entities like the European Union. Tensions are now appearing in the rail sector, notably a dispute over safety regulation in Switzerland that could have far-reaching implications for the Single European Railway Area.

In mid-September, BAV, the Swiss Federal Railway Office, introduced updated regulations for freight wagons based on its investigations into the August 2023 derailment in the Gotthard Base Tunnel. These impose requirements for minimum wheel diameters, systematic and more frequent maintenance and optimised inspections. Wheelsets used in Switzerland will be required to have a diameter of at least 864 mm, compared to the European standard of 860 mm, and shorter intervals between technical inspections are mandated. There are new obligations on asset owners and maintenance contractors to intervene if overheating components are found or ultrasonic test results exceed the requisite thresholds.

Implementation of the measures had initially been required by the end of 2025, but in mid-October BAV relented on the deadline for the enhanced inspection regime. This will now come into effect from December 2026. ‘Further discussions took place with the industry, which yielded new insights into the possibilities for implementing the measures’, the safety regulator explained to *Railway Gazette International* on October 16. ‘The entities responsible for the maintenance of freight wagons pointed out that a stay in a stationary workshop is absolutely necessary for an initial technical inspection of wagons. With the new decision, BAV recognises that more time is needed to implement this measure. For the remaining measures, the implementation date remains unchanged.’

The revised requirements have provoked the ire of rail freight



associations involved in cross-border operations, who warned that the unilateral nature of the changes had severe implications for north-south freight services running through Switzerland.

On October 16 the International Union of Wagon Keepers welcomed BAV’s decision to extend the implementation deadline, which it said reflected ‘the scale and complexity of the task faced by the rail freight sector’. However, UIP regretted that ‘the measures remain unilateral, adopted without a co-ordinated European discussion’. It called for the year before the revised inspection process kicks in to be used ‘to develop co-ordinated, evidence-based measures’ through the EU Agency for Railways’ Joint Network Secretariat.

According to UIP, the requirement for all inspections to be ‘carried out in stationary workshops and outside regular maintenance intervals’ would ‘reduce wagon availability, risk disrupting industrial supply chains and add cost, especially along Europe’s vital Alpine corridors’. Analysis from its members had suggested that around 20% of the UIP fleet could be affected, which equated to 46 000 vehicles.

When the changes were announced in September, UIP said it recognised that safety was ‘non-negotiable in rail freight’. However, it felt the Swiss changes presented ‘a one-sided focus on wagon keepers’, ran counter to the work of the JNS, and could ‘initiate a meltdown for European rail freight traffic’. It emphasised that the Secretariat had been established as the single entity to develop harmonised short- and long-term risk mitigation measures for the whole EU rail network in response to safety-related issues. ‘Many safety measures relating to reducing the risk of broken wheels have been developed by

the JNS since 2017 and consequently implemented’, it pointed out.

German wagon keepers’ association VPI said on September 15 that the measures announced by BAV were ‘not proportionate, sustainable or feasible’. Its Chairman Malte Lawrenz insisted that ‘only within the European framework can practical and effective measures be developed that ensure both security and interoperability’. The association warned that the changes risked depriving wagon keepers of ‘resources urgently needed for future investments, such as digitalisation, automation, and the introduction of the Digital Automatic Coupler’ (p18).

When asked to comment on BAV’s regulatory changes and their impact on pan-European rail freight operations, ERA declined to issue a statement, noting only that its priority was to reach ‘EU-wide harmonised risk control measures within the JNS’.

It is hard not to conclude that there may be wider pressures at work — some reports suggest, for example, that the Swiss rail sector was unhappy at the level of assistance SBB and its partners received from elsewhere in Europe when the urgent base tunnel repairs were needed. In this context, the BAV reforms could be interpreted as a desire to protect the country’s very expensive infrastructure. But there can be little doubt that the concerns about pan-European transit costs are genuine, especially as the freight sector is already worried about the cost implications of not only DAC but also ETCS and FRMCS.

By the same token, policymakers need to recognise that the EU alone cannot deliver a Single European Railway Area, given Switzerland is not a member state. The Gotthard safety debate is a microcosm of challenges that could emerge elsewhere; rail flows to and from Greek or Norwegian ports, or through the Channel Tunnel, will also require interoperability outside the political limits of the bloc. More than 30 years after Europe embarked on its quest for a continent-wide interoperable rail network, the challenge remains daunting. ●

‘Policymakers need to recognise that the EU alone cannot deliver SERA’

Briefing

Finland's **VR Group** has agreed to transfer the entire shareholding of its rolling stock subsidiary Suomen Ostoliikennekalusto to direct state ownership on November 1. It said the company had a balance sheet value of €15.1m. Some of the rolling stock currently owned by VR and used on contracted services is to be transferred to SO by early 2026.

Genesee & Wyoming subsidiary **Alberta Heartland Railway** has agreed a long-term lease of land for the construction of a multiservice rail terminal at Gasia Energy Corp's planned energy complex near Edmonton. When completed, the site will feature multiple loop tracks, storage for up to 1200 wagons and rail-to-road transloading facilities.

Built by mining company Elga Coal Co at a cost of 140bn roubles, the 531 km **Pacific Railway** connecting coking coal deposits with a port at Cape Manorsky on the Sea of Okhotsk was officially inaugurated in September. Test trains have been running since 2024.

The Paris – Wien and Paris – Berlin **Nightjet** sleeper trains are to end with the December 14 2025 timetable change, following a decision by French Ministry of Transport to withdraw funding support. The Wien service launched in December 2021 is operated by ÖBB in partnership with SNCF Voyageurs, while the Berlin service, which began in December 2023, is run by ÖBB, SNCF Voyageurs and DB.

Mälardalstrafik has selected VR Sverige as preferred bidder to operate **Mälartåg** passenger services on five routes to the west and northwest of Stockholm for eight years from December 2026, with an option to extend. Services are currently being run by Transdev under an interim contract after MTR Corp withdrew in 2024.

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'New start' for DB

GERMANY

Deutsche Bahn is to be reformed with a simplified structure and a greater separation between its train operating business and infrastructure arm DB InfraGO, under a 'new start' announced by Federal Minister of Transport Patrick Schnieder on September 22. This is intended to make the state railway group more financially sustainable and to improve punctuality.

New CEO Evelyn Palla (p13) has been tasked with taking forward the reform plans, which will see DB concentrate on the

'successful operation' of its core businesses — the three train operating divisions: DB Fernverkehr, DB Regio and DB Cargo.

DB AG is to present a concept by the end of Q1 2026 for an internal restructuring to reduce the number of divisions. It must also prepare proposals for the sale of various non-core activities.

DB Cargo is required to become 'economically viable' by 2026 to meet EU rules, and this is expected to drive further restructuring. Among the options being investigated is a reshaping of its loss-making wagonload operations

using a hub-and-spoke model.

DB InfraGO has been tasked with delivering sustainable improvements to the network, enabling all train operators to run their services 'more smoothly'. A reform of track access charges is planned, and its finances will be made 'more transparent', in order to demonstrate that income is being used purely for infrastructure purposes.

A 'Reliable Rail Task Force' has been convened to reflect the views of the wider rail sector and is due to report by the end of March 2026.

★ The December 14 timetable change will see a near-doubling of destinations served by half-hourly ICE services, plus faster Berlin – Stuttgart timings and the introduction of Talgo ICE L trainsets. ●

Infrastructure manager reformed

GREECE

The government has restructured the management of railway infrastructure, in response to the systemic failures exposed by the report into the head-on collision at Tempi in 2023 (RG 4.25 p9).

Under legislation approved by

parliament in July, infrastructure manager OSE has been merged with project delivery company ErgOSE and property and rolling stock company GaiaOSE to form Elliniki Sidiródromi Monoprósopi (Greek Railways). Headed by former OSE President George Ioannou, ESM owns, maintains and

manages all rail infrastructure except the Athens Metro.

According to the Ministry of Infrastructure & Transport, the new body will 'comprehensively' enhance safety, strengthen network supervision and improve staff skills, based on European operating and governance standards. ●

InterRegio EMU completed

ROMANIA

Pesa unveiled the first of 29 three-car InterRegio EMUs being supplied for Romania's railway reform authority ARF at its Bydgoszcz factory on September 3.

ARF ordered an initial 20 Type RE-IR2 units in June 2024 and an additional nine in June 2025, under a deal that includes 15 years of maintenance.

The 160 km/h EMUs with seats for 191 passengers are to be deployed on various routes including Cluj



Napoca – Sighișoara – Brașov, Cluj Napoca – Alba Iulia – Simeria – Târgu Jiu – Craiova, București – Ciulnița – Călărași and Brașov – Ploiești – Buzău – Focșani – Bacău – Pașcani – Iași/Suceava. ●

Passenger joint venture

UAE

Ethihad Rail has formed the Ethihad Rail Mobility joint venture with Keolis to launch passenger train services in the UAE from 2026. Under a long-term partnership agreement announced on September 30, Keolis will be responsible for operation and maintenance of the 200 km/h passenger services, which will initially link four

stations in Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah and Fujairah.

Keolis told *Railway Gazette International* that the network was designed to connect all seven emirates and passenger trains were expected to serve 11 major cities and key sites. However, the exact routes and service patterns are still being finalised. Ethihad Rail had previously ordered seven push-pull passenger trainsets from CAF and four

from CRRC Qingdao Sifang.

★ Ethihad Rail has signed a preliminary agreement with port and customs authorities to launch a Bonded Rail Corridor linking Khalifa Port with Fujairah; pilot operations are scheduled to begin before the end of 2025. Meanwhile, the UAE-Oman Hafeet Rail joint venture is working with Abu Dhabi Airports to look at serving Al Ain International Airport. ●

Akdoğan eyes European freight

TURKEY

Akdoğan Tren Kargo has become the first Turkish company to order Siemens Mobility Vectron locomotives, placing an order for five multi-system electric locos for use on international corridors to EU destinations.

The operator expects to offer uninterrupted end-to-end services carrying imports and exports between Turkey and the EU without the need to change locos at national borders. This would contribute to Turkey's commercial integration with Europe, offering synergies with China's Belt & Road Initiative and the Middle Corridor routes linking Asia and Europe.

Deliveries are planned from the end of 2027. The 200 km/h locos will have the XLoad equipment package to increase haulage capability, and will be equipped with ETCS Baseline 3. They will have national train protection systems for operation on cross-border freight services in Germany, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, as well as on domestic routes in Turkey.

The order announced on October 2 includes a 10-year full-service contract, with options to extend the term by up to two years and to purchase five more locomotives. 📌

RegioJet orders BEDMUS to operate PSO services

CZECH REPUBLIC

RegioJet has signed a KC9bn contract for Škoda Group to supply 18 two-car and 16 three-car battery-electric-diesel multiple-units for use on PSO-supported regional services.

The Type 27Ev BEDMUS are designed as battery-electric units, with a diesel powerpack to charge the battery. They will be able to operate at up to 160 km/h where 3 kV DC or 25 kV 50 Hz electrification is available, and at up to 120 km/h in diesel or battery mode. Škoda said this was the best available option for routes where electrification has not

yet been completed, estimating that the fleet would save up to 19000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per year.

In August the Ministry of Transport selected RegioJet to operate long-distance regional services on five routes northeast of Praha, in one of the country's largest PSO contracts to date. The company beat bids from ČD, Arriva and Leo Express for the KC15bn package, which will run for 15 years from December 2029 and requires the deployment of new rolling stock. To ensure a cost-effective procurement, there is a guarantee that the rolling stock will be transferred to

the next operator after the initial term expires.

The operating contract covers five routes totalling 4.5 million train-km/year:

- R14A Pardubice – Liberec;
- R14B Liberec – Ústí nad Labem;
- R21 Praha – Turnov – Tanvald;
- R22 Kolín – Mladá Boleslav – Česká Lípa – Rumburk;
- R24 Praha – Mladá Boleslav – Česká Lípa – Rumburk.

There is also an option to introduce another service, designated R29 Kolín – Liberec, subject to the upgrading of the Mladá Boleslav – Liberec line. 📌

Intermodal business sold

UK

Marseille-based shipping and global logistics group CMA CGM has agreed to acquire Freightliner UK Intermodal Logistics, including its rail and road operations and inland terminals in the UK, as well as the Freightliner brand. The transaction announced on September 22 is expected to close in early 2026, subject to regulatory approvals.

Freightliner's Heavy Haul operations in the UK, as well as activities in Poland and Germany and the Rotterdam Rail Feeding business, will remain with the current owners, Canadian investment group Brookfield and Singapore's sovereign wealth fund GIC.

CMA CGM said it was aiming to build a sustainable and

competitive transport offering in Europe, and acquiring a long-standing name in UK rail freight would reaffirm its commitment to supporting modal shift from road to rail as a cornerstone of decarbonising supply chains. The group acquired Spanish rail freight operator Continental Rail from ACS Group in 2021.

Freightliner said it would remain focused on its multi-user and multi-customer approach, adding that it would be run independently while benefitting from CMA CGM's support and global coverage. Group CEO Tim Shoveller said the divestment would mark 'an exciting new chapter for Intermodal and Heavy Haul, allowing each to focus on their distinct markets under separate ownership.' 📌

Mizoram connection inaugurated

INDIA

The isolated northeastern state of Mizoram has been connected to the national rail network, with the inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi of a broad-gauge line to serve the state capital at Aizawl. Built at a cost of Rs60bn, the 51.4 km line from Bairabi near the Assam border terminates at Sairang, around 20 km northwest of the city.

Under construction since 2014, the line runs through difficult mountainous terrain, requiring 48 tunnels with a total length of 12.8 km as well as 55 major bridges. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav described it as 'one of the most difficult projects in the region'.

A weekly *Rajdhani Express* connects Sairang with Delhi, while the *Mizoram Express* links Sairang with Kolkata. A daily *Aizawl Intercity* service runs between Sairang and Guwahati in neighbouring Assam.

The government has already confirmed its intention to extend the line to the Myanmar border at Hbichhuah, around 232 km beyond Aizawl (RG 8.25 p33). 📌

Herat railway progresses

AFGHANISTAN

The Ministry of Public Works and the provincial government formally launched construction of the final phase of the railway corridor from Iran to Herat with a ceremony on September 14. The first three stages of the line from Khaf in eastern Iran are already complete, with the current terminus at Rosnak having been officially opened in December 2020.

Stage 4 is being built in two phases, and the 43 km from Rosnak to Robat Paryan is reported to be more than 90% complete.



The 47.3 km Phase 2 from Robat Paryan to the Herat industrial area and airport is being built by Afghan conglomerate Gamma Group with the support of RZD International under a contract signed on March 28 2024.

The US\$54.6m project is being financed by the Ministry of Mines & Petroleum, which in January 2025 granted Gamma Eagle rights to extract lead and zinc at Sarsarkhak in Yakawlang.

Meanwhile, Uzbekistan has reportedly agreed to provide technical and financial assistance for construction of a rail link between Herat and Balkh, near Mazar-i-Sharif, via Andkhoy and Sherberghan. 📌

Greater Anglia to be a benchmark

UK

The operation of Greater Anglia passenger services transferred from Transport UK to the public sector DfT Operator Ltd at 02.00 on October 12. The transfer means that almost 50% of the passenger-journeys for which the future Great British Railways will ultimately be responsible are now run by publicly owned entities.

The Department for Transport said there was an opportunity for Greater Anglia to act as a benchmark and a source of best practice

for other public sector operators.

'We are proud of the transformation we've delivered at Greater Anglia in recent years and we're fully committed to maintaining those high standards as we pass into public ownership,' said Managing Director Martin Beable. 'We are pleased to end the current era with Greater Anglia as one of the best train operators in the UK and look forward to building on that positive legacy under public ownership in the years ahead.'

Transport UK noted that Greater Anglia had been the most

punctual operator in the UK since April 2023, and the only privately run operator to generate income for the Treasury in 2024.

Meanwhile, integrated leadership teams are being set up across the publicly owned passenger train operators and Network Rail routes to increase collaboration and accountability ahead of the legislation needed to implement rail reform and establish Great British Railways.

Jamie Burles has been named Integrated Managing Director (Designate) for the Anglia region. He will identify opportunities for closer integration of operations and infrastructure, and establish a unified executive leadership team bringing together Network Rail Anglia, commuter operator c2c and Greater Anglia. 📍

Briefing

The section of the **Beograd – Budapest** main line between Novi Sad, Subotica and the Hungarian border near Kelebija has reopened following a major rebuilding to allow 200 km/h running. The new double-track alignment was inaugurated by Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić on October 3, with revenue services starting on October 12.

Boluda Shipping has agreed to acquire Transfesa's intermodal transport activities in Spain and Portugal from DB Cargo, under a deal expected to be completed by the end of the year. Transfesa's locomotive and wagon fleet will be split between Boluda and DB Cargo, which will retain the automotive transport business and its gauge-convertible rolling stock.

San Bernardino County Transportation Authority put its **Stadler Flirt H2** zero-emission multiple-unit into passenger service on September 13. The fuel cell powered ZEMU is operating on the 14.5 km Arrow commuter line linking San Bernardino and Redlands alongside a fleet of three Flirt DMUs.

The Scottish government has awarded West Fraser Ltd a Freight Facilities Grant of up to £3m towards the construction of an **£11.2m rail freight terminal** to serve its wood panel board factory at Dalcross near Inverness. Under construction for opening in mid-2026, the terminal is expected to remove more than 27 million lorry-km from local roads over 10 years.

Canadian company Cando Rail & Terminals is to acquire the **Channelview Terminal** in Houston from the Texas Deepwater Partners joint venture of USD Group and Pinto Realty Partners, as its first facility in the USA. The transaction is expected to close in Q4 2025. Cando will then own and operate 15 rail terminals and one short line, in addition to providing rail operations at more than 50 customer locations.

'Iron link' inaugurated

UKRAINE

Standard gauge trains from the EU can now run directly to Uzhhorod, following the opening on September 5 of a 1435 mm gauge track from Chop near the Slovakian and Hungarian borders with a ceremony attended by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Passenger services from Uzhhorod to Wien, Budapest and Bratislava began running the following week. More connections with domestic services will be provided from the December timetable change, including night trains from Kyiv.

The project undertaken by Ukrzaliznytsia involved the construction of 22 km of 1435 mm gauge track parallel to the existing 1520 mm gauge line and almost 2 km of four-rail interlaced track. Half of the €286m cost was covered by a grant from the EU's Connecting Europe Facility, and half by an EIB loan guaranteed under the Ukraine Facility.

Further plans include the construction of a 1435 mm gauge track between Mostyska near the



Polish border and Lviv, as well as the renovation of the existing Lyuboml – Kovel, Uzhhorod – Pavlove and Borzhava – Vynohradiv – Dilove standard gauge lines.

The broad gauge Uzhhorod – Syanky – Lviv and Lviv – Chernivtsi – Vadul-Siret routes are to be double-tracked. However, UZ Chairman Oleksandr Pertsovskiy said building a standard gauge network across Ukraine would be 'prohibitively expensive'. 📍

RATP Dev to run Étoile de Caen

FRANCE

The Normandie *région* has selected RATP Dev as preferred bidder to operate its first tendered package of regional passenger services.

The Étoile de Caen contract covers the Caen – Coutances – Granville – Rennes, Caen – Cherbourg, Caen – Rouen, Caen – Lisieux – Evreux, Lisieux – Trouville Deauville and Trouville Deauville – Dives-Cabourg routes, totalling 3 million train-km/year.

The appointment of RATP Dev is due to be endorsed by the regional assembly in December, allowing a mobilisation period before the contract starts in July 2027.

'This major project is fully aligned with our ambition to deliver high-performing, sustainable mobility services for local communities,' said Hiba Farès, President of RATP Dev.

The company said it had overseen the transition of more than

40 networks and 8000 employees in France and internationally since 2011. It said the transition in Normandie would be 'carefully and meticulously managed' to ensure a 'smooth, transparent and reassuring handover' for the *région*, passengers and employees.

Normandie is expected to begin tendering its Étoile de Rouen services this autumn, with further contests planned for Paris – Granville services and routes radiating from Paris St-Lazare. 📍

Power deal

USA

Commuter operator Caltrain is to be paid for the power its trains return to the grid, thanks to a regulatory change to classify regenerative braking by electric trains as a renewable generation facility.

The 82 km San Francisco – San Jose route has been electrified at 25 kV 60 Hz. The commuter rail agency uses an average of 207 MWh on weekdays and 175 MWh at weekends. It buys 100% renewable energy supplied by Peninsula Clean Energy and San Jose Clean Energy, mostly from solar and wind generation, which costs around \$15.3m/year.

Caltrain said regenerative braking returned about 23% of the power it uses to the grid. With effect from April 2026, it would qualify for a net billing rate, enabling it to recoup approximately \$1m/year for this returned power. The use of renewable energy also allowed the agency to benefit from the California Low Carbon Fuel standards programme. ●

Lion dance launch

CHINA

Hong Kong metro operator MTR Corp held a dancing lion eye-dotting ceremony on October 3 to bring good fortune to the construction of its Northern Link Main Line and to mark the start of detailed design for the Northern Link Spur Line.

The Northern Link will connect East Rail at Kwu Tung with the Tuen Ma Line at Kam Sheung Road to form a loop connecting the New Territories and the Kowloon urban area. The 4.2 km Spur will run to Huanggang Port in mainland China as Hong Kong's third direct cross-boundary rail link, with a connection to the Shenzhen metro network. Both are due to



open no later than 2034 (RG 9.25 p11).

MTR Corp Chairman Dr Rex Auyeung said the Northern Metropolis was 'a new growth engine for Hong Kong's future economic development', adding that 'rail remains the city's efficient and reliable public transport backbone'. ●

Line 2 groundbreaking

VIETNAM

The Hanoi People's Committee held a ceremony on October 9 to launch the construction of metro Line 2.

Backed by the city administration, the project is separate from Line 2A, the capital's first metro line which was developed by the national government and opened in November 2021.

The 11.5 km initial section of Line 2 will run from Tran Hung Dao in the city centre to Nam Thang Long in the north. There will be three elevated and seven underground stations, while transit-oriented development is planned around the depot at Xuan Dinh.

Funding for the 35.6bn dong project is coming from the city budget as well as loans from Japan

International Co-operation Agency loans. Opening is planned for 2029.

Future plans include extensions at both ends of Line 2, including a branch to Non Bai International Airport, which would take the total route length to 42 km with 32 stations.

Another ceremony is scheduled for December 19 to launch construction of the 61.9bn dong metro Line 5, which will run for 38 km from Van Cao in the city centre to Hoa Lac in the western suburbs. ●

Helsinki fleet renewal

FINLAND

Helsinki transport operator Pääkaupunkiseudun Kaupunkiliikenne has selected Stadler as preferred bidder to supply and maintain 63 customised Tango Nordic trams, with options for up to 120 more.

Procurement began in 2021 through market dialogue and progressed as a negotiated procedure with CAF, Stadler and Škoda Transtech shortlisted in

April 2025 to submit final offers. Škoda has already challenged the decision announced on October 6.

The firm order will cover 30 unidirectional trams to replace Valmet vehicles dating from the 1970s and 1980s, and 33 bidirectional versions to support the West Helsinki and Vantaa light rail projects. The contract will include 30 years of maintenance, technical support and spare parts supply.

To be manufactured at Siedlce in

Poland, the metre-gauge trams will be based on Stadler's Tango platform, and styled in collaboration with Helsinki-based design studio Aivan. They will offer increased seating capacity and enhanced passenger comfort compared to the vehicles they will replace.

'We are convinced that the type of tram that we selected is the best possible for the demanding conditions of Helsinki', said PK Chair Eetu Kinnunen. ●

Automated Line 7 opened

CHINA

Ningbo metro Line 7 has been opened as the city's second GoA4 driverless line, following the inauguration of Line 8 in June. The 39.4 km line with 25 stations links Yufan in the north to Yunlong in the southeast, with six interchanges. It takes the network to seven lines totalling 261.6 km with 156 stations. A further 168 route-km is under construction, including three new lines.

Line 7 is worked by a fleet of 40 six-car Type-B2 trainsets, which were assembled locally using traction equipment from CRRC Zhuzhou. They take power at 1.5 kV DC overhead and have permanent-magnet synchronous traction motors.

East-west Line 6 is now under construction for opening next year, and will also be equipped for GoA4; all three lines have CASCO signalling equipment. ●

Monorail project announced

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Project promoter Fitram has called tenders for detailed design and construction of the first phase of the Santo Domingo monorail project, after President Luis Abinader announced that the capital's monorail would be built in three phases.

The 10.5 km first phase with 12 stations would start from an interchange with metro lines 1 and 2 at Centro Olímpico and run to Avenue Charles de Gaulle in the east, following the Avenida 27 de Febrero and Las Américas motorways. This would serve an area with a population of more than 1 million inhabitants, and is expected to be used by 306 000 passengers a day.

The second phase would run west for 75 km from Centro Olímpico to Pintura, while the third phase would add a further 72 km along Prolongacion Av 27 de Febrero to interchange with the Line 2 extension currently under construction.

The monorail would initially be operated by four-car units with a capacity of 562 passengers, running at minimum headway of 90 sec. However, it would be designed to accommodate six-car sets in the future.

The President's office said the monorail option offered an estimated 35% cost saving compared to other rail systems. ●


M4 extension contract

DENMARK

København metro authority Metroselskabet has selected a consortium of MT Højgaard Danmark, Rambøll and Cobe to design and build an extension of Line M4 to Ydre Nordhavn.

The 1.6 km elevated extension from Orientkaj with stations at

v/Levantkaj and v/Nordhavn C is intended to provide efficient public transport 'from day one' for people who will live and work in the capital's largest development area, which will eventually have a population of up to 40 000 inhabitants. Construction is expected to begin in 2027 for opening in 2030.

An early contractor involvement model is being used, with increased collaboration between designers and contractors expected to halve the project's climate footprint compared to previous metro construction. The cost of the project is to be determined as part of the planning process, but is expected to be around DKr900m. 

Berlin JK cars enter service


GERMANY

Berlin transport operator BVG has put the first of its small-profile Type JK metro cars into passenger service on U-Bahn Line U2 following a ceremony at Deutsche Oper on September 8. Up to 140 vehicles are expected to be in service by the end of the year.

BVG and Stadler agreed a €3bn framework contract in March 2020 covering the supply of up to 1500 vehicles by 2035, and firm orders have so far been placed for 484. The 2400 mm wide Type JK cars are being supplied for the small-profile lines 1 to 4 and 2650 mm wide Type J cars for the larger profile lines 5 to 9. The JK cars are being supplied



as two or four-car sets that can run as six or eight-car trains.

The first of the large profile Type J cars are on trial and are scheduled to enter passenger service in summer 2026. 

Longest light rail line

USA


The opening of a 14.7 km extension on September 19 has taken the Los Angeles Metro's A Line to 93 km with 48 stops, which the operator said made it the longest light rail line in the world.

Built by Kiewit-Parsons under a contract awarded in October 2019, the extension from APU/Citrus College to Pomona adds stops at

Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne/Fairplex and Pomona North, where passengers can transfer to Metrolink's San Bernardino Line commuter rail services. Services run every 8 min in the peaks, every 10 min off peak and every 20 min at night.

The \$1.5bn cost of the project has been funded by a sales tax and state greenhouse gas reduction funds, as well as a

\$300m grant through California's Transit & Intercity Rail Capital Programme.

The design-build contract included an option for KPJV to add a further 5 km from Pomona to Montclair. However, San Bernardino County Transportation Authority said it had made a 'difficult decision' not to provide funding, as it would have had limited oversight of the project. It would instead study opportunities to expand Metrolink services in the corridor. 

Pink operating contract


INDIA

The Pune IT City Metro Rail Ltd consortium of Tata and Siemens, which holds a 35-year PPP concession to develop the city's metro Line 3, has awarded Keolis a 10-year contract to operate the line. In what Keolis said would be 'a particularly unprecedented initiative' Pink Line trains will be driven exclusively by women, with a team of around 100 to be recruited and trained.

The 23 km elevated line with 23 stations is under construction between the Hinjewadi IT hub and the central business district in Shivajinagar, augmenting the two lines built and operated by the state government. Alstom is supplying a fleet of 22 three-car Metropolis trainsets.

★ The first 4.3 km of the Patna Metro Blue Line from Patliputra Inter-State Bus Terminal to Bhoodanath was inaugurated by

Bihar's Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on October 6, ahead of state elections. A limited service is being operated using a three-car Tigrarh trainset leased from Pune metro, pending delivery of the city's own rolling stock.

When completed in 2027-28, the Blue Line will run for 14.6 km from ISBT in the east to Patna Junction in the west, serving 12 stations. The 16.9 km Red Line will run west from an interchange at Khemnichak to Danapur Cantonment, serving 14 stations. 

Briefing

The government of South Australia has taken back the operation of **Adelaide's** trams, terminating an eight year contract awarded by the previous state government in 2020 to the Torrens Connect joint venture of John Holland, UGL and bus operator Transit Systems. The concessionaires will continue to maintain the tram fleet and infrastructure until 2035.

Asian Development Bank has approved a US\$190m loan to support the construction of an 8.6 km underground section of the **Indore** metro with seven stations, which is scheduled to open by January 2030. Madhya Pradesh Metro Rail Corp opened an initial 5.9 km 'Super Priority Corridor' on June 1 as the first stage of a 31.6 km circular route with 29 stations.

Operation and maintenance of **New Jersey's** 55 km River Line diesel light rail service linking Trenton with Camden is to transfer from Alstom to NJ Transit by the end of the year. The line, which opened in 2004, was originally operated by Bombardier Transportation. The current contract, which began in 2015, was to have run to 2030 with an option for a further five years.

Moskva tram Route 90 between Sokolniki and Paveletsky station was launched on September 10, using a newly built 2.1 km section of catenary-free track along ul Mashki Poryvaevoy, pr Akademika Sakharova and Sretenskiy Bulvar. Services are operated using 20 single-section PK TS Lionet trams equipped with batteries.

Firenze city council has approved the final design of the 6.1 km tram route 3.2.2, linking Piazza Libertà to Campo di Marte and Rovezzano at an estimated cost of €360m. The route would include a 1.2 km catenary-free section between Piazza delle Cure and Largo Gennarelli.

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