



## Media release

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# Ceneri 2020: Base tunnel opening ceremony and NRLA fully operative

**In the first week of September, Simonetta Sommaruga, President of the Swiss Confederation, Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis and the president of the Ticino cantonal council Norman Gobbi will open the new Ceneri Base Tunnel, the final link in the New Rail Link through the Alps (NRLA). The tunnel will be officially handed over to the operator SBB on 4 September. A day previously, Ms Sommaruga will meet representatives of Switzerland's partner countries. The NRLA – the heart of the rail freight corridor running through the Alps – is key to Switzerland's policy of shifting freight transport from road to rail. Thanks to the Ceneri Base Tunnel, Ticino also gains an attractive suburban railway.**

The festivities to mark the opening of the Ceneri Base Tunnel and the completion of the New Rail Link through the Alps NRLA are rather more modest than originally planned owing to the coronavirus pandemic.

- On Thursday, 3 September 2020, Simonetta Sommaruga, President of the Swiss Confederation, will meet representatives of the neighbouring countries directly involved to discuss transalpine rail freight transport and environmental transport policy. Following these talks, the group will inspect the north portal of the Ceneri Base Tunnel, the final link in the NRLA. The flat route through the Alps forms the heart of the European freight corridor between Rotterdam and Genoa, allowing more freight to be transported by rail and thus contributing to the protection of the Alps and Switzerland's transport policy of shifting freight transport off the roads.
- The official opening takes place on Friday, 4 September 2020. The original intention was to invite 650 guests, but the scale of the event has been considerably reduced owing to the coronavirus pandemic. Ms Sommaruga, Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis and the president of the Ticino cantonal council Norman Gobbi will attend the event, as will Dieter Schwank, CEO of

the tunnel construction company ATG and Vincent Ducrot, CEO of the tunnel operator SBB.

The opening ceremony will be held at midday in front of the tunnel's north portal at Camorino. A ribbon will be cut in the traditional manner to mark the completion of the construction project, and a freight train will make the very first trip through the tunnel. The event will be broadcast live by Italian language broadcaster RSI.

### **Tunnel commissioned with December timetable change**

The tunnel will be commissioned to coincide with the change in the public transport timetable in mid December. The SBB and its partners are planning various events. On 12 December an event will be held with selected guests, and on 13 December the first timetabled intercity train to pass through the Ceneri Base Tunnel will be celebrated. Next summer festivals will be held in Bellinzona, Lugano and Locarno to celebrate the opening of the Ticino suburban railway. The Ceneri Base Tunnel creates much better connections for the three towns and indeed the whole canton, almost halving the journey time between Lugano and Locarno.

The NRLA and the completion of the four-metre corridor through Switzerland create greater rail capacity for freight transport. In passenger transport, SBB will implement the majority of the planned services on schedule when the timetable changes mid December. In addition to improvements in regional services, there will be faster and more frequent north-south connections and more international services.

#### **Media accreditation process now launched**

Members of the media may be present to report on the opening of the Ceneri Base Tunnel. The forms to request accreditation for 4 September can be found at [www.ceneri2020.ch](http://www.ceneri2020.ch). Requests should be submitted by Thursday, 20 August 2020. The number of places for the media is limited, and it will not be possible to obtain accreditation on the day or to gain access to the site without having received accreditation in advance. Information on accreditation for 3 September will follow at a later date.

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