

Press Release

Digitalization is the future of the German rail system

Feasibility study conducted by German government emphasizes benefits of digitalizing the rail system • Proposals for first phase of accelerated roll-out presented at InnoTrans trade fair

(Berlin, September 19, 2018) A study commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure has concluded that the rail network in Germany should be digitalized. Digitalization could raise capacity for rail passenger and rail freight transport by up to 20%, laying the foundation necessary to handle growing traffic volumes in Germany. With the Digital Rail for Germany program, the entire German rail sector aims to equip every one of the 33,000 kilometers in the German rail network with the European Train Control System (ETCS) and digital signaling technology. At the InnoTrans trade fair in Berlin today, high-level representatives of the German Federal Transport Ministry, rail sector associations, and Deutsche Bahn presented proposals for making Digital Rail for Germany a reality.

The feasibility study, which was presented today on the digitalization of the rail network, concludes that it makes sense to equip the German rail network with the latest generation of ETCS and with digital signaling technology. The study recommends that the process begin as soon as possible, and it includes a clear plan for the steps to take. The proposals presented include a technical vision, a strategy coordinated with the rail industry that describes how each section of the network could be digitalized, financing solutions, a description of the resources needed, and a structure for coordinating the process.

According to the study, digital rail would have a positive impact on the German economy. Specifically, it would:

- **Make the rail system more reliable** by offering new technology and systems to foster high service quality and punctuality
- **Raise rail capacity**, enabling the network to handle growing traffic volumes and to absorb more traffic from the roads
- **Raise energy efficiency and lower carbon emissions** by making energy-efficient network management possible and by shifting traffic to rail
- **Lower operating costs** for maintenance and operations
- **Equip the industry to handle demographic change** by giving employers tools to deal with lower operational staffing numbers resulting from retirement and employee turnover
- **Foster seamless international rail traffic** by ensuring that European systems are interoperable

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"The feasibility study shows that the benefits of introducing ETCS and digital signaling throughout Germany will be substantial," said Guido Beermann, State Secretary at the German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure. "We want to work together, using state-of-the-art digital technology to equip the rail sector to master the growing challenges in passenger and freight transport."

"Digitalization will make rail fit for the 21st century," said Ronald Pofalla, Board Member for Infrastructure at Deutsche Bahn. "Digital technology has a key role to play in ensuring that the rail sector is customer friendly and competitive. We will make systematic use of the unique benefits that rail offers, and foster higher capacity, better quality and greater efficiency."

"ETCS is the number one opportunity to generate more capacity with the same infrastructure," said Susanne Henckel, Chair of BAG-SPNV, the German federal working group for local rail transport authorities. "We cannot afford to miss this opportunity. It is time to put the framework in place to fund both lineside and on-board infrastructure."

"ETCS will give rail the decisive digital boost it needs," said Stephan Krenz, Chairman of the Mofair association of non-federally owned rail companies in regional and local transport. "As rail operators, we are particularly excited about the additional capacity that will become available. This capacity is urgently needed if we are to offer our passengers attractive services. It is important, however, that we not be forced to bear the brunt of retrofitting costs as ETCS replaces lineside signaling with cab signaling. Infrastructure will always be infrastructure, and infrastructure funding is the government's responsibility."

"The full-scale digitalization of rail transport in Germany is an important - and necessary - component in ensuring that Germany achieves the transport policy objectives set out in the government's coalition agreement," said Jürgen Fenske, Chairman of the Association of German Transport Companies (VDV). "Digitalization is absolutely essential if we are to see the substantial increases in rail passenger and freight transport called for in the coalition agreement. Digitalizing the rail network is a key infrastructure task of the German government."

Projects proposed for 2020 to 2025 would have a major impact

For the initial phase from 2020 to 2025, the study recommends three specific projects that would have a rapid impact on infrastructure capacity and service quality:

- **Equipping the Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor** from the North and Baltic Seas through central Germany and Bavaria to the northern access route to the Brenner Base tunnel



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- **Equipping core routes in the German rail network:** specifically, the Cologne–Rhine/Main and Dortmund–Bielefeld–Hanover high-speed lines and the Magdeburg–Knappenrode line
- **Digitalizing urban rail:** digitalizing the S-Bahn network in Stuttgart

According to the authors of the study, these projects would involve infrastructure investments of some EUR 1.7 billion between now and 2025.

The German government will now review and assess the proposals. All the parties involved are in agreement that digitalization will play a decisive role in making rail fit for the future.

Note for the media:

Up-to-date information on Digital Rail for Germany, including a news service release and a graphic showing priority projects, is available on the DB media portal: www.deutschebahn.com/presse (only partially in english). For more detailed information on the entire Digital Rail for Germany program, visit its new website: www.digitale-schiene-deutschland.de.

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