

Press release

Rolling highway – over 86,000 heavy goods vehicles transferred to rail despite a challenging environment

2019 proved to be one of the more difficult years in the almost 20-year history of RAIpin AG. RAIpin, operator of the Rola rolling highway, reported a significant loss in 2019 due to a variety of external factors. Nevertheless, the 86,000-plus consignments showed that it succeeded in making a significant contribution to Switzerland's modal shift policy. The result means that RAIpin was able to maintain its market share of just under 6% in a transalpine freight market that is generally on the decline.

Having reached retirement age, Erwin Rutishauser, Chairman of the Board of Directors, stepped down at the annual general meeting of shareholders held on 19 June 2020. His successor is Nicolas Perrin.

The decline in demand is reflected in the year-end result of CHF -3.6 million (2018: CHF -0.5 million), as many costs, such as for the locomotives and rolling stock, are fixed, i.e. they continued to be incurred at the same level despite the drop in business, the reason being that the company was keen to continue offering an attractive timetable. Moreover, RAIpin was unable, within the year, to make up for the shortfall in federal compensation, which was cut by more than a third from over CHF 30 million to less than CHF 20 million.

To get the rolling highway back on track in terms of its finances, the board of directors has launched the "RAIpin 2021+" project. The business model is to be put back on a solid, financially sound basis from 2021. This will involve, among a raft of other measures, cost savings at our Olten head office and optimisations in terms of locomotive deployment. RAIpin is also planning to extend trains by adding more rolling stock. This will allow it to improve profitability by transporting more vehicles without having to increase the frequency of services on the Lötschberg-Simplon axis, which is already very busy.

The COVID-19 situation has added to the pressure on RAIpin in the current year. The number of vehicles transported fell by two-thirds in March and April. RAIpin is also deploying additional sleeping cars on busy trains to ensure social distancing for drivers during the journey. The market is currently recovering slowly. RAIpin is counting on the forthcoming special financing package from the federal government, which is designed to provide help for public transport providers. The company is doing all it can to strengthen the rolling road offer with innovative solutions on the Freiburg im Breisgau – Novara route.

Erwin Rutishauser (71) retired from his position as chairman of the board of directors of RAIpin AG after seven years. RAIpin AG owes him an immense debt of gratitude for his prudent and forward-looking management, especially during the past two challenging years. He was succeeded on 19 June 2020 by Nicolas Perrin (60), the deputy chairman and very much an industry insider.

Olten, 29 June 2020

RAIpin AG at a glance

Headquartered in Olten, RAIpin AG operates the rolling highway (Rola) between Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, and Novara, Italy. Every year, the company transfers around 90,000 goods vehicles from road to rail. Under the rolling highway system, drivers embark their vehicles onto low-floor trains at the terminals and accompany their loads in a sleeping car. RAIpin's rolling highway service makes a significant contribution to the modal shifting of traffic from road to rail and to safeguarding the sensitive Alpine region.

The shareholders of RAIpin are BLS AG, Hupac SA and SBB Cargo AG.

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