Nouvelle-Aquitaine Region

Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line

EUROPEAN YEAR OF RAIL 2021

CROSS-BORDER RAIL CONNECTIONS:

fostering cohesion between regions and their citizens

10th & 11th June 2021
A major missing link between Spain and Europe

- Response to the **need to connect** between the Iberian Peninsula and the rest of Europe, by connecting southwestern France to Spain by the most direct route, through the Pyrenees mountain range (a barrier of 350km);
- **Major international axis**, in particular for freight;
- **Strong partnership project**: at national level (French and Spanish Ministries); regional (Government of Aragon, Nouvelle-Aquitaine region), and with the infrastructure managers (ADIF, SNCF Réseau).
Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line

History of the railway line

1853: birth of the railway line project between France and Spain, via Aragon

1904: signature of the international agreement for the construction of the "Western Trans-Pyrenees" Oloron-Zuera, by the Somport

1912: commissioning of the Oloron-Bedous section

1914: completion of the Somport tunnel works

1928: Inauguration of Canfranc station
Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line

History of the railway line

- Official opening of the Somport Tunnel 1912
- Official opening of the Canfranc station 1928
- Derailment and destruction of the Estanguet railway bridge 1970
- Cooperation agreement between Aquitaine and Aragon 2001
- Project enters the State-Region contract 2000-2006
- Reopening of the Pau-Oloron section 2011
- Reopening of the Oloron-Bedous section 2016
- Official opening of the Canfranc station 2021
- Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line 2021
Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line

Project timeline

- Reopening of the Pau-Oloron section: 3/1/2011
- Reopening of the Oloron-Bedous section: 27/6/2016
- Official opening of the Canfranc station: 1/4/2021
- Presentation of the White Paper: 11/12/2019
- Public inquiry
- Reopening of the line

Interreg programme CANFRANEUS II
- 556 420 euros
- Tunnel safety studies
- Optimization levers
- 65% of ERDF co-financing

CEF 2016
- 14 710 000 euros
- Convergence studies
- Governance structure
- 50% of CEF (Connecting Europe Facility) co-financing

CEF 2019
- 8 600 000 euros
- Tunnel studies
- Works at Canfranc Station
- 32% of CEF co-financing
Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line

Opportunities of the reopening

A low number of rail crossings through the Pyrenees:
Only 3 connections: 1 on the Atlantic side, 2 on the Mediterranean
The absence of a rail crossing over the 350 km of Pyrenean massif, which forms an insurmountable barrier, unlike the Alps, where there is a crossing every 50 km.

An unbalanced modal share:
Only 3% of modal share for rail freight
15 to 30% for the Alps, up to 70% in Switzerland

A reopening fully in line with the national freight plan:
Project promoting a significant shift of freight traffic to rail
Compatible with the creation of a short-distance, alpine-type rail motorway
Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line

5 major interests at the reopening

**Economic**
- Passenger traffic
- Movement of goods
- Link between the structuring nodes (Barcelona, Oloron, a freight and rail motorway crossroads
- Restore / consolidate industry and logistic

**Environnemental**
- Massive modal shift
- Pollution decrease
- Road safety improvement
- Biodiversity enhancement

**Touristic**
- Pyrenean valleys
- Hiking and pilgrimage routes
- Winter sport resorts
- Touristic train

**Heritage**
- Mountain line with remarkable landscape
- Canfranc station
- Century-old works of art

**Societal**
- Central permeability of the Pyrenees
- Social and cultural development
- Land use planning project
Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line

33km to reopen between Bedous (France) and Canfranc (Spain), out of 305km

**French section:** 90km of single track between Pau and the entrance to the Somport tunnel

8km of cross-border tunnel: 1/3 French, 2/3 Spanish;

**Canfranc international station** in Spain inaugurated on April 15, 2021.

**Spanish section:** 130km of single track with Iberian gauge between Canfranc and Huesca
A partnership between France and Spain, a guarantee of cohesion and commitment

End of 1999: intergovernmental seminar between France and Spain. Ministers decide to study the possibilities of reopening the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza railway line

A dedicated organization structure, a tool to support the achievement:

• A concerted choice (competences, geographical coverage, timeline)
• A validation by the institutional “quadripartite group” dedicated to the project

Support from the European Commission, key to the success of the project:

- 2011: the line is identified on the TEN-T comprehensive network
- 2015 - 2020: pre-feasibility studies co-financed by Interreg
- 2017-2023: technical studies of rehabilitating of the cross-border railway Pau-Zaragoza and Somport tunnel, co-financed by the CEF
- 2023-2025: Public inquiry (France) and detailed design studies
- 2025-2027: Works
Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line

Technical challenges

Transform the technical project into a territorial project

Attract freight traffic with a "short-time" rail motorway

Support the development of touristic projects

2 important technical issues:

- Interoperability of railway systems and upgrade to European standards
- Environmental transition with the search for carbon-free solution (H2, electrification)
Reopening of the Pau-Canfranc-Zaragoza cross-border rail line

Financial challenges

A white paper has identified levers to maximise the traffic

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<td>• Institutions, NGOs, goods carriers, tourists</td>
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Development levers for the territory *

- **20** touristic sites near the line

- **Canfranc station:** 2nd largest station in Europe

- **Rail freight**
  - **160 to 220** heavy goods vehicles / day that can switch to rail
  - **2 millions** tons of captive goods

*initial data to be consolidated in subsequent studies*
Focus on tourism development

Benchmarking carried out

- Success stories in France: Ligne des hirondelles (St-Claude - Dole), Train des Neiges / des Merveilles (Nice - Tende)
- Exemplary European cases: Bernina Express (Switzerland), Train des châteaux (Italy)

Study trips

- Bernina Express (Switzerland): fully integrated touristic offer, systemic approach
- Castle train (Italy): complete touristic offer, 80% coverage rate

Development with local partners

- Local partners deeply involved in the development of the offer (co-construction),
- Various stakeholders: NGOs, tourist offices, local businesses, etc.
Consultation and cooperation are key to turn a rail infrastructure project into a real regional project.

Event between France and Spain in Accous on December 11, 2019

115 participants: local, private and public actors

4 thematic workshops: Governance and local life, Travelers, Freight and Tourism

Canfraneus.eu platform

Download the White Paper
To know more:
https://www.canfraneus.eu/

Thank you for your attention!