Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation
Federal Office of Transport FOT

Public transport in Switzerland

Facts and figures

Switzerland has a highly developed public transport system. The railways form its backbone, being the most widely used means of transport in terms of passenger kilometres. There are both long-distance trains and regional rail networks. Trams and buses play a major role in urban areas, while bus services are vital in rural areas with no rail connections. Other means of transport, such as cableways and boats, are mainly used for tourism.

The public transport network (2020):

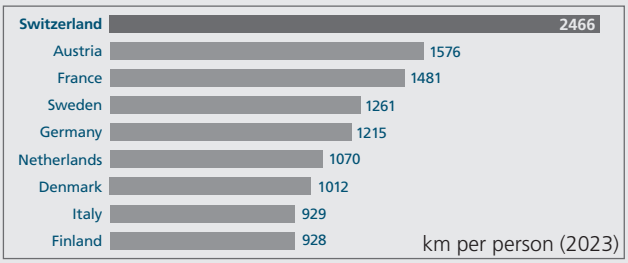
Rail network:	5317 km
Cog railways:	126 km
Tram lines:	316 km
Cableways:	1037 km
Inland waterways:	514 km
Bus routes:	20869 km

Passenger kilometres (2024, in million km):

by rail:	22,983
by cog railway:	72
by tram:	1,115
by cableway:	341
by boat:	166
by bus:	3,629

Railways: An international comparison

There are few countries in which train travel is as popular as it is in Switzerland. On average, people in Switzerland take more than 70 train journeys a year, travelling over 2,400 kilometres. This is more than in any other country in Europe.



Modal split in freight and passenger transport

The railways play a particularly important role in transporting freight across the Alps. In 2024, around 70% of all goods crossed the Swiss Alps by rail, and 30% by road. Rail accounts for 37% of all freight transport in Switzerland. The share for passenger transport is lower: rail accounts for just 18% of all passenger kilometres in Switzerland. Add road-based public transport to this figure, and around 22% of all passenger kilometres are travelled on the public transport network.

International cooperation

Many train, bus, boat and tram connections cross Switzerland's national borders, as does a large proportion of freight transport. As a small country at the heart of Europe, Switzerland has an interest in coordinating its transport policy with neighbouring countries and the EU, ensuring that transport flows smoothly across its borders and that Switzerland's investment in its transport network can be fully exploited.

Direct transport and clock-face timetable

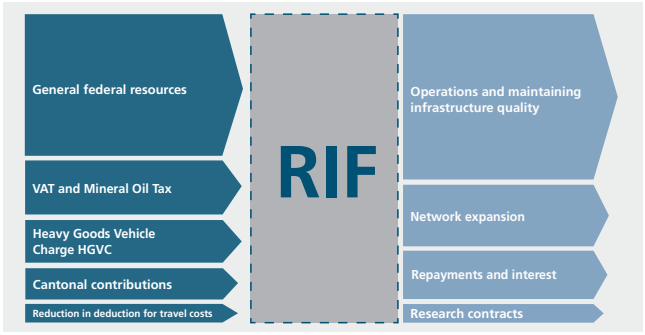
Switzerland's ‚national direct transport' system, in which just one ticket is needed for a journey no matter how many transport companies are involved, is unique in Europe. The system allows the use of travelcards such as the GA or Half-Fare Travelcard, which cover practically the entire Swiss public transport network. Another important element is the ‚clock-face' timetable, involving public transport connections at regular intervals (e.g. every 30 minutes) and good connections at transport hubs.

Funding

Public transport and rail freight transport are publicly subsidised. The federal government, cantons and communes meet around half the costs of public transport. The other half is covered by income from ticket and travelcard sales and other sources.
In total, around CHF 7 billion of public money goes towards public transport and rail freight transport every year. Almost CHF 6 billion is spent on rail infrastructure, around CHF 1 billion subsidises regional passenger transport and approximately CHF 200 million goes towards rail freight transport.

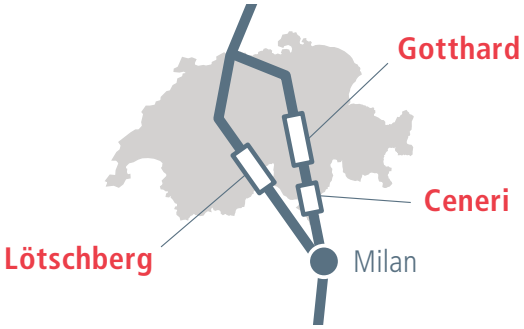
Rail Infrastructure Fund (RIF)

In 2014 a specially dedicated Rail Infrastructure Fund (RIF) was set up for the purpose of modernising the Swiss rail network. The fund is fed from various sources, and finances the operation, maintenance and expansion of the entire rail infrastructure to the tune of around CHF 6 billion a year.



The NRLA

The New Rail Link through the Alps (NRLA) consists of three new base tunnels through the Alps and extensions to their access routes. It shortens journey times between north and south and helps to shift freight traffic from road to rail – one of the main objectives of Swiss transport policy. The Lötschberg Base Tunnel was opened in 2007, followed in 2016 by the Gotthard Base Tunnel, which is the longest railway tunnel in the world (57km). The NRLA was completed in 2020 with the opening of the Ceneri Base Tunnel. It is the centrepiece of the European rail freight corridor between Rotterdam and Genoa.



The FOT's role

The Federal Office of Transport (FOT) is responsible for public transport and freight transport. Its main tasks are: **Policy:** Prepare and implement political decisions made by the Federal Council, Parliament and the electorate; **Safety:** Achieve a high yet affordable standard on railways, buses, inland waterways and cableways; **Funding:** Use resources efficiently to enable high-quality transport services and **Infrastructure:** Ensure that the necessary infrastructure is available and that it complies with regulations.
www.bav.admin.ch