

Press release

The Rolling Highway will be discontinued at the end of 2025.

Due to an unexpectedly large number of restrictions on the rail network, RAlpin is no longer able to operate the Rolling Highway (Rola), i.e. the loading of entire lorries by rail for travel through the Alps, even with financial aid from the federal government, despite continuing high customer demand. In consultation with the federal government, the Rolling Highway will therefore be discontinued earlier than planned, i.e. at the end of 2025 instead of the end of 2028, as previously planned.

RAlpin AG is facing significant economic challenges. Despite ongoing financial compensation from the federal government, existing demand and good capacity utilisation of 80%, it is no longer economically feasible to operate the Rolling Highway (Rola). Around 10% of trains had to be cancelled throughout the year 2024. This was due to planned construction sites and construction works set up at short notice, as well as other unforeseeable events. This led to a negative result of around CHF -2.2 million in 2024. Due to construction work, around 20% fewer trains ran in the first quarter of 2025 compared to the previous year; instead of 1018 trains in the first quarter of 2024, only 794 trains ran in the same period this year.

Two years ago, the Federal Parliament decided to extend the federal government's financial support for the Rolling Highway for the last time and to cease operations at the end of 2028. RAlpin has now concluded that the Rolling Highway can no longer be operated profitably under the changed conditions, especially as the situation is unlikely to return to normal in the near future. In consultation with the federal government, it has therefore decided to suspend operations as early as the timetable change in December 2025. The three shareholders of RAlpin (BLS, Hupac and SBB) are ensuring the financing of the Rolling Highway until then to enable an orderly cessation of operations and fulfil business obligations. For its part, the federal government will increase the average compensation per transported lorry until the Rolling Highway will discontinue.

RAlpin employs 16 people and is looking for solutions for the employees affected. As it has been clear for some time that operations will continue until the end of 2028 at the latest, RAlpin is in constant dialogue about the individual future career paths of all employees.

The challenges in Alpine-crossing combined transport are high

In recent years, RAlpin has created the conditions required to shift up to 80,000 lorries per year to rail in accompanied combined transport through the Alps despite rising costs for the use of rail infrastructure, energy, terminals and traction with a constant expenditure ceiling. This corresponds to 7% of combined traffic through the Swiss Alps. Together with its customers, RAlpin will look for ways to continue to transport its volumes by rail. However, it can be assumed that some of the goods transported on the Rolling Highway will first be transferred back to the road until the conversion to semi-trailers suitable for handling by crane has taken place.

The situation on the Rola lines out the symptomatic challenges of Alpine-crossing combined rail transport sector. The reason for the increasing number of train cancellations on the Rolling Highway is the persistently high susceptibility to disruption of the rail infrastructure in Germany. RAlpin expects that conditions for those involved in combined transport will improve in the coming years and that new viable solutions for achieving the goal of shifting from road to rail will therefore emerge. To this end, accompanying measures from policymakers will continue to be needed. The aim must be to safeguard the efforts made over the past 25 years to ensure a successful transfer of Alpine-crossing traffic through Switzerland to rail in the long term.

Olten, 05 May 2025

Unaccompanied combined transport replaces the Rola

The Rolling Highway (Rola) was the first service since the late 1960s to shift heavy goods traffic through the Alps from road to rail. Whole trucks or articulated lorries are loaded onto the rails and the truck drivers travel on the train in a sleeping car. This is why the Rolling Highway is also known as 'accompanied combined transport'.

As part of the expansion of the Alpine transit routes, the Rola was modernised in 2001 with the newly founded RAlpin AG, a joint venture between BLS, Hupac and SBB. The operator transports lorries on the route between Freiburg im Breisgau and Novara. The offer was designed from the outset as an interim solution until the completion of the NRLA, which would enable the efficient rail transport of semi-trailers (articulated lorries without the towing vehicles and drivers) and containers over long distances. Two years ago, the Federal Parliament decided to extend the federal government's financial support for the Rolling Highway for the last time and to cease operations at the end of 2028.

At the same time, 'unaccompanied combined transport' continued to develop thanks to advanced handling techniques such as semi-trailers and containers that could be handled by crane. With the completion of the NRLA, the future on the north-south corridor belongs to this segment of combined transport.

RAlpin Ltd at a glance

Headquartered in Olten, RAlpin AG operates the rolling highway (Rola) between Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, and Novara, Italy. Its service encompasses over 100,000 opportunities for lorries to transfer from road to rail each year. Around 72,000 lorries used this service in 2024. Drivers embark their vehicles onto low-floor trains at the terminals and accompany their loads safely in a sleeping car. RAlpin's rolling highway service contributes to the modal shifting of traffic from road to rail and to safeguarding the sensitive Alpine region.

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

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