

Montreux, 09 November 2020

Press release:

Launch of the Goldenpass Express postponed to December 2022

The Goldenpass Express, which will provide a direct link between Montreux and Interlaken, should have made its grand debut next year. Unfortunately, this will no longer be possible due to the consequences of the current pandemic, which have paralysed the industrial world and caused extensive delays. What's more, global tourism has come to an abrupt halt and these markets will not recover before 2023. The new launch date will be 11 December 2022.

After more than a hundred-year wait, it will no longer be possible to launch the train between Montreux and Interlaken in June 2021 as planned. It is with great regret that MOB, in agreement with its main partner, BLS, and its sponsors (the cantons of Vaud, Bern, and Fribourg, and the Federal Office of Transport), was forced to take this decision.

The Covid pandemic has a first negative effect on this exceptional project: it has inevitably slowed construction. While several carriages have already been completed and delivered, construction of the famous variable gauge bogies, which involves many partners in Switzerland and abroad, has been hampered by this public health crisis for several months.

On the economic level, the results of analyses conducted by us and by various tourism experts are inescapable: highly damaged by the pandemic, the tourism sector will take several years to recover. This applies both to Switzerland and foreign markets, which are so important for MOB. According to the various forecasts, the sector will not return to its pre-Covid levels before 2023, or perhaps even 2024. In view of these projections and the great uncertainty that currently reigns, we are nowhere near achieving even the minimum objectives set for the Goldenpass Express and clearly it would be unreasonable to launch this new product in this environment.

With these factors in mind, MOB has regrettably decided to postpone the entry of the Goldenpass Express into service until the timetable change of December 2022.

Please note that commuters will not be affected by this decision. The new transport provision - every half hour on the busiest sections of the line - will come into force on 13 December 2020, as planned.

First discussed in the 19th century, the idea of directly linking Lake Geneva to the Lake Brienz and Lake Thun regions is on the brink of happening. Thanks to a revolutionary variable gauge bogie, the Goldenpass Express will switch from the metric-gauge track (Montreux - Zweisimmen) to the standard-gauge track (Zweisimmen - Interlaken) in a matter of seconds. A world first. This is also an exceptional project in terms of tourism. The Goldenpass Express, designed by prestigious Italian designer PininFarina, will have First and Second class carriages, as well as a Prestige class.

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Several Goldenpass Express carriages, built in the Stadler Rail workshops in Bussnang, have been completed and delivered. (© photo Actalis)