SecondTrack

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Interview: Dušan Mes, director general, Slovenske železnice

A historic moment for Slovenia: the Second Track is operational

The first train ride from Divača to Koper

Column: Monika Pintar Mesarič

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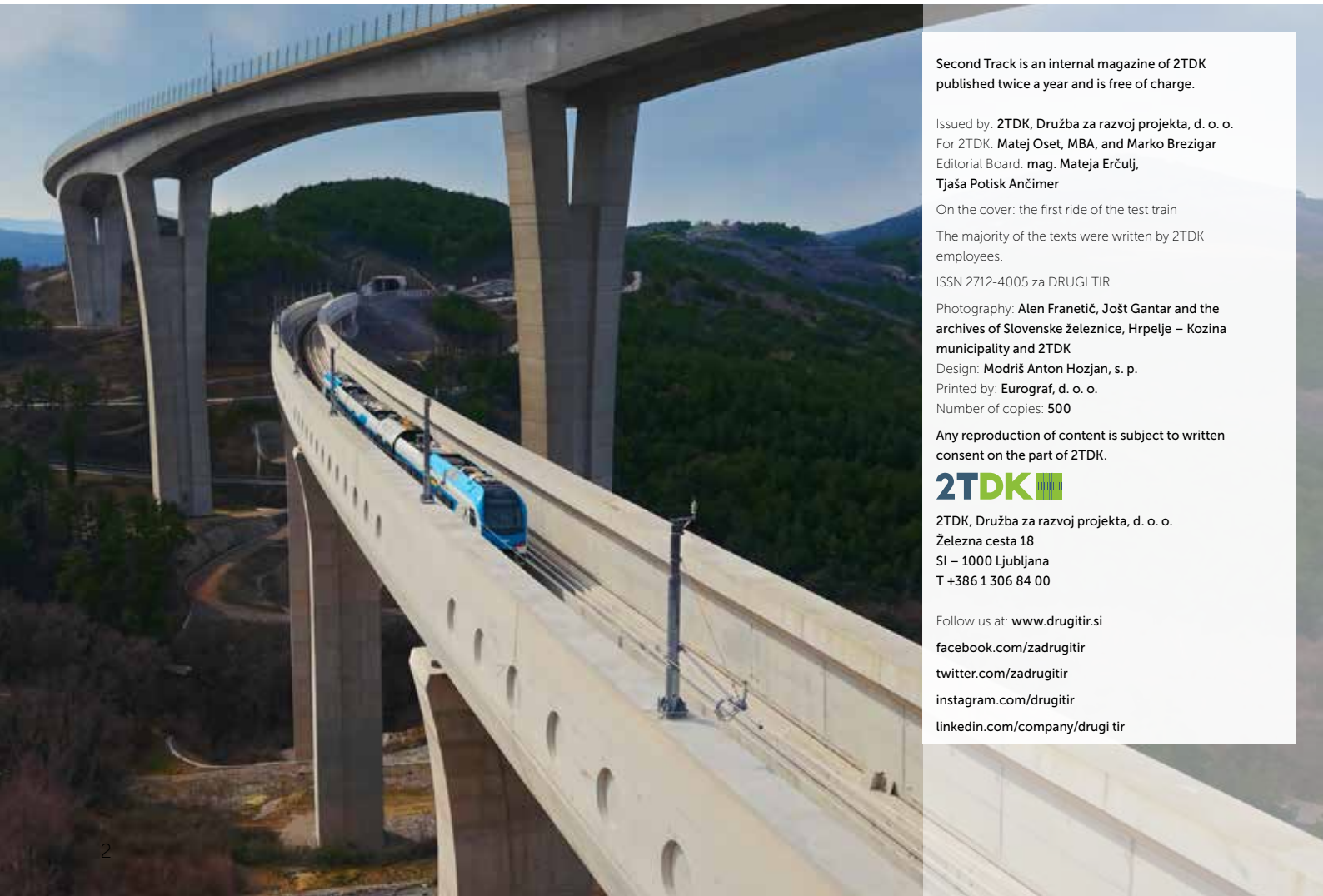

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On the cover: the first ride of the test train

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The Second Track is a success story

New railway lines are not built very often – not in Europe, and even less so in Slovenia. That makes it all the more remarkable that the first trial train ride has already taken place on the new line between Divača and Koper.

Matej Oset, Marko Brezigar
Managing Director of 2TDK, Director of 2TDK

The Second Track is a story about the power of Slovenian expertise. It is a story of how our experts designed, built, and equipped this railway line. It is also a story of persistence, cooperation, and the dedication of everyone who contributed to this project. Above all, it is a story of pride and the future it opens for our citizens, the economy, and the environment.

The operability of the line between Divača and Koper represents a significant milestone. It already brings numerous benefits today – it enables system testing, confirms the quality of execution, and provides assurance that the project is successfully approaching its goal. The path to this point has not been easy, but we are particularly proud that the project's cost has not increased throughout the entire construction process. On the contrary – we have managed to secure more European grant funding than was anticipated when the investment programme was signed in 2019, and the project will ultimately even be slightly cheaper.

This is an achievement that is exceptional even by European standards. It is not unusual for large infrastructure projects to become more expensive during their multi-year construction – quite the contrary, this is often the norm, as it is impossible to predict in advance all the challenges and unforeseeable circumstances that such projects face. Public opinion often attributes annexes and subsequent increases in project value primarily to the Slovenian environment; however, practice shows that this phenomenon is present worldwide. The Koralm Railway, the Semmering Railway Tunnel, and even the Brenner Base Tunnel, along with many other railway projects, saw cost increases. All major projects face geological surprises, market shifts, and supply chain disruptions. Precisely because of this, the fact that our project did not become more expensive during a demanding period – but actually became cheaper – represents an achievement that is difficult to match even in the wider European space.

Professional, well-considered, and timely decisions are key to successfully managing such a project. Such a result is not a given, but proves that large projects can be managed responsibly, transparently, and effectively – for the benefit of the country and its people. We also view the Second Track as a symbol of cooperation between businesses, the state, and local communities. We are pleased that it will help reduce the number of trucks on the roads and thus alleviate traffic congestion – a problem that is well known to anyone who frequently travels on the Littoral Motorway. It brings new opportunities to local communities – from improved accessibility to tourism development. This is an investment in economic competitiveness and a better quality of life.

The track's operational readiness is proof that, through good planning, expertise, and determination, we have made significant progress. However, the project is not yet complete – a major step has been taken, but the ultimate goal remains full operation, which will bring all of its benefits. As directors, we are proud to be part of this story and confident that the second track will bring long-term benefits to all residents of Slovenia.

A historic moment for Slovenia: the Second Track is operational

Slovenia has reached an important infrastructure milestone – a test train has travelled along the route of the Second Track, thereby confirming the operational readiness of the new Divača-Koper railway line.

Tjaša Potisk Ančimer

The new, 27-kilometre railway line runs along an entirely new corridor and represents the first such railway connection built in independent Slovenia. Seven tunnels and three viaducts have been built on the challenging Karst route, making the project one of the most demanding engineering feats not only in Slovenia but also in Europe. The main contractors for the construction and railway works were the Slovenian companies Kolektor CPG and Železniško gradbeno podjetje Ljubljana, which, together with numerous domestic and foreign partners, made a significant contribution to the successful implementation of the project.

The Second Track is a project of superlatives: it features the longest tunnel in Slovenia, and in just five years, more kilometres of tunnels were built on the entire project than on the entire highway network since Slovenia's independence. At the event marking this historic milestone, Prime Minister Dr. Robert Golob pointed out: "Today is a fantastic day when we can proudly and with great satisfaction tell a story that begins with a vision for the coastal region, with a window to the world that we possess and that we must equip with regular connections. It is a story of Slovenian expertise and the power of our knowledge, which enabled us to design this challenging track on our own. Our experts took on the responsibility to ensure that today we can travel on this line."

Minister of Infrastructure Mag. Alenka Bratušek highlighted an achievement that is remarkable even by European standards – the Second Track project remained within the financial framework set in 2019, when the first investment program was drawn up, despite the numerous challenges that had to be overcome during this period and also within the timeframe: "Today we celebrate a great success for our country, a historic event not only for Koper and Slovenian Istria, but for all of Slovenia. The Second Track is much more than just an infrastructure achievement. It means better accessibility, faster travel, and greater traffic safety. It represents significant developmental and connectivity potential for Slovenia, for the Port of Koper, and for the neighbouring countries that cooperate with it. In doing so, we are strengthening the economy of the European Union."

Matej Oset, General Manager of 2TDK, said that the first train ride was exceptional and that it made all the hard work worthwhile. At the same time, he addressed the local residents, who have felt the impact of the construction sites the most in recent years: "The residents of this area are exceptionally patient and understanding. We greatly appreciate their cooperation and understanding, which is why we are striving for solutions that will take their needs and quality of life into account as much as possible."

Marko Brezigar, Director of 2TDK, also highlighted the significance of the event, noting that such projects do not happen often, neither here in Slovenia nor in Europe. "In Europe, we are recognised as a model of best practice; European institutions hold us up as an example to other countries and companies undertaking similar projects, encouraging them to follow our model of how even highly complex infrastructure projects can be managed transparently, responsibly, and efficiently."

The Divača-Koper Second Track is a completely new railway line, designed with the most modern technical and construction solutions. For the majority of the route, a slab track is used, which represents an advanced form of railway construction and ensures greater stability, reduced maintenance requirements, and a longer infrastructure lifespan. After six years of construction – starting with access roads in 2019 and main works in 2021 – the first train made a symbolic run today, marking an important milestone in the development of Slovenia's railway infrastructure.

The new railway line brings development and safety

Tjaša Potisk Ančimer

The Second Track project will provide the Slovenian economy with a significant developmental impetus. It will accelerate progress in the municipalities along the route, while simultaneously providing the companies involved in its construction with valuable references for securing future business.

The route of the Second Track begins in Divača, a municipality that has long been connected to the railway. At a ceremonial event marking the line's operational readiness, Mayor Alenka Štrucl Dovgan noted that Divača became an important transportation hub nearly 170 years ago with the construction of the Vienna-Trieste railway, and now similar positive economic effects are expected from the construction of the Second Track. "We have supported this project from the very beginning, as we are well aware of its long-term significance. At the same time, we expect the new rail link to have a positive impact on tourism and contribute to greater recognition of our municipality. Another significant benefit is that the trains allow for the transport of bicycles, which opens up new possibilities for sustainable mobility and the development of cycling and excursion tourism."

The importance of the project for the economy was also highlighted by City of Koper Mayor Aleš Bržan. The line ends in the city where Slovenia's only international cargo port is located – the Port of Koper. While the positive effects of the Second Track project for the port are well known, the Mayor particularly stressed the importance of the new line for residents. In his words, the benefits for the local community will be even greater once the double-track connection to Koper is also built. "Removing what currently reduces the quality of life, namely the old track, and converting it into a bike path for both tourists and recreational users, reducing the risk of anything happening to our precious water source, and reducing the risk of wildfires – all of this means a significant improvement in quality of life for all those who currently live along the now somewhat outdated railway line."

The project is an exceptional European achievement

Jerneja Jug Jerše, Head of the European Commission Representation in Slovenia, emphasised that the project represents an exceptional achievement and clear proof of what can be accomplished when engineering expertise, determined will, and European funds come together. In her words, the European Commission supported the project because it is of great importance to the wider European region – as much as two-thirds of the cargo arriving at the Port of Koper is intended for countries in Central Europe.

"This project is an example of the effective integration of various financial instruments. Slovenia is one of the few Member States that managed to obtain the highest possible amount of support from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) – more than EUR 780 million in grants for mobility projects. In this way, the European Commission has demonstrated particular confidence in Slovenia."

An opportunity to gain references

The Second Track project has been exceptionally important, especially for construction and railway contractors, as they have gained valuable references that will help them secure new business both at home and abroad. Stojan Petrič, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Kolektor, pointed out the technical and organisational complexity of the project: "Based on extensive experience, Kolektor has gained references that lead me to believe we are the only Slovenian company in the Western Balkans capable of executing all projects in this region starting tomorrow."

He also highlighted one of the most important aspects that is often overlooked given the scale of the project – that this multi-year project was completed without any major accidents, which is an exceptional achievement in itself.

The Second Track will reduce the number of trucks on the roads by 6,000

Dušan Mes, Director General of Slovenian Railways (Slovenske železnice), spoke about how the Second Track represents a major step forward for the railways, both in terms of freight and passenger transport. Currently, approximately 100 trains depart from the Port of Koper each day. "With the new track, this cargo will double, meaning more than 200 trains per day and an additional 6,000 trucks moving from the roads to the railway," he says.

The Second Track will also significantly improve passenger traffic – travel time between Divača and Koper will be reduced by half an hour, daily commutes will be more comfortable, and at the same time, the long-term burden on the local environment will be reduced, as the new line largely bypasses populated areas. The greatest benefit, according to Mes, however, is safety. He recalled the 2019 train accident where several thousand litres of kerosene leaked, threatening the Rižana water source and underscoring the urgency of building the Second Track. "Once the additional track is built, the local population will be less burdened by trains passing by their homes, which solves key safety challenges in the long term," he pointed out.

A major challenge, well worth the effort

The work of the contractors was closely monitored by a supervising engineer throughout the construction. The engineer is responsible for supervising, approving, and managing the execution, as well as making numerous technical and contractual decisions. Marko Movrin from the company DRI Investment Management (DRI upravljanje investicij), who serves as the head of supervision on the project, stated that the challenges for the engineer would be as great as the project itself. "It was essential that we were able to properly manage all the unforeseen circumstances that arose during the project." He admitted that the project is technically and logistically demanding: "On this project, we certainly realised that success does not depend on an individual, but on the team and mutual cooperation. I must emphasise that my team and I are truly proud to participate in this project and that we have the support of management when difficult decisions need to be made."

The first train ride from Divača to Koper

The first trial run of the train between Divača and Koper marks an important milestone – it confirms that the railway line, which has been under construction for the past five years, is now operational.

Tjaša Potisk Ančimer

The first trial train ride was attended by some of the country's highest-ranking officials, representatives of the contracting authority and the engineering firm, as well as the directors of the companies that built this major infrastructure project. The photos show the participants of the first ride at the Divača train station, where a range of emotions can be seen on their faces: from anticipation and excitement to joy.

They travelled along the newly built railway line; through the windows of the test train, they could see locations that, until recently, had been construction sites with hundreds of workers. Views of tunnels, viaducts, and sections of the open track revealed the scale of the project and the effort invested in its realisation.

The words of those who experienced the ride on the new line were similar: the ride was exceptional and, at the same time, emotionally charged. They also agreed that something magnificent had been built from Divača to Koper – for the present and for future generations. As they got off the train, the participants expressed, above all, their satisfaction that the project is nearly complete. All stakeholders involved in the project followed the same goal – to construct the structures along the line as quickly as possible and to successfully lay and connect the tracks into a single entity, which enabled the first trial train ride, confirming the line's operational readiness, a key step towards its full launch.

The trial run was followed by a ceremonial event marking the operational readiness of the line between Divača and Koper and highlighting its importance for the country's development. Key project stakeholders addressed the gathered guests, emphasising the complexity of the construction, the collaboration of numerous experts, and the strategic value of the new railway connection.

The event concluded with a symbolic send-off for the trial train, which was given the go-ahead by Prime Minister Robert Golob, marking the beginning of a new chapter in the history of Slovenian rail transport – a chapter of greater capacity, reliability, and connectivity with the international community.


DIVAČA


znice A pri DRI Upravljanje investicij in
a projekt tira Diva – Koper

If Europe wants to achieve its environmental goals, it will have to create the conditions for as much freight transport as possible to shift to rail.

Dušan Mes
Director General, Slovenske železnice

The railway has a potential to become the backbone of logistics in the region

Tjaša Potisk Ančimer

Dušan Mes, Director General,
Slovenske železnice (Slovenian Railways)

The track between Divača and Koper became operational in March. You have always been of the opinion that the Second Track is urgently needed. How do Slovenian Railways assess this achievement?

We will undoubtedly gain a great deal from this track, and I am pleased that construction proceeded practically without any major complications and within the planned timeframe – and that we will have a modern rail connection in a relatively short time. It has been just under five years since construction began, and the track is now operational. Looking at the bigger picture, planning for the Second Track project began as early as the mid-1990s, while actual construction did not start until 2021. Various procedures and bureaucratic hurdles delayed the project by nearly a quarter of a century. To put it differently: we needed approximately 25 years for planning, but only five years for the implementation and construction of the project.

We may regret not having built it sooner, but at the same time we can be pleased that the project is finally being realised. The second track is vital for Slovenian logistics and essential if we are to maintain the competitiveness of one of the country's key economic pillars. The new track represents a significant leap forward – not only in terms of the volume of freight we will be able to transport, but also in terms of the quality of the infrastructure. It has been built to modern standards and is essential for the volumes of freight we currently transport to and from the Port of Koper.

What do these 27 kilometres mean for the future of the Slovenian railway system?

Certainly, this is a sign that the Slovenian railway network, which was somewhat neglected in recent decades compared to other infrastructure projects in the country, is finally developing. For us and for our passengers, it is very important that the new Divača-Koper track will very soon bring a significant reduction in travel times. The travel time for passenger trains on this section will be reduced by nearly half an hour. This will certainly make train travel from the Coast to Ljubljana and vice versa more attractive to passengers.

When it comes to logistics, increasing the capacity of the line is, of course, also crucial, as the existing single-track line has long since failed to meet actual needs, which limits throughput and hinders the growth of freight traffic.

There is also another aspect that is perhaps not mentioned often enough, yet is equally important: the bulk of the freight currently transported on the existing old track will be redirected to the new line. The current line runs through a very sensitive natural environment and also past residential areas, so the new infrastructure will also significantly contribute to reducing the burden on the area.

What concrete improvements in flow do you expect after the opening of the Second Track, once regular freight and passenger traffic begins to run on it?

To be very specific: with the new track, the capacity on this route will increase to 212 trains per day, which in practice means we will be able to transport approximately 28 to 30 million tons of freight annually. For comparison, today approximately half of that volume is transported on this route, meaning between 14 and 15 million tons of freight. If we look at what this means in terms of reducing road traffic, due to the additional freight we will be able to transport by rail, there will be 6,000 fewer trucks on the motorway.

Once the parallel track is built, the gains will be even greater. At that point, we could further relieve the existing track or use it for other purposes, and total capacity could increase to approximately 37 or even up to 40 million tons per year. This would be a major change compared to the current situation. Along with this, it would of course make it possible to introduce at the same time a significantly larger number of passenger trains. It therefore makes sense to complete the Second Track as soon as possible, as most of the structures are already in place for the double-track system.

How is Slovenian Railways preparing for the increase in capacity and growth in transport volume?

In the field of logistics, we wish to focus development primarily on the digitisation and automation of processes, and I believe that simultaneous investment in the modernisation of the rolling stock is also essential for this. In freight transport, we have therefore already invested approximately 150 million euros in the purchase of 30 multi-system electric locomotives, which the manufacturer is expected to deliver over the course of the next two years. This will allow us to improve service quality, reduce operating costs, and increase capacity, making it easier to adapt to changing conditions – which is crucial for competitiveness in an open market where multiple carriers operate today.

In recent years, Slovenian Railways has indeed invested heavily in modernising its rolling stock. To give a very concrete example: just five years ago, the average age of

passenger train sets was over 40 years; today, it is nearly half that. At the beginning of this month, the last ordered Stadler train set arrived in Slovenia, marking the completion of the delivery of all new diesel-powered train sets for regional transport. In total, we have purchased 72 new modern passenger train sets, while we are gradually phasing out the old ones. We also signed a contract in December for the purchase of 20 new passenger cars for international transport and four multi-system locomotives, thereby further strengthening the capacity and quality of cross-border connections.

At the same time, we are continuing to make significant investments in modernising the machinery used to maintain the public railway infrastructure. The total modernisation project is estimated at approximately 135 million euros. At the beginning of March, we signed contracts with our Italian partners for the delivery of 21 track maintenance vehicles, which will enable faster and more precise work on the railway network.

Do you believe that the Second Track will also help reduce traffic on Slovenian motorways?

Rail certainly has real potential to become the backbone of logistics in the region, but only with simultaneous investments in infrastructure, rolling stock, and better cross-border coordination. With the construction of the new Divača-Koper section, rail transport is becoming a more attractive option for both passengers and carriers, including in freight transport, so the Second Track will certainly contribute to the gradual shift of traffic from roads to rail.

Nevertheless, the long-term role of rail as the backbone of logistics will also depend to a large extent on broader European transport policy, particularly on whether Europe will actually create the conditions for shifting freight from roads to rail. If Europe wants to achieve its environmental goals, it will have to create the conditions for as much freight transport as possible to shift to rail. Without systemic measures to level the playing field between road and rail transport, rail will struggle to become fully competitive with roads, despite its obvious strategic potential. We must also bear in mind that, in the long term, it is cheaper and more sensible for the state to invest in an efficient railway than to solve the problems arising from increasingly congested roads.

The main partner for the railway works was the Slovenian company ŽGP, your subsidiary. How important is it for a Slovenian project that Slovenian companies participate in it, thereby gaining references for future projects?

The Second Track construction project is certainly further proof that in Slovenia, with domestic expertise, domestic engineers, and contractors, we are capable of carrying out large and highly demanding projects. I must say that I am also proud that the ŽGP team has once again demonstrated the extent of its expertise, and that we, after all, have truly exceptional personnel in our ranks with the experience to execute the most demanding railway projects. I also believe that ŽGP was a key partner that made a significant contribution to ensuring the Second Track was built so quickly and according to schedule. Of course, we also learned new things along the way, which I hope and believe will serve us well in other major development projects still ahead for the country.

ŽGP built the second track largely using technology that is relatively new in Slovenia – a slab track. What is the advantage of this track, and what benefits do you expect during the operational phase?

The system offers quite a few advantages. It is exceptionally safe and ensures long-term alignment stability of the track at relatively favourable construction costs and low maintenance costs. Since maintenance does not require extended track closures, we can ensure high frequencies of heavy freight trains and passenger trains, while also reducing noise levels. I should mention that ŽGP has already installed slab tracks, specifically years ago during the upgrade of the railway line on the Maribor-Pesnica section, which was approximately 2.5 kilometres long at the time. This time, we are building a much longer section. We chose the RHEDA 2000 system, which is among the most frequently used ballastless track systems in the world.

What other key projects are currently underway at Slovenian Railways?

Slovenia has recently been investing heavily in the renovation and expansion of the railway network. Not only on the coastal section of the network, but also on other sections of the public railway infrastructure, we are already witnessing significant upgrades that will substantially increase the capacity of the Slovenian railway network and the competitiveness of the Slovenian logistics route. The state is already well advanced with the double-tracking project to Kranj, and a new station is also being built in Jesenice, which will enable better traffic management and faster train exchanges with Austria.

Currently, one of the most exciting projects for us and the general public is the long-awaited construction of the new Ljubljana Passenger Centre. Right next to the new railway station, which is growing day by day and is expected to be completed this year, a new bus station will also be constructed – this is a project entirely of our own, that is, a project of Slovenian Railways. If procedures are not significantly extended, we expect the northern terminal of the new bus station in Ljubljana to be completed in 2028.

The capacity of the new passenger centre will be significantly greater than the present one, as the upgrade will practically double the traffic flow – approximately 1,000 trains per day will be able to pass through the hub. In other words: if the station has so far handled approximately 70,000 passengers per day, it will be able to handle around 150,000 in the future. It will be a modern railway terminal that will become the central hub of mobility in Slovenia.

The next step following the opening of the new Ljubljana Passenger Centre should, in my opinion, be to remove freight traffic from the heart of the capital as soon as possible. Ljubljana is, in fact, one of the few capital cities in Europe through which rail freight traffic still passes. From this perspective, re-establishing the bypass, or the so-called Tivoli Curve, is an important and sensible interim solution. It involves a relatively small investment that can improve traffic flow at the Ljubljana railway hub in a much shorter time – at least until the realisation of long-term, significantly more demanding infrastructure projects, such as the construction of a connection that would divert freight traffic toward Gorenjska via a junction near Brezovica.

How do you view the future of Slovenian Railways?

Very bright, no doubt! For several years in a row, our passenger traffic has seen growth in the number of passengers carried. Last year, for example, we even achieved the best results in the history of the independent state – 20.9 million passengers travelled with us, which is 25 percent more than the year before. This record number of passengers confirms that our trains are becoming an increasingly attractive choice for daily travel. This success is all the more remarkable when we consider that we achieved these records at a time when our work is hampered by numerous restrictions and track closures due to extensive infrastructure projects.

Freight transport is also performing well despite the decline in European industrial production, and Slovenian logistics continues to maintain its role as a key link between the northern Adriatic and Central Europe. I believe that with further investments in infrastructure, we will only strengthen this role in the future.

Final phase of the Second Track: systems for safe and reliable operation

The Second Track project is being implemented in three consecutive phases, lots. Lot 1 comprised the main construction works between Divača and Črni Kal, Lot 2 involved the construction of tunnels and viaducts from Črni Kal to Koper, and Lot 3 focuses on the construction of railway infrastructure and tunnel systems that enable safe and reliable operation of the line and effective emergency response. This is a critical phase, as without these systems in place, the line cannot operate.

Peter Pušnik

The company 2TDK selected the contractor for Lot 3 through a public tender, and the contract was signed in September 2023. The works include the construction of the superstructure (tracks), electrical and mechanical systems, the Črni Kal traction substation, three transformer stations, and cabling infrastructure. At the time of writing, the track facilities have already been completed, and test runs between Divača and Koper have already been conducted. Intensive work is currently underway on the installation of electrical and mechanical equipment along the entire Second Track route.

Approximately 85% of the line features a slab track, primarily in tunnels and on viaducts, while the remaining section consists of a conventional ballasted track.

Electrical and mechanical equipment, safety lighting, and ventilation

Electrical systems include the overhead contact line, power supply from the 110 kV grid, substations, lighting, video surveillance, communication systems, and SCADA (Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition). Mechanical systems primarily cover emergency tunnel ventilation and the ventilation of technical areas. Particular emphasis is placed on safety: emergency escape routes with illuminated handrails, public address systems, radio communications (ZARE, TETRA, GSM-R), and video surveillance enable rapid and effective response. All systems will be monitored from the traffic control centre in Postojna, where a dedicated tunnel control centre will be established. Communication networks are designed in such a way that

if one part of the system fails, the other systems continue to operate.

Forty-five transformer stations are planned for power supply, and the system is designed with two independent power sources. Key safety systems also feature uninterruptible power supply (UPS), allowing for at least 90 minutes of operation in the event of a complete power cut from the public grid.

Lighting is an important safety element: the tunnels are equipped with safety and emergency lighting systems that can be activated remotely or manually.

Ventilation is specifically designed for fire emergency situations – powerful fans in longer tunnels prevent the spread of smoke and enable safe evacuation. The longest tunnels (T1 and T2) are equipped with a central ventilation system, the first of its kind in Slovenia, placing us among countries with the highest standards of passenger safety.

In addition to safety ventilation, installations for ventilation, cooling, and heating of technical areas in transverse tubes and exterior transformer stations have also been installed in the tunnels.

Most of these systems are already in place on the section from Črni Kal to Koper, and equipment is also being installed in tunnels T1 and T2 on the first section. While the contact wire has not yet been installed on the overhead contact network, all contact wire supports in the tunnels and masts on the open track are in place. Tunnels are equipped with radiating cables for radio systems, power supply and lighting cables, and safety handrails with LED lighting along emergency escape routes, as well as video surveillance and communication systems. In technical areas, which are located in standalone structures along the open route or in transverse tubes, mechanical equipment for ventilation and air conditioning is installed along with the systems listed above.

Overhead contact line and signalling and safety equipment

The line is electrified at a voltage of 3 kV, with power supplied by existing substations (Divača and Dekani) and the new Črni Kal substation. The system enables power supply to passenger and freight trains in all combinations, including the operation of heavy freight trains (over 2,200 tonnes) under demanding conditions. The Črni Kal substation is a standalone facility already constructed on the T2 tunnel plateau at Črni Kal, powered by a 110 kV high-voltage transmission line. To connect to the transmission line, two transmission towers have been built, which are connected via a switchyard to a transformer and then to a rectifier group to provide 3 kV electrical voltage.

Signalling and safety equipment (ETCS) will also be installed, which increases the safety and capacity of the line and enables modern and reliable operation and management of rail traffic.

European requirements

The requirement for such complex tunnel equipment stems from European legislation, and the design follows established tunnel safety concepts and fire safety studies.

Lot 3 therefore does not merely consist of tracks, the overhead contact line and other railway systems for ensuring train traffic, but rather a comprehensive system that, in addition to infrastructure, includes all key technologies for safe operation, monitoring, and rescue operations in tunnels.

This is one of the most demanding phases of the project, positioning Slovenia among countries with highly developed and safe railway systems.

** This article has been prepared based on the article – Systems for Reliable and Safe Operation of the Second Track, published in the monograph 'The Second Track Project: The Divača-Koper Double-Track Line'.*

Track types on the Second Track

Given the characteristics of the new Divača-Koper track, the terrain configuration, and the numerous tunnels and viaducts, the decision was made early on in the design phase that most of the new track would be constructed as a slab track rather than a conventional ballasted track.

Marjan Zaletelj

The new track namely runs through seven tunnels and over three viaducts, which together account for as much as 85% of its length. These structures, with their concrete compositions, provide a suitable and stable foundation for a slab track system, which requires a firm and homogeneous base.

On the shorter sections at both ends of the line, where the new track connects to the existing railway network near Divača and Koper, the ballasted track system is used. The total length of these sections is approximately 2.7 kilometres – 2.1 kilometres at Divača and 0.6 kilometres at Koper. This system is well known within the Slovenian railway network and is frequently used in track renovations and upgrades.

About the slab track

The systematic development of slab tracks began in the 1960s and 70s, primarily in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. In Europe, the terms "Feste Fahrbahn" or "slab track" are used for this type of superstructure. Several different structural systems exist, including those with concrete sleepers on a load-bearing base, with monolithic precast elements, or with bi-blocks embedded into concrete.

In Slovenia, the slab track system was first used about fifteen years ago during the repair of the Križiški, Ležeški, and Jurgovski tunnels on the Ljubljana-Sežana line, and later during the construction of the Pekel Tunnel near Maribor. A distinctive feature of the slab track on the Second Track project is its length, as the track is constructed continuously over a length of approximately 23.2 kilometers, from the start ahead of the first tunnel at Divača to the plateau after the last tunnel on the Koper side.

The main advantages of this system are a long service life of over 60 years, lower maintenance costs, and fewer track closures required for maintenance work. Compared to the ballasted track system, however, the main disadvantages include more demanding repairs following extraordinary events, slower construction, and higher initial investment costs.

Design and selection of the structure

During the design phase, several of the most widely used European slab track systems were studied, including ÖBB PORR, RHEDA 2000, RAILTECH, Max Bögl, and EDILON SEDRA. Following technical analyses, the RHEDA 2000 and ÖBB PORR systems were shortlisted. The project documentation initially envisaged the ÖBB PORR system; however, the tender documentation allowed bidders to propose other suitable solutions.

The selected contractor for the "railway and tunnel systems" contract proposed the RHEDA 2000 system from the German manufacturer PCM RAILONE AG. Prior to approval, the contracting authority reviewed the technical documentation and obtained additional expert opinions from the designer and the experts at Deutsche Bahn. After all verifications, it was determined that the system met all the project's technical requirements. The RHEDA 2000 system is also the leader in terms of total installation length on European railways.

Implementation

Before work began on the route, test sections for the open track, tunnel, and viaduct were constructed at the construction depot in Dekani to verify the specific installation requirements. Work on the project began in November 2024 with the installation of the track in the T8 tunnel. The "top-down" method was used, where all track elements are placed on special stands before concreting, requiring millimetre precision in the positioning of the rails.

The final section of slab track, from the portal of the T2 Koper tunnel to the Gabrovica viaduct, was concreted in February 2026.

Noise and vibration mitigation system

In certain sections of the T1 and T8 tunnels, a noise and vibration mitigation system (MSS – Mass-Spring System) was also installed due to the proximity of residential areas. Measurements taken with the VibroScan device revealed that secondary noise limits could be exceeded at certain locations; therefore, a special polyurethane material of varying thickness was incorporated into the structure to reduce vibration transmission.

The RHEDA 2000 system is one of the most widely used slab track systems in Europe, particularly in Germany, where it was developed. In Slovenia, however, this system has been

installed for the first time on the new railway line from Divača to Koper.

** This article has been prepared based on the article – Track Types on the Second Track, published in the monograph 'The Second Track Project: The Divača–Koper Double-Track Line'.*

Preparatory activities for the construction of the Divača–Koper parallel left track in full swing

The project to construct the left parallel track on the Second Track Divača-Koper represents one of the key infrastructure investments for the further strengthening of the rail connection between the country's hinterland and the Port.

Matija Vižin

In 2025 and early 2026, preparatory activities for the project intensified significantly and entered an intensive phase of technical, organisational, and administrative preparation. This is a strategic continuation of the railway line upgrade, which, by establishing the parallel left track, will significantly increase capacity, safety, and reliability of traffic on this internationally significant corridor.

To date, geodetic surveying has been completed, and land acquisition procedures are proceeding intensively. These include appraisals, the preparation of offers, the conclusion of purchase and sale agreements, and other activities necessary to obtain documents granting the right to build.

A crucial segment of the preparatory works for the parallel left track is the preparation of project documentation, which is proceeding according to the confirmed timeline through regular weekly coordination meetings. The contracted designers, a partnership between ELEA iC, d. o. o. (lead partner), IRGO Consulting, d. o. o., and SŽ – Projektivno podjetje Ljubljana, d. d. (partners), along with nominated subcontractors, are preparing and coordinating the building permit documentation (DGD) in accordance with the scheduled timeline, conducting the environmental impact assessment with the corresponding Environmental Impact Assessment Report (PVO), and simultaneously preparing the content for the project for implementation (PZI). An integrated procedure for obtaining the building permit will be carried out for the parallel left-hand track project. The preliminary information procedure for the environmental impact assessment (EIA) has been completed. Documents are currently being prepared as part of the project for implementation, containing the information required to produce an environmental impact assessment (EIA), including a cross-border assessment due to the proximity of the border with Italy.

The complete project documentation is being prepared in a BIM environment, which enables improved coordination, real-time verification of technical solutions, and the reduction

in discrepancies. Simultaneously, technical specifications for construction are being prepared, reviewed, and coordinated; these define requirements, standards, materials, technological procedures, and control mechanisms, and serve as a key foundation for future tender documentation and the construction itself. Geological, geotechnical and hydrogeological (GGHG) surveys are currently being carried out on-site for design purposes.

A key advantage of the parallel left-track project is that preparatory activities are carried out in parallel with the construction of the right track, enabling the direct transfer of experience, proven solutions, and optimisations to the left track. This synergistic approach reduces risks, shortens response times, and improves the quality of execution in all phases of the project.

As part of the public procurement process to select a contractor for preparatory works, procedures are underway to select a BIM supervisor and to conduct a specialist review (review and audit) of the documentation for the building permit and for the project for implementation, which will ensure independent verification of the compliance of design solutions. The purpose of the specialist review is to enhance the quality and accuracy of design solutions and ensure the quality of the prepared project documentation, to ensure the accuracy of the estimated investment value, bills of quantities and quantity estimates, and to increase construction reliability and safety standards.

Within the scope of BIM process supervision, the BIM Supervisor must oversee the entire project during the design phase. This includes overseeing the entire BIM model and all other deliverables (input files for 4D/5D modelling, i.e., the schedule with linking criteria between building elements and activities, bill of quantities with linking criteria between components and items, etc.). The BIM Supervisor is responsible for the technical and substantive correctness of the entire BIM model.

As the construction of the left track will take place alongside the right track during its operational phase, the designer for the left track must prepare a detailed study on the technology and construction phasing. The train schedule on the adjacent right track will have to be taken into account in cases where short-term closures are necessary. Any potential partial or total closures will have to be notified three years in advance, as the second track will be an international line.

The tender for the main construction works will be announced after obtaining the integrated building permit and the preparation of the project for implementation documentation. This will enable the preparation of detailed technical requirements, bills of quantities, and all necessary grounds for contractor selection. Prior to the start of construction works, a public procurement procedure for archaeological surveys and excavations will have to be conducted in parallel with other activities to ensure the protection of cultural heritage along the route of the new railway line, the existence of which is known based on previously conducted archaeological surveys.

Public procurement procedures are conducted in accordance with the Public Procurement Act (ZJN 3), which includes announcements in the eJN system and on the TED portal, with bidders' questions addressed on an ongoing basis. The submission of bids is followed by expert assessments of qualifications, legal protection before the National Review Commission (DKOM), and the signing of contracts once the decisions become final.

Consulting services for the parallel left track are provided by DRI, d. o. o. These include consultancy services for land acquisitions (participation in geodetic surveys and land purchases), consultancy services for design (participation in all coordination with designers and all activities under the design contract), and consultancy services for the preparation of the public tender for the BIM supervisor (participation in the preparation of technical specifications with a committee member).

The overall progress confirms that the Divača-Koper left track project is entering a crucial phase of technical and organisational preparation. The real-time production of documentation, the BIM approach, technical specifications, and the transfer of experience from the right track are key elements for the successful execution of the upcoming main construction works for the parallel left track.

Amendment to the Investment Programme for the Divača-Koper Second Track project (NIP3)

In October 2025, the third amendment to the Investment Programme for the Divača-Koper Second Track project (NIP3) was prepared.

Ahac Kobal

NIP3 builds upon and updates the previous investment programme and its two amendments. The purpose of NIP3 was to provide an up-to-date and comprehensive overview of the development of the "Divača-Koper Second Track" project. The primary reasons for preparing NIP3 were the updating of traffic forecasts, a revised project implementation timeline, and changes in funding sources.

It had namely been established that the previous document, NIP2, contained outdated traffic forecast data that differed from actual or recent forecasts and the strategic documents of the Port of Koper. It was necessary to review and revise the cargo throughput forecasts and the modal split between road and rail, as these elements have a significant impact on the calculation of costs and benefits in the economic analysis. The results of the traffic analysis showed that 27.1 million tonnes of cargo would be transported on the section between Divača and Koper by 2060, which is substantially more than in the scenario involving the existing track (12.5 million tonnes). At the same time, the results indicated that without a double-track Divača-Koper line, the share of cargo transported by rail would decrease from the current 55% to 33% by 2060. This would negatively affect the motorway network in terms of both throughput and increased emissions. Under the double-track scenario, however, the expected share of rail freight in the future will be around 60%.

Another significant reason for NIP3 was the time delays in project implementation compared to the previous investment document, NIP2; under the new timeline, the project will be completed six months later, at the end of 2026. The key reasons for these delays include: the postponed completion of the Glinščica bridging structures; Karst phenomena and other geological and hydrological changes; the complexity of coordinating the simultaneous execution of works under multiple contracts; the deterioration of the financial standing of a foreign partner of the contractor on Sections 1 and 2; and the remediation of rockslides in the Glinščica Valley.

The third reason is new EU funds that the company received in 2025 through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) 2024 call, amounting to 156 million EUR. The acquired European grant represents a significant financial relief for the project and ensures the conditions for its high-quality, modern, and technologically advanced implementation. 2TDK thus secured 101 million EUR more in EU grant funding than had been projected in NIP2.

According to NIP3, the total investment value of the "Divača-Koper Second Track" project amounts to 1,074 million EUR (excluding VAT) at constant prices, or 1,109 million EUR (excluding VAT) at current prices.

The project is financed through a combination of various financial instruments, including the equity contribution of the Republic of Slovenia, EU grants, and bank loans. Nearly half of the financing comes from the state's contribution, amounting to 507 million EUR. Slovenia's initial capital contribution amounts to 400 million EUR, while additional capital will be provided through the collected toll mark-up, which is invested annually into the capital of 2TDK (107 million EUR). EU support totalling 362 million EUR covers various grants for investment projects in the transport sector. Most recently, the company successfully secured CEF 2024 grants totalling 156 million EUR. The remainder of the financing consists of loans and increased user fees during the construction period.

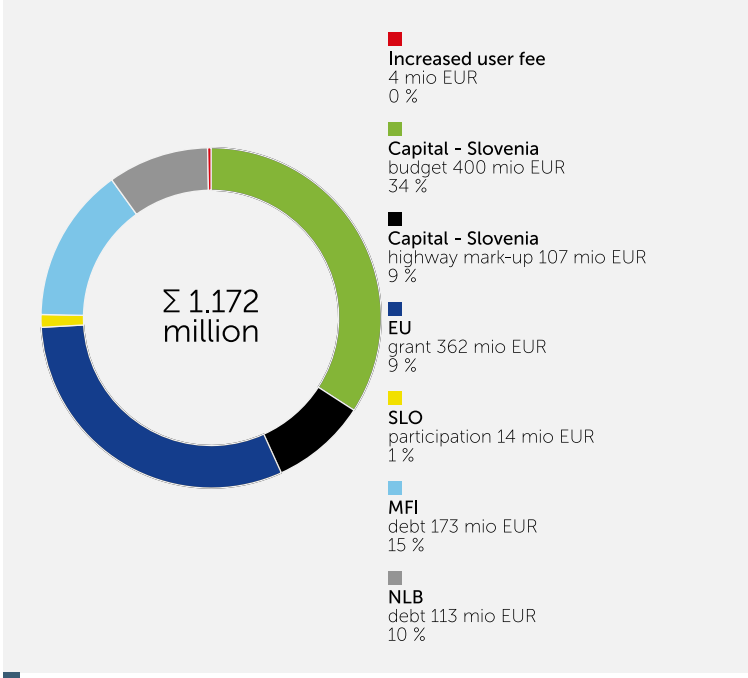


Figure: Sources of funding at current prices (in M€)
Source: KF Finance based on 2TDK data

The calculation of the economic net present value (ENPV) shows that the project is economically desirable, as it yields a positive economic net present value (ENPV) of 816 million EUR, an economic return rate of 10.23% and an economic benefit/cost ratio of 4.95.

The text above is based on NIP3, which is available at https://drugitir.si/en/important-documents.

Peter Pušnik

Project manager | 2TDK, Project Development Company

Peter Pušnik is a Bachelor of Electrical Engineering who has dedicated his entire professional career to the railway. As a student, he received a corporate scholarship from Slovenian Railways for the field of telecommunications, where he was subsequently employed for the next 18 years. His initial focus was on marketing available capacity, but his career path gradually led him closer to the core of the railway system – to planning, maintenance, and involvement in investments. He participated in numerous upgrades and major projects and rounded out his professional career as the telecommunications coordinator at the national level in Slovenia.

He joined 2TDK in September 2019, during the preparation of the project for implementation (PZI) documentation. This was a time when the foundations of the Second Track project were just being laid, while the first tenders were being prepared, in which he actively participated in numerous public procurement committees. In his own words: "It is a personal challenge for every railway worker to participate in the construction of a new line. This is a rare opportunity – in railways, you mostly renovate existing lines but rarely create something entirely new. When you're renovating, your work is more or less hidden, in the construction of a new railway line, however, the achievements are visible to everyone."

He began his career at 2TDK as an independent professional associate for signalling, safety, and telecommunications equipment, and in June 2025, he became the project manager for Lot 3. He took over Lot 3, which covers railway and tunnel systems, during the most intensive phase, when the tracks were being laid and the installation of electrical and mechanical equipment had begun. "As project manager, I have an overview of the big picture," he says, "and it is precisely this breadth that makes decisions easier, even though there is no shortage of challenges. We are building something new, where there are often no established rules."

Although the right-track project is nearing completion, he is not slowing down – quite the opposite. He looks ahead to the next chapter, the construction of the parallel left track, with optimism. He sees it as an opportunity to put the experience gained during years of intensive work into practice in a new form. "I find it important that the story doesn't end here. Together with my colleagues, we've gained invaluable experiences – from coordinating numerous contractors to collaborating with various stakeholders – and these will now form the foundation of our work moving forward."

Vanda Labović

Independent professional associate in the legal sector | 2TDK, Project Development Company

Vanda Labović began her career at the District Court in Ljubljana, where she worked on civil and commercial matters. After completing her legal traineeship and passing the bar exam, she accepted a position there, which gave her a solid foundation in the legal world. She completed her master's degree in the Netherlands and earned the internationally recognised LL.M. degree. As early as during her time working at the Court, she realised that she was most drawn to the field of construction, as commercial disputes often involved matters in this field. Joining 2TDK therefore seemed almost inevitable – as she herself puts it: "Who wouldn't want to be part of the country's largest construction project?"

In March 2018, she joined a small team at 2TDK, initially focusing primarily on tenders and public procurement legislation. She specialised in the field of FIDIC – internationally recognised standards for construction contracts that define rights, obligations, and procedures for large-scale projects – and obtained a certificate, becoming the company's sole FIDIC specialist. She was responsible for drafting the main construction contract for Section 1 and Section 2, which required her to reconcile FIDIC standards with Slovenian legislation. In 2024, at the Grand Public Procurement Congress in Portorož, she presented her experience with a large-scale tender for construction works, explaining the use of a two-phase procedure and the advantages and disadvantages of such an approach. "It means a great deal for me to be part of the largest infrastructure project in Slovenia and to be able to contribute to its development. I was most interested in the field of international construction contracts – experiencing this in practice has opened up a whole new perspective for me and provided me with invaluable experience," says Vanda Labović.

Today, her legal challenges primarily involve monitoring contracts and ensuring their compliance throughout the entire project cycle. "I am proud to have been involved in the project almost from the very beginning, to be able to follow every phase – from development to implementation and monitoring. Nothing is more satisfying than seeing how a project develops while also observing the growth of the company and its processes," she says, adding: "It's completely different when you prepare a tender and then, a few years later, see that everything has been built. It's a special feeling – incredibly fulfilling."

Mirko Perković

Category A train driver | SŽ – Železniško gradbeno podjetje Ljubljana, d. d.

When Mirko Perković, an electrical and mechanical engineer for railway vehicles and equipment, talks about his work, he speaks calmly, almost reserved – yet behind those words are more than four decades of experience on the railroad tracks. He began his career as a scholarship student at SŽ – ŽGP, after completing his education at the railway electrical and metalworking school in Šiška, where train drivers, traffic controllers, and other key roles in the railway system were trained. Today, following the European harmonisation of the profession, he holds the title of Category A Train Driver. The title may have changed, but his work remains tightly bound to the rails, the terrain, and construction.

"I have been doing this job for 41 years," he says. During that time, he has driven various track vehicles – from handcars for transporting materials and machines for track maintenance to ploughs used to smooth ballasted beds. He doesn't drive passenger trains, as that isn't part of his company's operations. His work world consists of worksites, ballast, rails, and the precision required by every phase of railway track construction and maintenance.

The handcar he is currently driving is not a small vehicle, as some might imagine. It is a heavy-duty motorized handcar that transports everything from rails to ballast. "In principle, my work is similar to that of train drivers," he says. However, he is never alone on the job – there are at least two people on the railcar, and on larger machines, such as tampers, crews consist of at least four members. All workers on the machine must be precisely coordinated, which is why training is a constant. He undergoes knowledge assessments every year: from signalling regulations to braking systems.

For him, the Divača-Koper Second Track project is something special. "Being involved in this project means a lot to me," says Mirko Perković without hesitation. "What's being built here is completely new infrastructure, and it will also mean a new level of ride quality. Once trains start running on this line, it will have a major impact on the economy, on logistics, and indeed on all systems in the country. The benefits will be felt in the development of the Port of Koper, as well as in the daily work of railway workers. The difference will be enormous," he emphasises.

He himself has already travelled the entire length of the Second track from Divača to Koper – multiple times. He knows nearly every part of the Slovenian railway system, having worked on all Slovenian railway lines with various machines. With the Second Track project, his long career is symbolically coming full circle, as he will soon meet the requirements for retirement. "Given my age, working on this project means even more to me. Here, I can put all the experience I've gained over my working career to use," concludes Mirko Perković.

Rudi Sever

Supervising engineer for GSM-R equipment | SŽ – Infrastruktura, d. o. o.

Rudi Sever, a telecommunications engineer at SŽ – Infrastruktura, has been involved with the railway for more than four decades. Employed at the railway since 1982, he currently works within the electrotechnical maintenance service, focusing on telecommunication systems. His work is currently also closely linked to one of the largest infrastructure projects in Slovenia – the new railway line between Divača and Koper.

In the Second Track project, Rudi Sever serves as the Supervising Engineer for the GSM-R system (Global System for Mobile Communications – Railway), which represents the core communication system of modern rail transport. The new equipment being installed on the Divača-Koper line is being integrated into the existing Slovenian Railways GSM-R network, built about ten years ago. Alongside this, a technological upgrade of certain parts of the existing system is underway, requiring precise coordination and expert collaboration between various teams.

A particular challenge in establishing the system is ensuring a reliable communication signal within the tunnels. For this purpose, radiating cable technology is used, enabling stable radio signal coverage even in demanding underground conditions. It is precisely these technological solutions that allow for the safe and efficient operation of modern railway infrastructure.

"The new Divača-Koper line has been designed according to the latest technical criteria and connects the Port of Koper with the inland railway network through challenging Karst terrain. In addition to extraordinary civil engineering structures and technological solutions, it consists of advanced technical systems dedicated to safety, orderly railway traffic, high line capacity, and passenger safety. The project represents a significant achievement of Slovenian engineering knowledge," emphasises Rudi Sever.

"Being part of this project brings me great joy, as we are building a line for future generations," Sever points out. In his work, however, Rudi Sever places particular emphasis on collaboration with experts from various fields, which brings new knowledge and a broader perspective on the construction of modern railway infrastructure.

In his own words: "The railway is more than just a system of tracks and equipment – it is the work of people who, with their knowledge and dedication, ensure that trains reach their destination safely every day."

Matic Novak

Site manager | Kolektor CPG, d. o. o.

Matic Novak, a Bachelor in Civil Engineering, began his career in 2014 and has been employed at Kolektor CPG since 2017, where he serves as Site Manager. His responsibilities include organising and managing the construction site, as well as coordinating the workforce, construction equipment, subcontractors, and materials. He ensures the quality of work execution in accordance with the project documentation, monitors costs and the schedule, and manages construction documentation, paying special attention to occupational health and safety.

On the Divača-Koper Second Track project, he is overseeing work on the section between Divača and Črni Kal, specifically on all structures outside the tunnels. As the primary operations manager on this part of the project, he vividly recalls the kick-off meeting, when he was made aware of the immense scale of the construction site. At first, he associated this scale mainly with the length of the route (15 km), but it soon became clear that the project's complexity far exceeded its linear dimensions.

"This is one of the most complex projects in Slovenia, as it integrates practically all key processes of modern construction," emphasises Matic Novak. Among the major challenges, he points out the comprehensive material management system – from raw material extraction, processing, and installation to waste management and reuse. Managing excavated material and implementing environmental measures, particularly regarding technological wastewater, was especially demanding.

According to Matic Novak, an important part of the project was also the production of aggregates for concrete, which were mostly produced from limestone extracted directly from the excavations along the route. "Despite the geological diversity and fluctuations in raw material quality, we managed to establish a stable process and ensure consistent material quality, despite limited disposal options," says Novak.

He credits his team with playing a key role in the successful implementation. "Without the flexibility of foremen, contractors, and heavy machinery operators (TGM), the project could not have proceeded so efficiently," he says. "The work required constant adaptation to the dynamics of the tunnelling operations – from the rapid installation of temporary portals in the initial phase to coordinating the final works with the intense activity and operations inside the tunnels," Novak emphasises.

It is precisely this need for constant coordination, rapid response, and operational efficiency that, in his view, is one of the key characteristics of the project, ranking it among the most demanding infrastructure projects in Slovenia.

Railway traffic operations between Divača and Koper

The Divača-Prešnica line was built as part of the Istrian Railway in 1876, while the line between the Prešnica junction and Koper was built in 1967 as an industrial track to serve the Port of Koper, with an annual capac-ity of 1.5 million net tonnes.

Mag. Klemen Ponikvar, B.Sc. Traff. Eng.
Ljubljana Transport Institute
(Prometni institut Ljubljana, d. o. o.)

The section has the characteristics of a mountain railway line with small curve radii and steep gradients. The maximum gradient of the track is 25.8‰, and the minimum curve radius is 250 metres. Trains between Koper and Divača climb a 536-metre elevation difference. On the Divača-Koper line, traffic is remotely controlled from the Postojna traffic control centre; the line is equipped with elec-tronic signaling and safety devices as well as ETCS and GSM-R. The electrified line (3 kV DC) is powered by six traction substations: Divača, Hrpelje-Kozina, Črnotiče, Rižana, Hrastovlje and Dekani. Due to the steep gra-dient of the line, approximately 80% of freight trains travelling in the Koper-Divača direction require two or three locomotives.

Between 1985 and 2025, freight traffic on the Divača-Koper line mostly saw growth, despite some tempo-rary declines. Overall, freight volume on the line has quadrupled from the mid-1980s to the present, rising from 3 million net tonnes to 12 million. The line's throughput capacity is currently 94 trains per day, and its utilisation rate has been exceptionally high over the past decade.

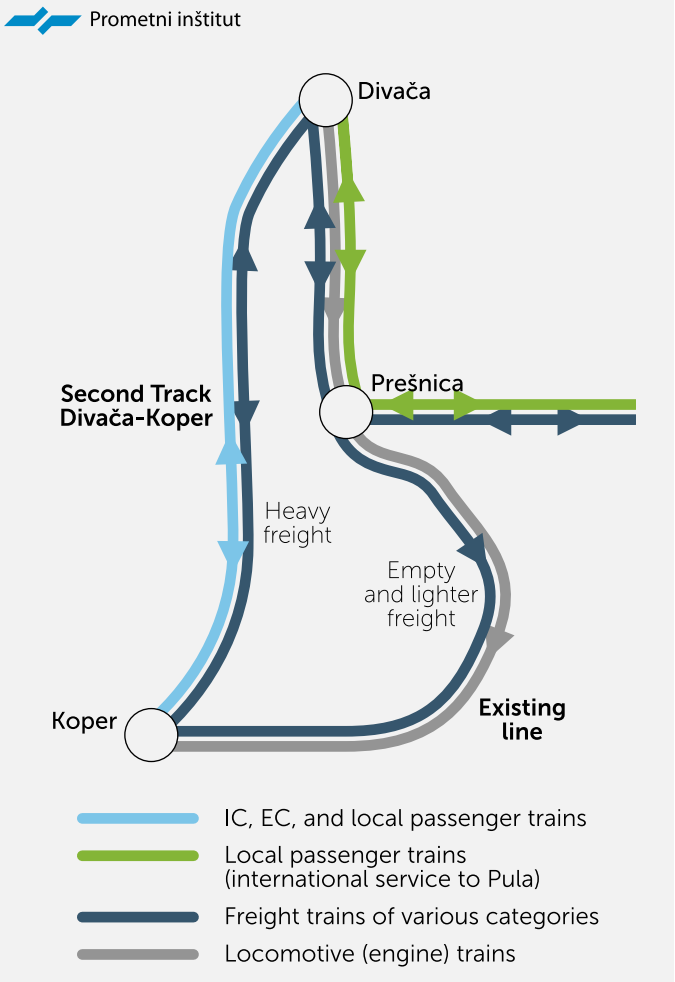
year	net tonnes (million)	total number of trains	capacity utilisation (%)
2014	11,04	30.631	100
2015	11,41	31.588	103
2016	11,77	31.115	102
2017	12,89	32.022	105
2018	12,64	31.232	102
2019	12,76	32.034	100
2020	11,29	28.290	89
2021	12,01	31.068	97
2022	12,38	32.284	101
2023	11,44	30.632	96
2024	11,18	30.414	95
2025	11,62	31.324	98

Utilisation of throughput capacity on the existing Divača-Koper line for the period 2014-2025

In 2025, 11.62 million net tonnes of freight were transport-ed by train between Divača and Koper, of which 72% was in the Koper-Divača direction and 28% in the opposite direc-tion. The average net weight of trains travelling from Koper to the hinterland was 740 tonnes, while in the opposite direc-tion it was only 320 tonnes.

The Second Track runs along a new route and in a different location than the existing line. The starting and terminal stations are Koper and Divača. The Koper-Divača section is more challenging, featuring a constant longitudinal gradient of 17‰. The new line will be 17.5 km shorter than the existing one, and in terms of gradient and track resistance, it will be comparable to the Kranj-Jesenice section. Once the Second Track is completed, there will be two single-track lines between Divača and Koper, each technically distinct. To ensure sufficient capacity for a system of two single-track lines, a new model of rail traffic organisation must be introduced.

- Existing line: Handles part of the freight traffic in the Divača-Koper direction. It carries empty and lighter freight trains, as well as locomotive trains returning to Koper. Passenger and freight trains run in both directions between Divača, Prešnica, and Buzet (HŽ).
- Second Track: Fully loaded heavy freight trains run on the new track in the Koper-Divača direction, as well as fully loaded trains in the Divača-Koper direction. All passenger trains (long-distance, local, in-ternational, etc.) also run on the Second Track, in both directions. An increase in the number of pas-senger trains is planned due to improved service and shorter travel times.



Operating model for trains on the two single-track lines Divača-Koper

To achieve the appropriate capacity of both single-track lines, rail traffic between Divača and Koper must be organised according to the following model:

- Priority passenger trains run on the Second Track in both directions;
- Local passenger trains run on both lines in both directions (the existing line primarily serving Pula);
- Heavy freight trains in the Koper-Divača direction run on the Second Track due to lower resistance;
- Empty and lighter freight trains in the Divača-Koper direction run on the existing track;
- Heavily loaded freight trains in the Divača-Koper direction generally run on the Second Track;
- Locomotive-hauled trains (resulting from coupling or uncoupling on the Second Track) generally re-turn from Divača to Koper on the existing track.

The total throughput capacity of both tracks between Divača and Koper is 212 trains/day, and the transport capacity is 36.9 million net tonnes/year. The combined capacity of both lines under the proposed opera-tional model is sufficient for an increased passenger service offer as well as further growth in freight traffic for the Port of Koper.

The existing Divača-Koper line will remain a bottleneck until the Second Track is handed over for operation. By diverting a larger share of trains to the Second Track, traffic on the existing line will be reduced by ap-proximately 55%. Discontinuing the existing line between the Prešnica junction and Dekani once the Sec-ond Track is operational is not yet acceptable from a capacity standpoint. To ensure the Second Track is uti-lised to the maximum extent possible, it will be necessary to further increase the capacity at the Koper Freight Station and in the Port of Koper, as well as on the Divača-Ljubljana hinterland rail link.

The Koper Fire Brigade and the Second Track project

The Second Track project is one of the largest infrastructure undertakings in Slovenia and, simultaneously, a significant challenge from the perspective of safety and the protection and rescue system. Long railway tunnels and large volumes of diverse freight require meticulous planning of intervention procedures, as well as adequate technical and personnel readiness.

Jan Brodar, Director – Commander
Koper Fire Brigade

The Koper Fire Brigade began systematically preparing for these new conditions as early as during the project planning phase. Our unit will play a key role in ensuring fire safety within the railway infrastructure.

A major step in this direction was the acquisition of a new road-rail fire engine, specifically designed for interventions on railway infrastructure and inside railway tunnels. In collaboration with the company 2TDK, we based this vehicle on a design already utilised by our colleagues from the Jesenice professional fire and rescue service unit. It allows travel both on roads and on railway tracks, which significantly improves access to the site of intervention, even on the most challenging sections of the route. This reduces response times and increases the safety of operations in an environment where working conditions can be very demanding due to limited space, smoke, and logistical constraints. The vehicle is equipped with specialised rescue and firefighting equipment tailored for this type of intervention.

The road-rail vehicle is already stationed at our unit, though it is currently awaiting registration. Before it is put into active service, we must undergo additional training in its operation in cooperation with the manufacturer. In terms of firefighting, the vehicle is similar to our other engines; however, its ability to drive on railway tracks is something we firefighters have not encountered before. We will therefore pay special attention to training for safe railing and driving on railway infrastructure.

New equipment and enhanced expertise make a significant contribution to the safety of railway infrastructure users. At the same time, they raise the operational level of our unit and the entire protection and rescue system in our area.

The Koper Fire Brigade is aware that modern infrastructure requires modern approaches to safety. With appropriate technical equipment, trained personnel, and ongoing cooperation with all stakeholders, we aim to ensure that the protection and rescue system in the area of the Second Track operates quickly, professionally, and effectively.

Tunnel engineering in modern railway projects

In recent decades, tunnel engineering has become one of the key directions in the development of modern construction and infrastructure.

Marko Movrin | DRI Investment Management (DRI Upravljanje investicij, d. o. o.)

Spatial constraints, environmental requirements, and the need for faster and more efficient transport connectivity increasingly dictate the construction of routes through tunnels. Today, these represent vital infrastructure assets that connect regions and enable the development of sustainable transport corridors, particularly in the field of railway infrastructure.

Europe faces significant spatial constraints, and many areas are also environmentally sensitive. Consequently, tunnels enable a reduction in surface impacts, route optimisation, and higher travel speeds. Advances in excavation technologies, support systems, and construction monitoring have significantly reduced risks, making it possible today to construct tunnels even in very challenging geological conditions.

Infrastructure projects are also underway in our neighbouring regions, where a large portion of the railway infrastructure will run through tunnels. Among the largest railway tunnel projects in our region, the Koralm Tunnel (33 km), the Semmering Base Tunnel (27 km), and the Brenner Base Tunnel (64 km) – which, upon completion, will be the longest railway tunnel in Europe – stand out.

The Koralm project represents a new high-speed rail link between Graz and Klagenfurt. The core of the project is a nearly 33-kilometre tunnel through the Koralpe massif, where the overburden exceeds 1,000 metres. Travel time between the two cities has been reduced to less than 45 minutes. The project is part of the European Baltic-Adriatic transport corridor and makes a significant contribution to shifting traffic from road to rail.

The Semmering Base Tunnel is 27.3 kilometres long and runs beneath the Semmering massif along one of the most challenging railway routes in Europe. Construction began in 2012 and is taking place in extremely heterogeneous geological conditions, as different rock formations alternate over short distances. Once completed, the tunnel will enable faster and more reliable connections between Vienna and Graz and increase rail transport capacity.

The largest railway project is the Brenner Base Tunnel, which, at 64 kilometres in length, will be the longest railway tunnel in Europe. It connects Innsbruck in Austria and Fortezzo in Italy and represents the central section of the Scandinavian-Mediterranean transport corridor. Along with improving transport connections, the project is also significant from an environmental perspective, as it will enable a significant reduction in road freight traffic across the Brenner Alpine Pass.

Compared to these projects, the Divača-Koper Second Track is smaller in scale but remains highly demanding from a geological perspective and in terms of the proportion of tunnel work. Approximately three-quarters of the line runs through tunnels in challenging Karst terrain. The project represents a significant infrastructural step forward for the development

of the Slovenian railway network and the logistics of the Port of Koper.

Modern tunnel engineering transcends traditional civil engineering and requires the collaboration of numerous disciplines. It is an interdisciplinary activity that combines geology, engineering, digitalisation, sustainability, and high safety standards.

Tunnels are constructed in confined spaces, making precise planning of excavation, material transport, ventilation, and safety systems crucial. Digital models, constant monitoring, and advanced excavation technologies are increasingly utilised in this process.

Today, tunnels are no longer merely technical solutions for traversing natural obstacles, but rather a key strategic element in the development of sustainable transport infrastructure. They enable better connectivity between regions, reduce environmental impacts, and form the foundation of modern railway corridors of the future.

** This article has been prepared based on the article – Tunnel Engineering as a Trend in Modern Construction, published in the monograph The Second Track Project: The Divača–Koper Double-Track Line.*

Challenges in land acquisition for the construction of the parallel left track

The company GEAS, d. o. o. was selected to manage the procedures for the "settlement of real estate property rights for the implementation of the parallel left track of the railway line on the Divača-Koper section."

Valerija Kotnik, Štefka Poljanec Murn | GEAS, d. o. o.

The land plots required for the construction of the left track are listed in the Decree amending the Decree on the National Location Plan for the Second Track of the Railway Line on the Divača-Koper Section, specifically in Paragraph 3 of Article 2, which covers areas in the cadastral municipalities of: Divača, Lokev, Plavje, Tinjan, Osp, Gabrovica, Rožar, Dekani.

Based on our many years of experience in land acquisition for infrastructure projects across Slovenia, a highly unregulated land ownership situation was expected in this part of the country, as active ownership management has been neglected due to population migration. Land

registry data revealed that several owners are unknown, deceased, living abroad, or are foreigners who do not understand the Slovenian language. To obtain the documents proving the right to build, several preliminary procedures must be conducted to acquire such evidence or to enable the delivery of a purchase offer to the owner.

While Paragraph 6 of Article 109 of the Spatial Management Act (ZUreP-3) taxatively lists other documents that allow construction based on a comprehensive permit (in addition to evidence according to regulations governing construction), Paragraph 7 further stipulates that after the conclusion of these procedures, the investor must acquire ownership or another in rem right on the real estate where the right to build was demonstrated. This means that if proof of an initiated probate proceeding was sufficient to obtain a building permit, it is necessary, upon the conclusion of such proceedings, to conclude an agreement with the heirs and transfer the land to the ownership of the Republic of Slovenia.

While the aforementioned legal framework does allow for other documents to serve as proof of the right to build, it is simultaneously necessary to conduct all procedures for resolving ownership so that a contract can be concluded with the known owners or so that the land passes into the ownership of the Republic of Slovenia by virtue of escheat. To consider an initiated probate proceeding as sufficient proof in cases of such unregulated land registry states, data on the property right holder must be sought. Data and documents concerning long-deceased owners (some of the last land registry entries date back to the 19th century) are often kept across multiple local offices, administrative units, and archives in Slovenia and abroad (e.g., birth in Slovenia, death abroad). Furthermore, entries in these documents are written in various languages (Italian, German, Latin); therefore, acquiring them requires a high degree of knowledge and experience. When filing a proposal to initiate probate proceedings, the unambiguous identity of the owner must be proven to the court. Documents are also frequently lost, and some archives were burned during the war.

Where death records are unavailable in official registries but can be proven through other documents that the court accepts as authentic, it is necessary to prepare and file petitions for confirmation of death, or to prepare motions for a declaration of death when information regarding the death of the property owner cannot be obtained or the death cannot be proven.

In the course of land acquisition procedures, we have found that the land of unknown and deceased owners is most often only addressed once procedures for the construction of infrastructure facilities begin. In some cases, it is discovered that probate proceedings were indeed conducted, but not all land plots were included in the inheritance decree, necessitating proposals for additional inheritance decrees. However, if the court finds that the deceased already disposed of the property during their lifetime (e.g., through a life-maintenance contract), these lands are not included in the estate.

Therefore, if the providers of maintenance do not submit the contracts to the land registry despite being requested to do so, the delivery of a purchase offer (and eventually a request for expropriation) is hindered. In cases where

the maintenance provider wishes to settle ownership and submits the contract to the financial office for certification, but is granted an instalment plan for tax payment, the contract is only certified by the financial office after the full tax amount is paid. In such cases, the delivery of a purchase offer is also impossible as the new owner has not yet been entered into the land registry.

A particular challenge is also posed by the inheritance of persons who died abroad on or after August 17, 2015. Pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 650/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of decisions and acceptance and enforcement of public instruments in matters of succession and on the creation of a European Certificate of Succession, Slovenian courts no longer have jurisdiction over the probate proceedings of these persons. Instead, jurisdiction lies with the courts of the Member State in which the deceased had their last habitual residence, and the law of that state applies. Heirs abroad are often unaware that the deceased also owned property in Slovenia or are not interested in settling ownership, and the State is not among those entitled to obtain a European Certificate of Succession to propose the settlement of land ownership on behalf of the heirs.

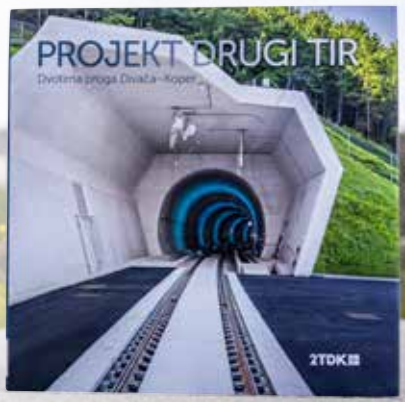
Another important aspect of land acquisition is also the appropriate approach towards landowners. The purchase of properties where the owners reside can trigger feelings of fear and resistance. For this reason, appropriate, respectful communication and a clear, understandable presentation of the procedures are crucial. Older owners often have an emotional attachment to the land, as the property represents stability and security for them.

The issues described above are only some of the challenges we face during land acquisition. We are successfully overcoming these challenges through our expertise, years of experience, and a thoughtful approach, in collaboration with our client 2TDK, d. o. o.

Regulated land ownership and up-to-date records significantly shorten the acquisition process. At the same time, regulated land records bring financial benefits to the State, such as revenue from the charge for the use of building land (NUSZ) and the consideration of assets when exercising rights to public funds. In cases where the estate passes into the ownership of the Republic of Slovenia through the aforementioned procedures, it enables the State to manage the land efficiently, including through sale, lease, rental, or exchange.

New monograph on the Second Track project published

Mag. Mateja Erčulj



In March, a new monograph entitled *The Second Track Project: The Divača-Koper Double-Track Line* was published; together with the first monograph on the Second Track Project, it provides a comprehensive presentation of one of the most important infrastructure projects in Slovenia.

Through text and rich visual material, the authors in both monographs trace the project's development – from initial plans and on-site challenges to construction solutions and the impact on regional development.

While the first monograph focused primarily on the construction aspect of the project, the second is conceived more broadly and, through the diverse perspectives of experts from various fields, presents the achievements of the Second Track as well as its challenges. The book concludes with a look toward the future and a presentation of the parallel left track. The aim of this book is to place the infrastructure project, currently the largest in Slovenia, within the context of space and time.

The publication of this second monograph marks an important milestone in documenting the Second Track project and provides valuable material for the professional community, students, and anyone interested in major infrastructure projects. The monograph is available on the website drugitir.si, under the Professional Literature section.

Cohesion in practice: students learn about the Second Track project and its financing

Tjaša Potisk Ančimer

In February, 2TDK hosted students from the Bežigrad Secondary Vocational and Technical School, who were interested in learning more about the Second Track project directly from the investor. The students are participants in the national School of Cohesion programme, where they explore the importance of European funds and major development projects for Slovenia.

The discussion focused on both the technical and financial aspects of the project. The students were interested in how the construction of one of the country's largest infrastructure projects is proceeding and what role grants from European funds, particularly the Cohesion Fund, play in this. The total value of all allocated European grants for the Second Track project to date amounts to 390 million euros. The company 2TDK has received 80 million euros from the Cohesion Fund for the construction of the Gabrovica and Vinjan viaducts and the Škofije Tunnel (T8).

During the discussion, the students also learned about the various challenges that can arise in such a large-scale project.

2TDK celebrates its 10th anniversary

Tjaša Potisk Ančimer

On 31 March, 2TDK marked a special milestone – 10 years of operation. A decade ago, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia established the project company with a clear vision for the development of the Second Track. Now, we are pleased to report that the project is in its final phase, and our gaze is already turned forward – toward the construction of the parallel left track.

The model of financing an infrastructure project through a project company represents a significant innovation in the practice of implementing investment projects in Slovenia, although it is already well-established abroad. The company was established with the aim of executing all key activities during the preparation and construction phases of the Second Track, as well as managing it for the duration of the concession agreement.

Through its work, expertise, and successful project management, 2TDK has already proven itself, as European institutions also cite the project's management as an example of best practice. We manage the project responsibly, transparently, and in close cooperation with domestic and international partners. On this occasion, we would like to thank all our colleagues and partners who, with their knowledge, dedication, and cooperation, are co-creating the story of one of the largest infrastructure projects in Slovenia.

The Divača-Koper Second Track as an example of responsible investment management

Mag. Mateja Erčulj

2TDK regularly participates in various professional conferences, meetings, and roundtables to discuss the challenges and management of the Divača-Koper Second Track project, as well as perspectives on the future of railway infrastructure.

In February, 2TDK's Director General Matej Oset attended a roundtable in Portorož titled "Investment Pressure 2030: How to Align Public Funds, the Economy, and Realistic Capacities", where he discussed Slovenia's future infrastructure challenges with representatives from the construction sector and state institutions. On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of 2TDK, Matej Oset highlighted the project's key challenges – ranging from the COVID-19 pandemic, administrative barriers and financial difficulties faced by contractors to geological surprises – and emphasised that the project is progressing steadily and within budget. The Second Track will allow for up to 212 trains per day, but further investments are essential for full utilisation, particularly on the high-speed line between Ljubljana and Maribor. In a discussion about record investments in railway infrastructure in recent years, Oset stated that this represents a clear turning point in the state's attitude toward railways. Increased investment means faster modernisation and an important signal to the economy that Slovenia is prioritising railway infrastructure.

At the Slovenian Engineering Day held in March, 2TDK Director Marko Brezigar presented the Divača-Koper Second Track project as an example of responsible management of a major infrastructure investment. The project strengthens the competitiveness of the Port of Koper, promotes the development of logistics, and contributes to reducing road traffic and minimising environmental impacts.

The entirety of the route is now connected by tracks. Construction was characterised by challenging Karst phenomena, large spans in tunnels, and landsliding in the Glinščica Valley, where appropriate solutions were developed in collaboration with experts. In addition, the project secured 101 million euros more in grant funding than expected, and audits confirmed the adequacy of its management.

Marko Brezigar emphasised that the project is becoming an internationally recognised example of best practice and an important source of knowledge for future infrastructure projects.

A documentary film showcasing the challenges and achievements of the Second Track project

Tjaša Potisk Ančimer

2TDK has produced a 50-minute documentary film about the Second Track project, which represents one of the largest and most technically demanding infrastructure projects in Slovenia. The film highlights three key aspects of the project: the revival of Slovenian engineering, the extraordinary scale of the construction, and the fact that the project remained within the financial framework set at the start of construction.

The documentary illustrates why the Second Track was built in the first place, how lengthy the procedures were before construction even began, and how the project designs were developed and ultimately implemented. It provides a comprehensive insight into a project that presented Slovenian engineering with invaluable challenges and opportunities, while at the same time telling a story of expertise, perseverance, and success. The film also offers a personal perspective on the project through the personal stories of those involved, bringing the viewer closer to the emotions, motivation, and experiences of the people who helped shape the project.

Director Aleš Žemlja and director of photography Saša Grmek have created a dynamic and visually rich record that combines interviews with key players, personal stories, and footage from the construction sites.

The documentary will be available on our YouTube channel, and given the project's significance, our company will strive to have it broadcast on national television as well.

European Court of Auditors confirms the Second Track project is on the right track

Tjaša Potisk Ančimer

The European Court of Auditors has concluded its audit related to the Divača-Koper Second Track project. The audit, which lasted six months, was completed without reservations.

An audit by the European Court of Auditors represents one of the highest standards of oversight regarding the expenditure of European funds and the implementation of major infrastructure projects. During the audit process, representatives of the ECA reviewed relevant documentation, including site-specific records, conducted site visits, and held several interviews with project stakeholders. The conclusion of the audit without reservations serves as a significant validation of proper project management and transparent, accountable conduct during its execution.

In the recent period alone, three external audit procedures have been conducted. In addition to the European Court of Auditors, a financial audit was carried out by the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), along with an audit by the Budget Supervision Office of the Republic of Slovenia. Despite months of documentation reviews, none of these institutions identified any irregularities in the operations of the company 2TDK or in the management of the Second Track project.

The results of these procedures further confirm that the Divača-Koper Second Track project is proceeding in accordance with the highest standards of oversight, transparency, and responsible management of public and European funds.

Intensified oversight at Second Track construction sites

Mag. Mateja Erčulj

In January, a meeting was held at the Sežana Police Station aimed at ensuring greater security at the construction sites of the Divača-Koper Second Track project, with a focus on preventing theft of materials and protecting property. This is because, particularly toward the end of 2025, some materials went missing from the construction sites, and the perpetrators have not been identified.

The meeting was attended by representatives of all police stations located along the Second Track route, as well as 2TDK and the contractor. The police presented their findings to date regarding the property crimes addressed so far, identified the key risks for their future occurrence, and coordinated measures to improve security in the construction site areas.

It was agreed at the meeting that the police would conduct intensified oversight of the Second Track construction sites, and the contractor would also increase surveillance. Consequently, increased patrolling will be visible in the vicinity of the Second Track construction sites in the future, and other preventive measures will also be implemented.

Delegation from Ukraine and Moldova on a study visit to Slovenia

Mag. Mateja Erčulj

The Second Track project, often cited by European institutions as an example of good practice, hosted a delegation in March consisting of representatives from relevant ministries and various institutions in the field of rail transport from Ukraine and Moldova. The delegation came to Slovenia for a study visit aimed at exchanging experiences in the field of rail transport.

The main purpose of the visit was to learn about Slovenia's experiences in the transposition and implementation of the European Union's legal framework in the field of railways. Aligning with European rules governing rail transport represents a major challenge for every country. This is precisely why Slovenia's experience as an EU Member State that has

already successfully completed this process is important for decision-makers from Ukraine and Moldova, which have begun a bilateral legislative review process.

The study visit, during which a delegation from Ukraine and Moldova met with numerous decision-makers and institutions in the field of rail transport, took place as part of the "Cooperation between Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine in the Transport Community" project, which aims to support the gradual integration of Ukraine and Moldova into the Transport Community and to strengthen their links with EU transport markets and the enlargement process.

We presented the Second Track project to the delegation and then visited the Škofije Tunnel (T8) together. During the presentation, special emphasis was placed on safety solutions, the construction of the slab track, and the implementation of modern railway systems.

2TDK at the MEGRA fair

Mag. Mateja Erčulj

This year, 2TDK was again participating in the 35th MEGRA International Fair for Construction, which was taking place in Gornja Radgona. This year's fair was focused on the future of living, highlighting digitalisation, automation, and the development of green, energy-efficient buildings, while also opening up new career opportunities. Special emphasis was placed on modular construction, advanced smart materials, and modern connected infrastructure. The fair represents an important opportunity to learn about the latest trends and technologies in the fields of construction, energy, public utilities, and crafts, as well as for professional education through accompanying consultations.

2TDK's participation in the fair allows it to present the Second Track construction project to experts and the public as one of Slovenia's key development projects and to highlight its role in shaping modern and sustainable transport infrastructure. At the same time, this is an opportunity to exchange knowledge, strengthen cooperation with domestic and foreign experts, and keep abreast of the latest trends in the fields of digitalisation, automation, and sustainable solutions in construction.

Visitors to the fair were mostly interested in the construction process, the individual phases of the project, and its benefits for railway infrastructure and Slovenian logistics. Namely, the Second Track significantly contributes to economic development, improved mobility, and a sustainable future for Slovenia.

View of the Glinščica Valley from the village of Jezero on the Italian side. Photo: Jošt Gantar.

Beka Landscape Park – natural and historical landmarks along the Glinščica Gorge

The park is situated on the border with Italy in the far western part of the Municipality of Hrpelje – Kozina. It encompasses the gorges of the Glinščica River and the Griža Stream and extends from the villages of Klanec, Ocizla, Beka, Mihele, and Nasirec on the Slovenian side, to the villages of Bottazzo (Botač), Draga, San Lorenzo (Jezero), San Antonio in Bosco (Boršt), Bagnoli della Rosandra (Boljunec), and San Dorligo della Valle (Dolina) in Italy, where it is protected as a national park. It was established in 1992.

Ester Mihalič | Municipality of Hrpelje – Kozina

Biodiversity

The park boasts exceptional biodiversity, flourishing under the influence of the river and the blending of marine and Karst microclimates. The fauna is diverse, with all families well represented. To date, 130 bird species have been recorded, of which approximately 70 are nesting species.

Numerous mammals can also be found here: roe deer, wild boar, red deer, hare, squirrel, dormouse, fox, hedgehog, shrew, lynx, badger, stoat, bats, and many other species.

The Glinščica Stream

Along its short course, the Glinščica Stream features one waterfall, approximately 40 metres high, which feeds water into an erosion base, thereby forming a small lake in shades ranging from green to azure blue. This is the first of twenty-one basins that follow one another along the short route from the waterfall to the village of Bagnoli della Rosandra (Boljunec).

A historically significant location

Throughout history, this area has been a vital transit zone between Trieste and the mainland. The region features the remains of prehistoric hillforts and a Roman aqueduct that supplied Trieste, the medieval pilgrimage church of St. Mary on the Rock, a salt route with a toll station, and more than 30 mills that once operated here. On the hill below Beka, archaeological remains of Lorencon (Vikumberg Castle), Tabor above Bottazzo, Mucha's Castle, and the remains of the Pungart fortress can be found.

The aqueduct was built by the Romans in the 2nd century B.C. It supplied the city of Trieste of that time with water from

A recreational trail runs along the former railway line between Kozina and Trieste. Photo: Jošt Gantar.

The cliffs in the Glinščica Valley offer more than 300 climbing routes. Photo: municipal archives.

the Glinščica Gorge and from springs in Crogole and Dolina. It is a simple structure in the form of a stone channel with side walls made of uniformly sized blocks, covered by an arch. It spanned a total of 17 kilometres and supplied Trieste with a flow of 5,800 cubic metres of water per day. Individual sections of the aqueduct have been preserved to this day.

The Church of St. Mary is a pilgrimage site, and many penitents made it their destination: it is recorded that anyone who cursed in public or used vulgar language had to climb barefoot to the little church of St. Mary on the Rock and seek forgiveness from the Virgin.

Along the Glinščica Stream and its tributaries, 32 mills once operated. The millers were skilled at carving millstones, while their wives were responsible for selling the flour, which they transported on donkeys' backs to the city and to more distant locations. Today, you can see the more or less preserved remains of four mills in Bottazzo, one below Draga, and four before the hamlet of Gornji Konec.

Perched on a steep rocky ledge stands the ancient Church of St. Mary at Peče. Photo: municipal archives.

Walking and cycling trails are now marked in the park

The Old Railway Trail – Leads from pristine nature straight into the heart of Trieste. Easy, suitable for anyone on foot or by bicycle.

TIGR Memorial Circular Trail – Starts in the centre of the village of Ocizla. Circular. A two-hour moderate walk. Yellow markers guide you past the Luza spring, mill ruins, a natural bridge with the Miško Cave, Maletova Cave with a waterfall, a cave entrance, and more.

The Friendship Trail

a) Bagnoli della Rosandra–Bottazzo–Beka: It was opened in 1981 at the initiative of cross-border residents. The route follows the ancient salt trail, which Carniolan merchants used for centuries to connect with the Trieste salt pans via Zaule (Žavlje). Legend has it that this is likely the path used by Slovenian literary hero Martin Krpan to smuggle salt from Istria on his mule.

b) Beka–Bottazzo–Beka circular route: It starts near the guardhouse in Beka, descends along a steeper, scenic path to Bottazzo, and returns via a gentler path to Beka, ending at the Church of St. Lawrence.

The Beka Trail takes you into the heart of the cave system, which is exceptionally attractive even from the surface. At Ociska Cave, it joins the TIGR Trail and returns to Beka via Jurjeva Cave. One and a half hours. Easy.

The Glinščica Valley also holds a special place among climbers. The valley's steep slopes have become very interesting even for the most experienced mountaineers, as certain sections are rated as high as grade 6 on the classic difficulty scale (or grade 8 on the UIAA scale), just a half-hour walk from the village. There are more than 250 maintained climbing routes in the valley, attracting numerous climbers from all over the world, as they are accessible even in winter.

As part of the Landscape Park, the Technical Museum of Water Pumps in Klanec pri Kozini is also operational. Tours are available by prior arrangement with the Municipality of Hrpelje – Kozina: 05 620 53 60, or obcina.hrpelje-kozina@hrpelje.si, or the Municipality of Hrpelje – Kozina on Facebook.

The Second Track as a strategic decision for the future of the Slovenian railway system

As Director General of the Directorate of Railways, Cableways, and Traffic Management, I view the Divača-Koper Second Track project as one of the most important development decisions in Slovenian transport policy. This is not merely about the construction of 27 kilometres of new railway track, approximately 20 kilometres of which run through tunnels, but rather a strategic investment in the long-term competitiveness of the Slovenian railway system.

Monika Pintar Mesarič, Director-General of the Directorate of Railways, Cableways and Traffic Management

The Divača-Koper line is part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and connects the Port of Koper with Central Europe. Its capacity directly impacts the competitiveness of the Port of Koper and Slovenia's position as a logistics hub. By eliminating one of the network's largest bottlenecks, we are increasing throughput, improving reliability, and strengthening the stability of supply chains across the broader European space.

This year marks the completion of the new single-track line, which in itself represents a significant step forward in the transportation sector. The new route enhances safety, improves technical parameters, and delivers significantly greater operational reliability. From the very beginning of construction, it was designed with the future in mind, as it is already being upgraded to a double-track system. This was an important and well-considered development direction adopted by Minister Alenka Bratušek in 2019. With the implementation of the double-track system, capacities on this route will be further increased. Instead of the current 98 trains per day or the 212 trains possible after the start of the new single-track operation, the double-track line will be able to handle as many as 252 trains daily.

The Second Track project also boasts the highest-level European technical standards. It is being implemented in accordance with technical specifications for interoperability and is prepared for the introduction of advanced signalling and safety systems. The digitisation of railway infrastructure is key to efficient traffic management, capacity optimisation, and greater safety. In doing so, Slovenia is not only following European guidelines but is actively contributing to the creation of a modern and interoperable railway network.

The Second Track project also holds special significance from a sustainability perspective. European transport policy encourages a shift of freight from road to rail, as rail transport is more energy-efficient and environmentally friendly. The increased capacity of the Divača-Koper line enables a higher share of rail transport, a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, and relief for the road network. The Second Track thus directly contributes to the achievement of the climate goals of Slovenia and the European Union.

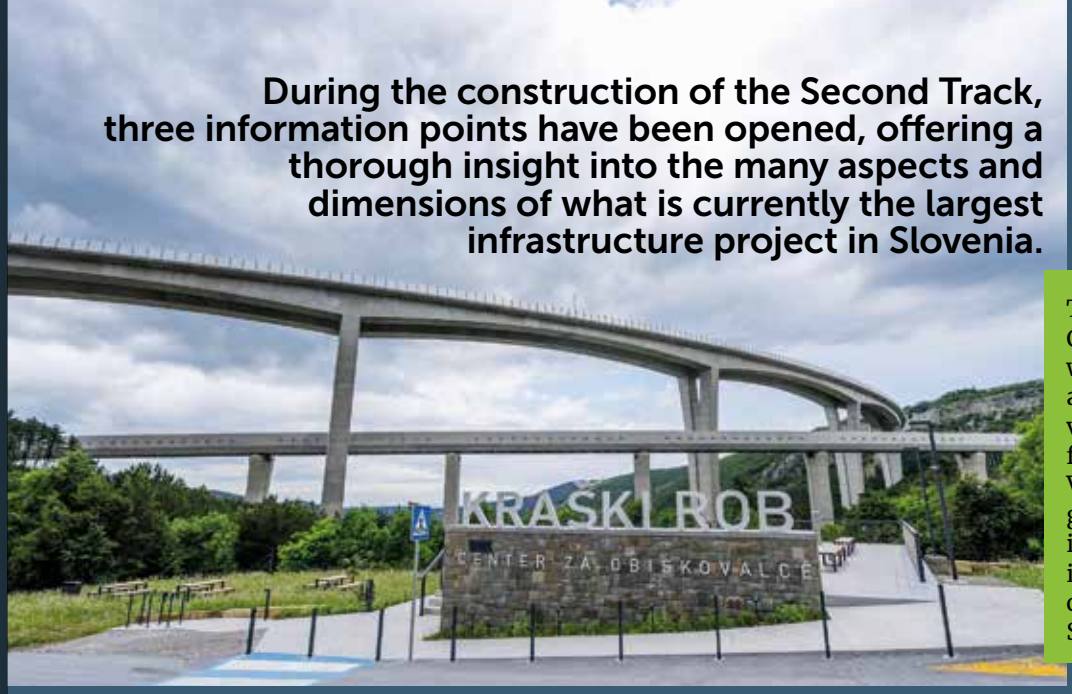
However, the completion of the Second Track does not mark the end of our development ambitions, but rather their beginning. Ahead of us lie further upgrades on key corridors, the elimination of remaining bottlenecks, and the strengthening of regional and international connections, with an emphasis on high-speed lines. The experience gained from this project serves as a valuable foundation for future investments and for the systematic development of railway infrastructure as the backbone of a sustainable transport system.

I am convinced that the Divača-Koper Second Track represents more than just an infrastructure project. Even today, we can see it as a symbol of a successful model of financing and construction, the swift resolution of numerous challenges, and, above all, responsible management. We have built a line that will shape traffic flows for decades to come and strengthen Slovenia's position within the European transport area.

The Second Track is synonymous with a successfully managed project, and at the same time, it is the foundation of a modern, powerful, and, in the long term, high-speed Slovenian railway infrastructure.

THREE INFORMATION POINTS OPENED!

During the construction of the Second Track, three information points have been opened, offering a thorough insight into the many aspects and dimensions of what is currently the largest infrastructure project in Slovenia.



The **Kraški rob** Visitor Centre welcomes visitors with its wide range of activities. It offers a variety of adrenaline-filled experiences using VR technology and VR goggles, as well as an interactive experience informing on the construction of the Second Track.

In **Divača**, near the former water tower, there is an open-air exhibition, accessible all year round.

An interactive exhibition has been set up at **Klanec near Kozina**, in the renovated former watchman facility next to the water pump building. Admission is free, upon prior arrangement. Please contact us at infotocka@2-tdk.si.

WELCOME!

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