



## Holiday time, travelling time, roadworks time

Permanent jams on the Tauernautobahn and roadworks with traffic jam potential make summer in Austria a real experience. It was only today that there was a warning of a jam on the Southeast ring road – 17 km because of roadworks between the Vienna city boundary and the Prater bridge. You would think that the holiday season would be a peaceful and relaxing period and that traffic and goods supply would tend to reach their destinations more punctually.

But think again! Because of the growing traffic level, together with the roadworks situation on Austrian roads, our traffic networks are also overloaded during the summer months in the meantime. The roadworks operators are not entirely without blame, by making decisions that are not feasible when coordinating their projects and programs. How could it happen, for example, that during the European Championships in Vienna, the potential jams were reduced in good time by providing targeted information to the population, although this is not possible in the case of roadworks (on the Southeast ring road)? On top of that, there is the fact that all diversion roads are all full of roadworks.

Either way, something must be done in order to alleviate the traffic situation in the long term, and not just during the summer months. Reasonable construction planning is but a marginal topic. What would be more important for the transport industry would be to give some thought to future alternative possibilities for the distribution of goods.

Alternatives that have been given much discussion are the release of 60 tonners or switching to rail or inland waterway transport. One thing is for certain: diverse traffic policy measures and the support of mass shipments using large modular trucks is not being supported, but rather the tendency for smaller shipments is being driven by increases in road tolls. A switch from road transport to rail is only possible in the short to medium term, since a 10% switch of the goods transported by truck would mean an increase in rail goods traffic amounting to 40%. Such an increase in volume is not feasible – given the present rail network infrastructure – and would require a massive extension of the rail transport network.

Opinions about the respective alternatives usually differ widely. What is of consequence at this point in time is, however, that something must be done before it is too late and we really experience the worst case traffic scenario. At this stage, I would like to pass the ball on to diverse research and development departments. Maybe traffic telematics can succeed in helping – or is it really time for us to actually make teleportation respectable?

Yours  
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