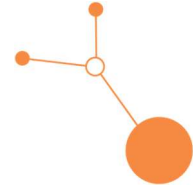


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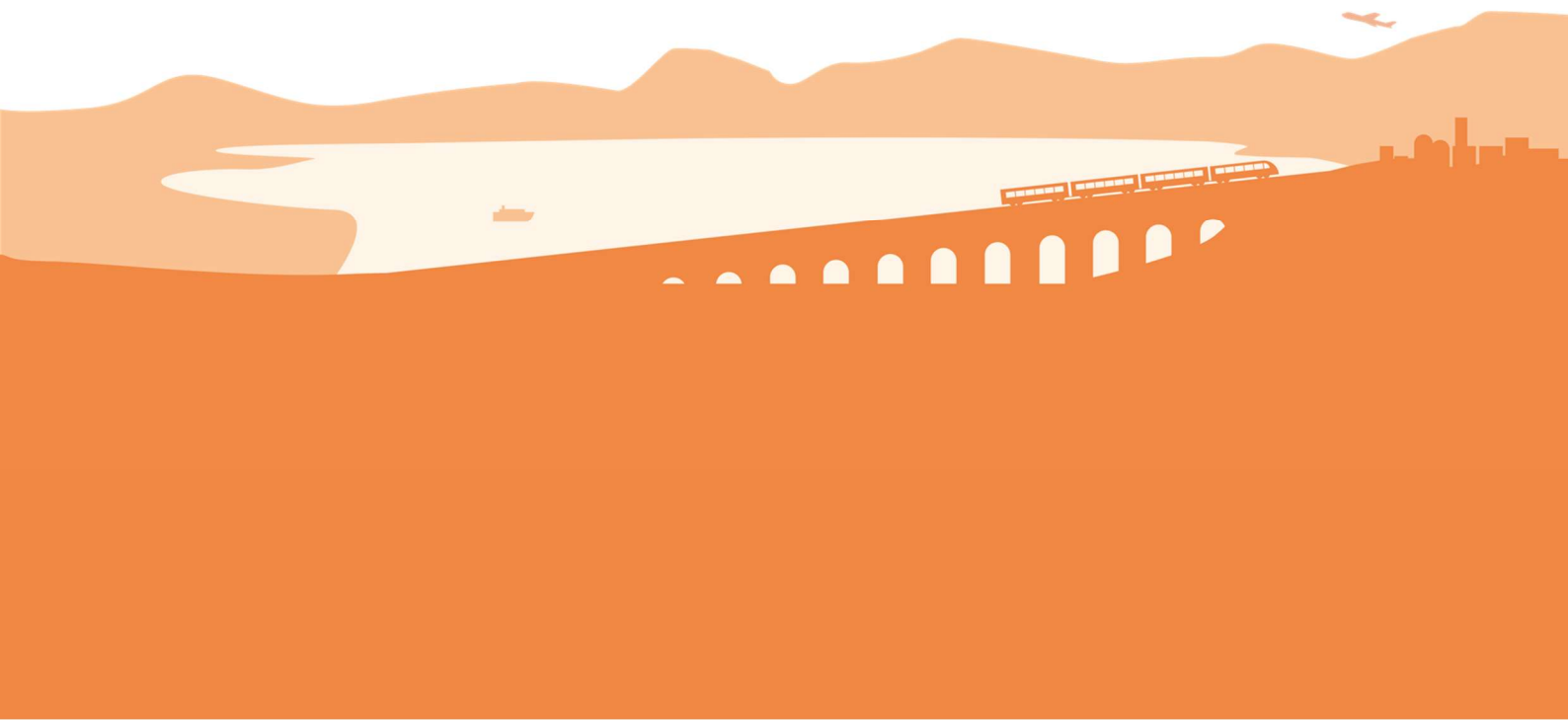
Rail4Regions

ACTION PLAN

Novara province, Italy



Final version
January 2026





A. General information

Partner Organization

- **Name of Partner Organization:** Province of Novara (Italy)
- **Region Covered:** Province of Novara and surrounding industrial area in the Piedmont Region

B. Regional context

Policy Application Processes

- How transport and spatial planning policies are currently applied in our region:

At the administrative level, transport planning in Italy is the responsibility of the regions. This is why decisions that affect the Province of Novara come from the Piedmont region. Two fundamental strategic documents define the framework of transport policies and territorial planning: the Regional Transport Plan, which concerns passenger traffic, and the Regional Logistics Plan, which concerns freight traffic. The Regional Transport Plan is implemented locally through Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (PUMS), while the Regional Logistics Plan is translated provincially by integrating regional strategies with the territory's specific needs. This involves adapting regional guidelines to local contexts by taking into account each province's infrastructure, productive activities, and territorial dynamics.

Territorial planning is also defined at Piedmont regional level on the basis of a regional policy law and developed at provincial and municipal levels through implementation documents. Planning is integrated with landscape and environmental protection regulations.

Transport and spatial planning actors

The main actors involved in transport and spatial planning in our region are:

- Piedmont Region
- Province of Novara (and other neighbouring Provinces' authorities)
- Municipality of Novara and other relevant municipalities in the provincial area
- Rete Ferroviaria Italiana (RFI)

The Piedmont Region is responsible for guiding, coordinating and financing interventions in the transport sector. In the area of territorial development, it has a general regulatory function with the force of law, including approving instruments proposed by subordinate bodies and supervising them.

As bodies covering vast areas, the provinces have an intermediate territorial planning function to ensure coordination between regulatory instruments at municipal level. They have no direct competence in transport matters.

Municipalities have a specific planning function in transport matters through the PUMS, and in land and environmental matters through the Municipal Master Plans.



These three levels are structured hierarchically in spatial planning, whereas a collaborative approach is pursued in transport matters to identify problems and solutions.

Rete Ferroviaria Italiana SpA (Gruppo Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane SpA) manages the national railway network and is responsible for planning maintenance, improvements and extensions to the infrastructure. This is based on the Programme Contract with the Italian State, as well as any other extraordinary intervention and financing plans decided by the Piedmont Region.

Besides, it is important to highlight the mechanisms driving collaboration among public and private actors (e.g., governance models, steering committees).

In the transport sector, Piedmont has a Regional Mobility Agency with operational functions in the territory. The agency focuses on passenger transport and, to a lesser extent, freight, benefiting from any infrastructure improvements primarily intended for citizens.

For logistics and freight transport, a Memorandum of Understanding exists between the three main north-western regions (Piedmont, Liguria and Lombardy). The Regions cooperate operationally through a 'steering committee' that analyses and plans measures to improve logistics and infrastructure in a coordinated manner. The 'cabina di regia' holds regular meetings and annual events involving both Rete Ferroviaria Italiana and private associations and operators in the logistics and production sectors.

For two decades, the industrialists' association Confindustria Piemonte has maintained the Piedmont Territorial Infrastructure Observatory, which monitors the implementation of infrastructure improvement projects (mainly transport-related) to enhance the competitiveness of Piedmont's economic system.

Key challenges: The planning objectives are primarily related to promoting the economic system and social welfare, beginning with transport infrastructure performance. Secondly, the aim is to reduce traffic on the roads and the resulting negative environmental and safety impacts by encouraging the transportation of goods by rail.

C. Adopted solutions

The Province of Novara has conducted a thorough analysis of the results produced by the four Working Groups that developed strategies to promote rail freight traffic. Two solutions were identified that realistically have a chance of being implemented across a large economic area centred on the Novara region and including other production centres that use the same logistics and transport infrastructure network.

The first solution is the Loading Points project, which focuses on creating a free-access online portal named RailHub Finder. This portal visualises existing loading points and displays rail networks, business locations and industrial areas. This tool is set to expand progressively to include further 'pins' representing active players in Central Europe and potentially the entire EU.

Branch and feeder lines: In Piedmont, specifically in the province of Novara, there are numerous minor rail links running through rural areas. These lines were suspended in recent decades due to insufficient profitability. The local strategy for inland areas, combined with the need to revitalise rail freight transport, is leading to the reactivation of some of these lines. Under certain conditions, they may once again prove useful. The aim is to make them more efficient and functional for passengers and logistics operators working in the area's numerous industries.

The Regional Logistics Plan includes two actions that align perfectly with the objectives of the RailHub Finder portal and RFI's investment plans for the Novara railway node, as desired by Rail4Regions.



- Action 28: Promoting the use of freight villages and terminals
- Action 50: Promoting modal transfer from road to rail for the transport of goods

As a strategic document guiding territorial planning, the Regional Plan does not directly allocate public investment to implement the actions. Instead, it establishes the framework within which the relevant authorities can make major investment decisions. In this regard, we would like to highlight some of the main investment projects currently capable of implementing the Logistics Plan. As a result of a public-private partnership, the design of a new intermodal terminal in Alessandria (approximately 50 km south of Novara, heading towards the coast) is in the initial phase. Meanwhile, some private investment programmes for the construction and enhancement of freight terminals are at a more advanced stage in Novara, on the initiative of Intermodaltrasporti, in Domodossola at the Domo2 yard, on the initiative of CargoBeamer, and then again near Asti (Ser Wax project) and finally near Cuneo, where the initiative is being carried out by RFI, that's to say through a public financing programme.

With regard to branch and feeder lines, the provinces of Novara and Verbano-Cusio-Ossola have a good distribution of freight stations throughout the territory. Only minor upgrading work on some sections of the lines is necessary to improve access to existing loading points. In view of the full realisation of the aforementioned Intermodaltrasporti terminal, work is underway to upgrade a section of about 4 km between Novara and Agognate along the line to Biella. This will involve forming a junction with signalling and electrification, and increasing the axle mass limit to category D4 in a second phase.

In order to improve freight traffic capacity on both the main and secondary lines, significant work is planned to reorganise the Novara railway node (to be discussed in detail in Section E). Some of this work can be prioritised to have a very positive impact on the local area and its inhabitants' quality of life.

In the southernmost part of the Piedmont region, work is underway to upgrade the Cuneo-Saluzzo-Savigliano secondary line, which has several privately connected freight yards that are already served by conventional freight traffic, such as grain, timber and paper. This line has not supported passenger traffic for many years due to significantly degraded tracks. Track upgrading works are currently ongoing, which will also improve the quality of freight transport.

These solutions address the region's specific transport challenges. The RailHub Finder has been created to simplify the identification of rail freight solutions and facilitate comparison with all-road solutions. Regular use of the portal, particularly if it is implemented across a wider geographical area, will highlight the advantages of rail solutions more clearly, such as reduced economic and environmental externalities, greater safety and reduced congestion on the roads. This is particularly important in highly industrialised areas such as the Po basin, which has a very high population density, making it even more important to reduce the social impact of freight transport than in other areas.

The role of loading points, which RailHub Finder highlights, becomes increasingly strategic and decisive the more goods that can be transported along European rail corridors. The infrastructure of the Novara area and its surroundings, with numerous highly efficient loading points, can facilitate modal shift. However, the real focus of investment projects in Piedmont is improving the accessibility of loading points and making more efficient use of branch and feeder lines to reduce the number of trucks on the roads.



D. Stakeholder Engagement

Throughout the Rail4Regions project, the Province of Novara could count on motivated stakeholders to support the various work phases, providing valuable suggestions and making their expertise available. This was evident during the initial analysis of significant case studies and, more notably, when it came to systematising the solutions devised by the working groups within the partnership and implementing this Action Plan.

The main channel of contact and exchange with stakeholders is the joint meetings held online. During these meetings, the public and private stakeholders who support the Province never fail to provide useful comments and suggestions on how to direct the work. There have also been ample opportunities for direct discussion with individual stakeholders, facilitated by the public nature of the Province itself and its regular institutional contacts with key bodies such as the Piedmont Region, responsible for territorial and transport planning, the Chamber of Commerce and associations representing business categories, all of which have the power to influence the organisation of the transport and logistics system.

In order to identify the most significant actions to be included in this document, the contribution of RFI (Rete Ferroviaria Italiana), a joint-stock company owned by the Italian State, was essential. RFI is specifically a wholly owned subsidiary of Ferrovie dello Stato Italiane, which is a public company. Therefore, despite being a private company, RFI has public ownership through its main shareholder, FS Italiane. In addition to actively participating in all Rail4Regions general stakeholder meetings, RFI also provided valuable input at further debates and conferences dedicated to transport organisation, in which the Province participated during the project. It is precisely thanks to the informal discussions held with Piedmont Region officials and RFI managers in such contexts that the groundwork was laid for a key action that will soon be implemented, which could bring valuable benefits to the organisation of the entire transport system in the Novara area.

Following, the list of key stakeholders consulted regularly during the project, especially in view of the preparation of the Action Plan:

- Piedmont Region
- Rete Ferroviaria Italiana
- Chamber of Commerce Monte Rosa Laghi Alto Piemonte
- Confartigianato Imprese Piemonte Orientale
- Intermodaltrasporti
- CIM
- Radici Group
- Marazzato Group



E. Proposed actions

Action #1: SUPPORT TO THE COMMUNICATION AND EXPLOITATION OF THE RAILHUB FINDER IN PIEDMONT

This action aims to provide continuity to the efforts to communicate the existence and features of the RailHub Finder across stakeholders and other subjects at local level.

Existence and utility of the RailHub Finder should be demonstrated also beyond the end of the project to keep it alive thanks to the sustained interest and use by shippers and land planners. Extended demonstration of the RHF is intended to ensure that it is updated also beyond the end of the project and that it becomes a lasting reference point.

The action is based on the availability of the RailHub Finder, on the presence of updated local information and on the possibility to update it offered to select local stakeholders.

The action naturally follows the participation of the Province of Novara to the Working Group on Loading Points. It consists of going on spreading the information and participating to suitable events to disseminate the availability of the platform to local stakeholders also after the end of Rail4Regions project, showing the functionalities of the RailHub Finder and which analyses it makes possible.

The targets of the action are local shippers that may therefore appreciate the vicinity of suitable loading points and transport services to their plants as well as regional, provincial and municipal spatial planners who have an interest understanding the wider picture of the economic system.

A regional challenge that the RailHub Finder helps alleviate is the appreciation of the services and loading points available on the regional area. Piedmont is rich in railway lines and loading points such as Novara, Agognate, Domodossola and others nearby, but understanding of services available among shippers is limited, as directly experienced during the initial part of the Rail4Regions implementation. On the other hand, intermodal transport operators often have plans or options for intermodal services but lack the critical mass or the return loads and their commercial actions do not always reach the possible shippers. Giving shippers the visibility of loading points and of the destinations served directly or indirectly from those may therefore facilitate the collection of the critical mass to set up intermodal train services or the completion of the loads of train services, making them more economically sustainable in the long terms, widening the rail offer and effectively shifting goods transport from road to rail.

- The multi-level public planning framework relevant to this action covers:

European Level:

Regulation (EU) 2024/1679 TEN-T Guidelines; Combined Transport Directive (Directive 92/106/EEC)

National Level:

Ferrobonus years 2023-2026 (ferrobonus is a contribution towards the cost of intermodal transport that intermodal transport providers receive from the State and have to pass on to customers as a reduction of the transport price).

Alongside “Ferrobonus”, there is an additional national incentive called “Norma Merci”, which is disbursed through the rail infrastructure manager (RFI). This measure is administered together with



the collection of track access charges. Originally introduced in 2015 to compensate infrastructure access costs in Southern Regions, it was later extended nationwide in 2016.

The scheme provides for two distance-based coefficients: a fixed amount of €1.30 per train-km for services to/from the South (increased to €1.83 in case of ferry operations), and a variable coefficient based on environmental savings across the entire national territory (up to €2.50 per train-km).

This measure is currently authorized until 2027, with a maximum funding allocation of €100 million per year.

Regional Level:

Regional Masterplan on Mobility and Transport (Piano Regionale della Mobilità e dei Trasporti, PRMT) and Regional Masterplan on Logistics (Piano regionale della Logistica PrLog) of the Piedmont Region; Regional contribution to the ferrobonus (Piedmont -as well as other Italian Regions- add to the State incentives called ferrobonus -see above- by topping it up in proportion to the train-km travelled on their territory).

- The private planning framework relevant to this action, covering identified private sector strategies or standards that influence regional transport or spatial planning:

The action is relevant to a multitude of actors that collectively may be interested in intermodal transport due to convenience and/or company policies and/customer requests. In this context the availability of the information provided by the RHF may be useful in defining the most effective cargo flows or in supporting location decisions of private companies.

By promising to provide a reliable source of information, the RHF has already been noted as an interesting project by some stakeholders such as the Piedmont Region and Confartigianato that are following its development. For instance, Confartigianato -the association of craft enterprises- of the Novara area has indicated the possibility to promote the RHF as part of the events for their associates. This is a promising channel since the Confartigianato umbrella covers companies that transport large amounts of goods in bulk, and has already been rewarding when the focus was on looking for case studies. The shippers belonging to this organisation may also want to be noted as part of areas originating goods: this would open possibilities for commercial action by transport companies that ultimately would result in shifting transport onto rail, if this alternative is sufficiently interesting. Therefore, the strategies of these private actors and their association will align with the public strategy to sustain the RHF as a means to support shift of transport to rail.

- Activities:

- Preparation of a re-usable presentation illustrating the features of the RHF with a focus on the Piemonte area and showing how the RHF can be queried
- Participation to local events organised and/or attended by private shippers, representatives of shippers' associations, local public administrations and delivery of the presentation on the RHF
- Involvement of stakeholders -particularly transport service providers- in updating the information on the RHF and pointing it out as a reference to shippers
- Involvement of stakeholders - especially shippers managing directly their logistics, at least in part - in using the RHF to source alternative logistics offers

- Responsible Actors:

- Province of Novara
- Piedmont Region



- Chamber of Commerce Monte Rosa Laghi Alto Piemonte
- Confartigianato Novara (the province of Novara branch of the association of craft enterprises, that covers also the Piedmontese area north of the province of Novara)

- Challenges and Requirements

Political:

Stakeholders' support will be sought by sustaining the contacts with the local associations of shippers and by delivering an initial presentation to the relevant services of Piedmont Region, who will have the possibility to take up the update of the RHF for the North-West Italy.

Financial:

This is an action relying on staff time by the Province and on staff time by the stakeholders involved. Efforts will be moderate and stakeholders such as Confartigianato already allows for staff time dedicated to facilitating discussions and networking development among associates.

- Financing Resources:

Funding would come from the Province of Novara in the form of staff time, related to attendance of events.

Additionally, stakeholders willing to contribute to the activities to widen the dissemination and the updating of the RHF may contribute with own staff time and possibly limited monies to circulate promotional materials about the RHF.

- Timeframe:

Start Date: 01/2026 (last month of implementation of the project).

End Date: 02/2027 (it is assumed that the events occurring during the first year after the end of the project are sufficient to reach local stakeholders).

- Risks and Mitigation:

- Risk: limited or no event where to present the RHF. Mitigation: this risk will be mitigated by relying on the set of events regularly set up by the associations of stakeholders that have expressed interest in Rail4Regions during the project's lifespan.
- Risk: lack of potential beneficiaries even after the presentation. Mitigation: the presentation will be designed with the practical needs of the stakeholders in mind including a demonstration of which are the practical uses of the data that may be obtained by using the RHF and the fact that they are sufficiently recent.
- Risk: limited or no staff availability to carry out the action. Mitigation: the action requires very limited staff effort since it will be based on a pre-designed presentation that can be re-used on various occasions.



▪ Action #2: REORGANIZATION OF NOVARA RAIL HUB FOR A HIGHER PERFORMANCE IN FREIGHT TRAFFIC

The action is centred on an investment programme conducted by the National Railway Infrastructure Manager RFI (Rete Ferroviaria Italiana SpA). It aims to resolve a bottleneck due to the interference between different traffic flows and categories, which currently penalizes the capacity of the important railway hub of Novara, located at one of the intersections between the Rhine-Alpine Core Freight Corridor and the Mediterranean Core Freight Corridor.

Novara is a primary hub for rail freight traffic in Italy, as main railways converge on it from the north (both Simplon and Gotthard axis through Switzerland and northern Europe countries), from the south (lines to ports of Genoa, Savona, La Spezia, and to southern Italy on both Tyrrhenian and Adriatic sides), from the east (hubs in Milan, Verona, Padua, Trieste, and to eastern Europe countries), and from the west (hub in Turin and the line through Frejus tunnel to France and further western countries (waiting for the base tunnel of Moncenisio)). Also, a couple of feeder lines enter the node, serving a siding and an intermodal terminal, while directly connected to the Novara Boschetto shunting yard we have 3 intermodal terminals, one maintenance facility for locomotives and by now one industrial siding.

The extensive and long-term plan for the reorganization of the railway facilities in the hub, developed and implemented by RFI, includes several domains of operation, with targets scaled over time and with significant differences in costs and impacts on existing infrastructures.

The bottleneck domains can be described as follows:

1. **Problem:** the freight trains from the north can reach the marshalling yard Novara Boschetto only after crossing a part of the urban settlements with several road crossings (noise pollution, lower quality of life) and entering the yard from south. As most trains must have a stop in Novara for operational reasons, this means that the locomotive must be repositioned from one end of the train to the other, wasting time and increasing costs.

Planned solution: building a new stretch of railway from the node Novara Vignale to a new entrance on the northern part of Novara Boschetto. The track running in the urban settlement shall be used only by local passenger services. The transit time of trains from Vignale to the shunting yard shall be significantly reduced and the capacity increased. Trains intended to continue south, east or west will be enabled to simply cross the yard and be routed on peripheral tracks of Novara main station: for instance, trains to/from the intermodal terminal in Agognate (located on feeder line Novara-Biella within the extended area of Novara) shall be able to reach the terminal seamlessly, saving about one hour compared to the current situation. Road works are also planned to eliminate interferences north of Novara station and increase the regularity of rail freight traffic.



2. Problem: current length of the tracks for receiving trains in the Novara Boschetto yard is mostly under the required standard for TEN-T European network of 750 meters. This penalises the efficiency and competitiveness of the rail mode against the road.

Planned solution: The Novara Boschetto yard shall be redesigned not only for the new entrance from the north, but also to extend as many tracks as possible to the required length. A first group of tracks are meant to be ready within 2027, matching the opening to service of the new base tunnel “Terzo Valico” from Genoa to the river Po plains.

3. Problem: the intermodal terminal recently opened in Agognate, connected within the Novara hub on the first stretch of feeder line Novara-Biella, can still be reached only using diesel traction units for the last mile from Novara Boschetto, with reduced efficiency and increases costs and pollution compared to a possible all-electric operation. More than this, the longer stop of the trains in Novara Boschetto reduces the general capacity of the shunting yard.

Planned solution: the stretch of line between Novara and Agognate is being equipped with electrical feeding. Works are ongoing (started in 2024) and their end is foreseen in early 2026 after final checks and authorization by national safety bodies. Operations without changing the locomotive in Novara Boschetto shall consent a direct pass-through of the trains or at least a short stop, making the track in the yard free for further trains to be received.

4. Problem: routing of the trains from Novara Boschetto to the south (line to Mortara-Alessandria-Genoa) needs crossing the tracks Novara-Milano on the west end of the station. These tracks are used by frequent passenger services related to the regional service of Milano, so that the interference of freight trains and passenger services brings problems of capacity and regularity of both traffic flows.



Planned solution: studies were made for a by-pass link to connect (likely underground) the line from Mortara to the Boschetto yard, or to the Vignale node only to advantage the pass-through traffic of Ligurian ports bound for northern Europe. A specific solution has not yet been selected by now, because this project is merely a working hypothesis and, as such, there is no adequate financial coverage in place for its potential implementation.

- The multi-level public planning framework relevant to this action covers:

European Level:

Green Deal EU, TEN-T Corridor North Sea-Alpine, European Railway Agency ERA

National Level:

State financing plans for railways upgrading (Programme Contracts), Rail network Manager RFI
Technical Regulations

- Activities:

- Feasibility studies
- Planning
- Search for funding
- Executive projects
- Works assignment and realization
- Works direction (all tasks carried out by RFI and State offices)

- Responsible Actors:

- Rete Ferroviaria Italiana SpA
- Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport
- Ministry of Finance

- Challenges and Requirements:

Political:

The Italian Government is responsible for allocating times and funds to support the implementation of the mentioned solutions

Environmental:

Authorization procedures carried out by RFI

Financial:

This matter depends on the agreements included in the Programme Contract between the Italian State and RFI for the upgrading of the railway network

Regulatory:

Authorization procedures carried out by RFI

- Financing Resources:

Bottleneck 1: a first step relating to the interventions compatible with the planned financial coverage of € 83.1 million (now available € 6 million) for elimination of the Level Crossings and construction of a 750 m module precedence track in Vignale and the first phase of the Boschetto yard new design on the current Control Installations; a second step for about € 110 million, including the remaining unfunded interventions (Vignale-Boschetto rail freight link and Boschetto new design with new Control Installations based on computer). Funds are and will be provided by the Italian State, mainly in the frame of the “Programme Agreement” already signed with RFI for upgrading works on the network.



Bottleneck 2: a first urgent intervention package for the extension of some tracks in Novara Boschetto has been defined, funded with € 12,7 million currently available and provided by the Italian State.

Bottleneck 3: the action is fully funded with € 3,2 million provided by the Italian State in the frame of the “Programme Agreement” already signed with RFI for upgrading works on the network. The private owner of the intermodal terminal in Agognate is going to complete the work inside its property, by electrification of 2 tracks 700 meters long funded on its own.

Bottleneck 4: the solution is still to be defined and there is still no indication about the funding sources. However, should the intention to complete this work be confirmed in the coming years, funding would come entirely from the Italian state, in line with the programme agreement in place with RFI. A rough estimate marked an amount of about € 392,5 million.

- **Timeframe:**

Bottleneck 1: project ongoing, funding not fully available, date for end not estimable

Bottleneck 2: project ongoing, first phase end estimated in 2027

Bottleneck 3: works ongoing, end estimated 1st quarter 2026

Bottleneck 4: solution undefined, dates for start and end not yet estimable.

- **Risks and Mitigation:**

Risks: uncertainty in timing of funding availability; uncertainty in timing for environmental permissions; delays in final authorization for the operations.

Mitigation: no mitigation action possible in these matters

F. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring Mechanism

In the short period before the partners conclude the Rail4Regions project and afterwards, the Province of Novara, as a public body covering a large area, will maintain a high level of attention on the implementation steps of the actions described herein. In particular, institutional dialogue with stakeholders and other public and private entities capable of promoting the dissemination of the RailHub Finder and the realisation of works planned by RFI on the Novara railway node will be maintained and, if possible, expanded. Although it is no longer responsible for transport management, the Province is in a position to interact with all the bodies involved in managing the territory in various ways. Monitoring will therefore be necessary to guarantee the future sustainability of the solutions developed within the framework of Rail4Regions activities.

In the case of the RailHub Finder portal, the Province of Novara will also be involved in activities aimed at promoting the use of the online map as a useful tool for planning logistics and transport operations. For this purpose, it will periodically monitor the portal's growth at the local level and organise verification sessions with stakeholders who have expressed a keen interest in this tool throughout the project. The Province plans to maintain close and ongoing contact, above all, with the Transport Directorate of the Piedmont Region, which has expressed a clear intention to make the portal available to additional Loading Points in areas of the region far from Novara. This will contribute significantly to the development of the RailHub Finder in terms of both an increase in the number of terminals on the online map and use by transport operators who are looking for the most efficient transport solutions for their customers every day.



Performance Indicators (KPIs)

This Action Plan is intended as a summary document to clarify the expected impact of the solutions developed within the Rail4Regions framework on the Novara area.

Throughout the project, the Province of Novara analysed territorial case studies and engaged in constant dialogue with stakeholders who are familiar with the local situation. This enabled the Province to identify strategic areas for action to facilitate railway shifting and strengthen existing Loading Points, as well as revitalise secondary lines that are considered strategic for efficient integration with the European network of railway corridors. In this context, the Province of Novara will monitor rail freight transport growth over time using the following simple qualitative and quantitative indicators:

- Questionnaires addressed to local companies and logistics and transport operators, to periodically assess the propensity for modal shift in freight transport and to understand which bottlenecks continue to hinder the choice of rail mode;
- Number of connected terminals and freight yards added to those already on the RailHub Finder online map;
- Percentage volume of incoming and outgoing goods passing through the Novara railway node;
- Level of harmful gas emissions from road transport;
- Number of road accidents involving heavy goods vehicles

G. Conclusion and Next Steps

Action #1 aims to support the dissemination and exploitation of the Rail Hub Finder tool. It is expected to make this tool a standard option for spatial and transport planners in the region. This will provide data for planning analysis that is closer to the real operational world of transport, enabling requests for locations to build or strengthen access points to the freight railway transport system to be satisfied. This could also be useful for future updates to the adopted Piedmont Region Logistics Plan.

Action #2 aims to support RFI, the Italian rail network manager, in upgrading the Novara railway hub. This is the first step in a series of measures required to achieve the targeted performance levels. The upgrade is expected to increase rail traffic capacity, particularly for freight in transit and bound for local road-rail terminals.

The proposed actions in the action plan can benefit all areas identified by the project. These benefits primarily relate to R4R's overall objective: the modal shift of traffic from road to rail, which is made possible by the increasing implementation of the Rail Hub Finder. These benefits include reduced air pollution and road traffic, fewer serious accidents, greater efficiency in the use of transport infrastructure, an improved quality of life and work for truck drivers, and opportunities for transporters and manufacturers to find optimized solutions for their supply chains.

At the local level, the solutions proposed by the action plan will significantly improve the quality of the transportation system in the Novara area. The new railway hub structure will increase the capacity and competitiveness of the production and logistics hub. In fact, a stretch of railway line that passes through a residential neighborhood with several level crossings and is currently used by heavy freight traffic, which causes noise and long road traffic disruptions, will be cleared of freight trains and used only by light regional services. There may be an additional stop for neighborhood residents. Even if postponed in the future, the completion of the RFI upgrading plans will design a set of railway lines capable of handling



increased traffic on routes outside of urban residential areas, which will benefit the residents and train traffic.

The follow-up activities to be implemented after the end of the Rail4Regions projects basically consist of cooperation with the Piedmont Region in organising a system to facilitate transport operators' access to the Rail Hub Finder, in order to keep the tool updated. They also consist of the monitoring actions already described above. Good operability of the Rail Hub Finder can improve opportunities for integration into the Piedmont Region's Logistics Plan. Furthermore, the use of the tool will be promoted by participating in logistics sector events and collaborating with business operator societies.

For action no. 2, the Province of Novara will monitor the implementation of the RFI plan. They will take into account the opportunity to participate in future public discussions on the projects. They will also highlight the advantages offered by the subsequent construction phases when they are operational. Additionally, they will identify and resolve the critical issues listed in the chapters describing the action.

Although the Province of Novara does not have specific functions related to transport administration, it can still monitor the growth of rail freight transport over time using simple qualitative and quantitative indicators:

- The number of terminals and freight yards added to those already present on the RailHub Finder online map.
- Volume of incoming and outgoing freight passing through the Novara rail hub and the percentage change compared to the previous situation.
- Level of harmful gas emissions produced by road transport;
- Number of road accidents involving heavy goods vehicles.

Subject to agreement with the Piedmont Region, the Province of Novara will also be able to contribute collecting data from local companies and logistics and transport operators to periodically assess the propensity for modal shift in freight transport and identify bottlenecks hindering the choice of rail transport.