

16 November 2018

SŽDC Launched Operation in the Longest Railway Tunnel in the Czech Republic; the First Train Passed It on 15 November

A record of 4,150 metres: such is the length of the longest tunnel in the Czech Republic. It is part of the railway line Rokycany – Plzeň which thus acquired a primacy within the whole network of Správa železniční dopravní cesty (SŽDC). A freight train was the first to pass the Ejpvovice tunnel southern tube at a lower speed on 15 November in the evening. Passengers took a ride through the tunnel in a special train on 16 November.

“Together with a speed increase, the tunnel construction has an essential impact on shorter traveling between Prague and Plzeň. Journey times will decrease on average by 9 minutes, for tilting trains by 10 minutes. A speed of 160 kph which is the highest allowed speed on the Czech railway network will be used in the tunnel. However, the tunnel is designed by its heading for future high-speed operation so that trains will be able to ride at speeds up to 200 kph”, said Mr. Jiří Svoboda, Director General of SŽDC during the first ride of a train with passengers. As he added, railway operation safety will also increase as well as travelling comfort and a required railway line capacity.

On 16 November, express trains, fast and through trains will start running through the southern tube in the direction from Plzeň to Prague. In the northern tube, operation is going to be gradually launched on 7 December; as of Sunday 9 December with the new timetable validity start, all trains will be using both tubes. Passengers will be thus able to appreciate the most essential construction asset – decreasing journey times between Plzeň and Prague.

The modernized line section Rokycany – Plzeň is a part of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) and is situated on the Western branch of the Czech Rail Transit Corridor III Prague – Plzeň – Cheb – state border with Germany. Total construction investment costs reach a sum of CZK 6.783 billion. The project is co-financed by the EU from its Cohesion Fund under the Operational Programme Transport. The EU contribution equals CZK 3.520 billion. The supplier is an association consisting of the companies Metrostav and Subterra.

The Ejpvovice tunnel is exceptional not only with its length but also by using other components. A slab track is laid down in both tubes. Great emphasis is laid on assuring safety in the tunnels; train operation will be safeguarded by the most up-to-date technologies..

Works’ launch in front of the tunnel portal near Kyšice was delayed almost by a year due to archaeological findings on the site of the future tunnel. First, pile walls approximately 300 metres long were built in the place of the entrance portals to allow digging a notch up to 18 metres deep in front of the tunnel entrance. It is a part of the line relocation which begins by track disentanglement behind Ejpvovice railway station.

Building a notch in front of the future tunnels' entrance included mining approximately 326,000 m³ of rock. Digging the tunnels was assured by a boring machine produced by the German company Herrenknecht with a cutting head diameter of almost 10 metres. The machine was over 110 metres long and it weighed 1,800 tonnes. Digging of the southern tube started in February 2015 and took 15 months. Builders started digging the northern tube in September 2016 and finished in October 2017.

Both tunnels are equipped with a slab track in their whole length. This is a railway superstructure construction without a ballast bed where the main bearing component is a flat armoured concrete slab with embedded rail fastening. The main slab track's advantage is its high durability, a construction practically with no need of maintenance and a low construction height which solves the problem of placing the catenary in the tunnels. Moreover compared to a classical superstructure, the track geometry can be maintained longer.

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