

# New Rail Baltica studies reveal recommendations for international and regional stations

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Industry news

Rail Baltica



An international consortium led by Ramboll, global architecture, engineering and consultancy company, has recently finalised on the behalf of the Rail Baltica joint venture, two studies and provided recommendations on how to maximize socio-economic benefits from development and operation of the Rail Baltica international passenger stations as well as regional railway services. The outcome of these studies will be integrated in the further development of the Rail Baltica global project and will provide basis for further enhanced cooperation with the global project's delivery organizations, municipalities, business associations, transport service providers, NGOs, and other relevant partners.

The study on maximization of the broader socio-economic benefits or Gross Value Added (GVA) for Rail Baltica international passenger stations, conducted by a consortium led by Ramboll, including Gottlieb Paludan Architects, Architects Soini & Horto, RealDeal, generated a number of recommendations, ranging from applicable in a short-run as well as in a broader long-run planning and continuous development perspective, on how to develop all 7 Rail Baltica international stations – Tallinn Ülemiste, Pärnu, Riga Central Hub, Riga International Airport, Panevėžys, Kaunas and Vilnius – to guarantee their role as multimodal transportation hubs and as important engines for the economic development of their immediate urban environment and beyond.

“Rail Baltica is a unique railway infrastructure project, and it is important to learn from international and proven experiences to ensure that the potential of the Rail Baltica infrastructure and economic corridor is used at its full potential,” said Dr. Stefano Manzo, Transport Economist at RB Rail AS. “The output of these studies will be used as a solid basis to continue the dialogue with the relevant project partners, decision-makers to further increase the focus of Rail Baltica infrastructures and services on the future end-users, people and businesses. Indeed, as each planned location for the different Rail Baltica regional stops is different, in terms of population, economic activities, potential development, etc. a close cooperation with municipalities and local communities during regional stations' planning and design phase, as well as continuous development, is of importance for success”.

Overall, there are several international examples of the potential for railway passenger stations to boost economic development. For instance, in the UK the redevelopment of the public realm at Manchester Piccadilly station was associated with a land value uplift of 33%, the generation of approximately 3 000 jobs in the area immediately around the train station and the creation of 2 000 m2 of retail space in the area surrounding the station.

Similarly, Sheffield Station Gateway program generated inward investment of £74m to the station area, which in turn led to a GVA uplift in Sheffield city of £3.4m per year. Also, empirical evidence from Sweden shows an increase of 20% or more in population, employment, and economic diversity in 3km radius from newly developed railway stations in urban, peri-urban as well as more remote locations while in Spain it has been observed a strong response to a HSR connection in the business areas of service, tourism, and knowledge-intensive activities.

Railway international stations - multimodal transport hubs and meeting points for people and businesses

Key conclusions of the study include recommendations on how to develop stations as meeting places for people and businesses, including designing for convenience and attractiveness for all types of users, therefore beyond the stations' historic function as transport operational facilities. This means providing services to make them more attractive for people, and not just travellers: examples of this could be retail areas, a range of choices for refreshments, possibly entertainment options, and so on.

The study investigates potential synergies and necessity for integration with surrounding urban landscape through modern station planning that shall guarantee universal accessibility and development of business and society, in a Transit Oriented Development perspective, i.e., that of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities centered around high-quality train systems.

Additionally, the study explores the importance of developing Rail Baltica railway international passenger stations as modern urban transport hubs, to be able to guarantee efficient and seamless integration of different mobility services, combining railway with public transport and private transport, including non-motorized transport modes, and shared and on-demand mobility services.

If efficiently developed regional passenger services can help boosting regional development and cohesion

The regional impact study provides a review of socio-economic regional opportunities related to the implementation of new or improved regional railway services in the perspective of the development of the Rail Baltica corridor.

In this context, the study highlights the crucial role that Rail Baltica regional stops are going to have as catalysts for potential population and business relocation by providing services crucial for non-urban areas beyond that of mobility. Such services span from e-commerce parcel delivery stations to those required by modern and efficient multimodal hubs for local and regional mobility, as well as several services specific to the different characteristics of the Rail Baltica regional stop locations, such as services for tourism or functional to residents of peri-urban areas, such as shopping or leisure activities.

The study also highlights how efficiently developed railway regional passenger services can contribute to increase regional cohesion, exploring the opportunities deriving from improved connectivity and digitalization, and increased levels of accessibility of peripheral and rural areas. Also, integration of the regional railway services with the broader regional mobility system and productive network, including integration and development of regional and local logistic services, should be ensured to fully leverage on the newly developed regional railway infrastructures and services.

Full reports on the studies can be found on the Rail Baltica global project official website <https://www.railbaltica.org/about-rail-baltica/documentation/>

Rail Baltica international and regional stations implementation progress

*In Estonia*

Currently, the master designs of the Ülemiste passenger terminal and the infrastructure are completed, and a construction

procurement announced with award of the contract is scheduled for October 2022 and the construction to be completed in the autumn of 2027. Whereas for the Pärnu passenger terminal master design is completed, the construction procurement scheduled to start in 2023 and the construction start – in 2024. The completion of the terminal is planned for 2027, which is also the deadline for the completion of the construction section of the respective main route. For the regional stops in Estonia, draft solutions will be developed in parallel with the design of the main route and considering the final design solutions for the main route. A contract has been signed for the design of local stops in Rapla County – within the framework of this contract, standard projects for the overpass between the station buildings of Rail Baltica's local stops and waiting platforms will also be developed.

#### *In Latvia*

Construction works on the two larger Rail Baltica project facilities - Riga Central Station and Riga International Airport are progressing. The amount of construction work performed in 2021 exceeded 55 million euros, and in both sections of the project most of lands were acquired. Whereas volume of construction works performed in the central node in 2021 reached 50.8 million euro. This year, construction works are underway in the territory of Rail Baltica Riga Central Station, including the south side of the station building. In 2021 construction of Riga International Airport was started and expanding this year to building new access road to / from the airport road, a parking lot extension and all utilities are being built. Construction of piles for the overpass will begin and the first works on the station building will begin, with the construction of a new pedestrian bridge connecting the terminal to the airport and an air-to-trail (luggage) tunnel.

As for the regional station's implementation, the negotiation procedure continues to select a company that will ensure the design of Rail Baltica's 17 regional mobility points in Latvia and will perform author supervision, including performing all the necessary preparations for the design.

#### *In Lithuania*

The winner of the Vilnius Connect architectural competition will be announced in the upcoming months, after which the design works follow. An agreement on the preparation of a special plan for the Panevėžys node is planned to be signed in June 2022. Once the special plan is to be ready, the location of the Panevėžys international station will be decided and it is foreseen to prepare the plan in the two upcoming years. The procurement of the design of Kaunas passenger station it is planned to be announced in August/September 2022.

#### About RB Rail AS

RB Rail AS is a multinational joint venture of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania established to lead and coordinate the implementation of the Rail Baltica Global Project, the first infrastructure development project of this scale in the Baltic region. RB Rail AS is responsible for the development, construction, and commercialization of the railway infrastructure megaproject.

More about Rail Baltica global project: [www.railbaltica.org](http://www.railbaltica.org)

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<https://www.sam.gov.lv/en/article/new-rail-baltica-studies-reveal-recommendations-international-and-regional-stations>