

Launch of the international call for tenders - Infrastructure concession for the Poceirão/Caia section of the Portuguese high-speed network.

Today saw the launch of the international call for tenders for the Poceirão to Caia rail infrastructure concession, which will be part of the high-speed line from Lisbon to Madrid.

The concession will last for 40 years and covers the design, building, financing and maintenance of the railway infrastructures. It also includes the section of line between Évora and Caia, which is part of the conventional freight line running between Sines-Évora-Elvas-Caia and the construction of the new Évora station, which will be built about 6 km outside the town.

Direct passenger journey times on the high-speed line between Lisbon and Madrid should take around 2:45 while the journey from Évora to Lisbon will be made in 30 minutes and the 167 km from Poceirão to Caia in less than 29 minutes.

Building work on the high-speed line between Poceirão and Caia will begin in 2010 but the complete Lisbon to Madrid service should only open to traffic in 2013.

High speed and conventional networks

The high-speed lines will be electrified double track with UIC gauge, designed to handle speeds of up to 350Km/h.

The conventional part of the line between Poceirão and Caia will be electrified single track with Iberian gauge and polyvalent sleepers.

The line between Poceirão and Caia will mean building 36 bridges with a total length of some 16.5 km. These engineering works include an overpass above the A12 motorway near Fernando Pó, and another over the A6, near the western end of Évora-Norte station.

The track will also require 120 under and overpasses to replace the roads and lanes cut by the railway line.

The power for the section of line between Poceirão and Caia will come from three sub-stations that will be shared by the different

networks. These substations will be built as part of the concession.

Tender procedure

Applicants will have four months to prepare their initial proposals before they are assessed and then RAVE will hold direct negotiations with the best-placed applicants.

This is the first call for tenders to be launched under the Portugal's new Public Contracting Law.

To ensure that the applicants are as well briefed as possible, RAVE has made all the technical studies and background information gathered for the section in question available to them.

Financial issues

The Poceirão-Caia Public-Private Partnership is the first PPP for the high-speed project in Portugal and the business and procurement model focuses on four main strategic objectives: ensuring that the financial burden is not too great; minimising the risks; guaranteeing that deadlines are met and ensuring a high-quality service.

A lot of work has gone into ensuring everything is properly managed and that risks have been reduced to the minimum for everyone involved, especially the Portuguese state.

The overall investment for the line between Poceirão and Caia should be around 1.450 M€, which is about 250 M€, or some 15%, less than the figures initially announced on the 21st of June 2007.

The Poceirão/Caia section of line is part of two Trans-European Transport Network Priority Projects, which were defined by the European Commission in 2004. The line between Poceirão and Caia, part of the high-speed line between Lisbon and Madrid, is included in Priority Project No. 3 (South-western Europe high-speed railway line), while the section between Évora and Caia on the conventional speed line Sines-Évora-Elvas-Caia is included in Priority Project No. 16 (Sines/Algeciras-Madrid-Paris rail freight line).

641 M€ of community funds will be made available for the Poceirão to Caia line, 191 M€ of which will come from the

2007/2013 programme for Trans-European Transport Networks and 450 M€ from the National Strategic Reference Framework (Cohesion Funds).

The future concessionaire will be paid in accordance with the performance (in terms of future availability of the railway infrastructure) plus a part for maintenance and another based on actual future traffic (measured in the number of trains).

RAVE opened a technical and financial analysis process with the European Investment Bank a few months ago since this organisation will be closely involved in this project. There will also be benefits for the Portuguese state, as the EIB offers more competitive financing conditions than other institutions.

Environmental Impact Assessment

The Environmental Impact Declaration (DIA), which was issued for the section of line between Évora and Elvas on 27 May, was the final step in the environmental impact study for the line between Poceirão and Caia.

The final decisions minimise urban and rural land usage as well as protecting the environment.

The DIA will keep the impact on the landscape as low as possible and there will be programmes to monitor the engineering works during the construction phase and when the line comes into operation.

Évora, 2 June 2008