Twin-tube Tauern tunnel opened for traffic
Great celebrity turnout at festive opening – speakers underline improvements to traffic flow and safety

A milestone in international road transport development was marked by the ribbon-cutting ceremony held in Salzburg on June 30th 2011: with the opening for traffic of both tubes of the Tauern tunnel between Flachau (Pongau region) and Zederhaus (Lungau region), the A 10 (Tauernautobahn) motorway, one of Europe’s major north-south transit arteries, has finally shed its last bottleneck. Previously, congestion in front of the tunnel portal was a frequent occurrence, with record back-ups of up to 40 km at the peak of the summer holiday season.

The event was attended by many celebrities, including Austrian transport minister Doris Bures, the governors of Salzburg and Carinthia, Gabi Burgstaller and Gerhard Dörfler, and the top management of ASFINAG, the Austrian motorway construction and management company. PORR CEO Karl-Heinz Strauss also participated in the opening, a great moment for PORR too. All speakers at the event stressed that the second tube will not only help traffic move faster, but will also improve safety. The elimination of oncoming traffic in itself makes the tunnel safer, and additionally, help can arrive more quickly in case of accident because the two tubes have been connected by 26 cross-passages. “In all, we are investing nearly five billion euros up to 2014 to make Austria’s tunnels safer,” said transport minister Bures.

The cost of building the new tube and renovating the existing one totalled EUR 197 m, which was EUR 31 m less than originally budgeted. Parallel to the tunnel project, the toll station at St. Michael (Lungau region) was enlarged; with the addition of five more lanes, it will now be able to handle up to 2,200 vehicles per hour.

First and second tube
Construction of the first tunnel tube began at the north portal in November 1970. 56 months later, on June 21st 1975, the tunnel (Tauern mountain route) was opened for traffic. The construction cost at the time was 1.5 million Austrian schillings, equivalent to about EUR 109 m today.