



The waiting is over

With the opening of the Herren Tunnel in Lübeck in 2005, one of the first toll routes in the German road network went into operation.

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The waiting has finally come to an end. Commuters now get to work on time rather than spending it in traffic jams because just in front of them an ancient bascule bridge has raised its two decks to let a container ship steam up the Trave heading for the Baltic. That bottleneck has been eliminated: Since August 2005, traffic has rolled smoothly through both tubes of the 800-meter-long Herren Tunnel.

“Following the tunnel under the Warnow in Rostock, the Herren Tunnel in Lübeck is the second project in Germany which we have realized using the so-called F-model,” explains Frank Mathias, commercial manager at the operating company Herren Tunnel Lübeck. Bilfinger Berger and Hochtief have an equal stake in the company. The F-Model stands for the German Act on Private Financing for Transport Infrastructure. In the 1990s, the act made it possible to build bridges, tunnels and mountain passes in the form of PPPs, or public private partnerships. Here, the private partner is the service provider who not only does the building, but designs and finances the project and operates it in the long term. The investment

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is financed by levying a toll. “The revenue from ongoing operations covers not only the construction and financing costs, but also all maintenance outlays. After all, the tunnel must be in perfect condition in 30 years time, too,” reports Peter Bartsch, the company’s executive manager.

“We rely on specialists in each field when calculating the costs of such a project,” explains Jürgen Schönwasser, member of the executive management at Bilfinger Berger BOT GmbH. “The focus is on an appropriate spread of risks in the contracts, reliable traffic forecasts, viable financing models,

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and detailed computations of payment flows across the entire service life. In other words, dozens of experts are involved in compiling such a complex offer.” The concessionaire, in this case the Hanseatic City of Lübeck, can carry out such a project far faster and does not have to concern itself beforehand with financing or with maintenance once the project is in operation. And the Herren Tunnel also provided the city with the optimal solution in terms of traffic flow. The federal government was only prepared to finance a new bascule bridge – but not the tunnel Lübeck





so desperately wanted. And the operating company likewise profits from a PPP project, as it can generate a long-term steady return on the capital it has employed.

The Herren Tunnel is a trailblazer of private-sector solutions for traffic infrastructure in Germany. Additional projects are currently in the planning stage. “This could be just the beginning,” says Jürgen Schönwasser. He points to the pending road construction projects based on the so-called A-Model. Finally, Germany is also to have

highway sections that are built and operated privately – primarily user-financed from the toll paid by trucks that use these routes. The competition for the first projects is now in full swing.

Jürgen Schönwasser is optimistic about the concession model: “This system, which has proven itself in other places, will also be successful here in Germany.”

