

Electric revolution in public transport in Ticino: HESS wins tender for electric buses in Lugano

HESS has been awarded the contract for the groundbreaking electric bus system in Lugano. By the end of 2025, eight electric lighTram^{® 19 OPP} buses will be operating on the TPL route 5 (Viganello–Lugano Centre–Manno), each of which are rapidly recharged at their final stops.

For TPL, the electrification of Route 5 is a first important step in the major transformation which, for almost 10 years, the company has prepared for with meticulous analysis, design and feasibility work. From 2015 until now, various kinds of study have been undertaken, from topographical assessments to others relating to the costs, energy and environmental performance of the company's current fleet. From these studies, it became apparent which technology (diesel, hydrogen, hybrid or electric) is the most suitable solution for use in Lugano. The facts and figures showed that electric vehicles are the most suitable solution for the drive unit.

The decision to electrify Route 5 first is the result of a careful consideration of all the factors and actors. Roberto Ferroni, the Director of TPL, defines it as 'a particular decision that underscores TPL's definite determination to achieve sustainable results: Route 5 is actually one of the most challenging and frequently used'. It is one of the longest routes in Lugano (16.4 km there and back), so every bus covers almost 300 kilometres a day, as well as overcoming a difference in altitude of 117 metres. With about 2.2. million passengers per year, it has the second highest number of passengers after Route 3.

A fully electric bus route is a step forward when it comes to limiting the effects of vehicle operations on the environment, without compromising the quality of services for users. The benefits can be summarised as the complete absence of CO₂ emissions and particulates in urban areas, a significant reduction in noise due to the quietness of the electric motor and last but not least, a reduction in vibrations inside the vehicle, which offers more comfort for passengers and a better working condition for drivers. This environmentally friendly project not only significantly reduces CO₂ emissions, but also provides increased comfort for passengers and residents.

In the international call for tenders by TPL, HESS won the contract for the delivery of the complete e-bus system, comprising eight electric articulated buses and the necessary charging infrastructure. The HESS articulated buses can run electrically for the entire daily operation of over 19 hours, without having to return to the depot. This is thanks to two charging stations which have been constructed along the route.

Electric vehicles in Lugano are not uncharted territory for HESS: rather, it represents a successful return to the Sottoceneri region for the electric bus manufacturer. That is because the TPL trolleybus network, which was taken out of service in 2001, had operated since the 1960s with buses with HESS bodywork. Furthermore, there are still about 60 HESS SwissAlpin midibuses currently operating in and around Lugano, some also on the TPL network.



The future lighTram® 19 OPP in Lugano (Source: HESS)

HESS currently employs over 850 people and is training 47 apprentices in 12 different occupations.

HESS has established itself as a pioneer in bus manufacturing in terms of **design, quality** and **reliability**. Because environmentally friendly HESS electric buses increase the quality of life in cities and conurbations, public transport authorities in Switzerland, Europe and overseas increasingly rely on bus solutions from Bellach. Decades of further development of the **CO-BOLT® modular system** has created means of transport that are precisely tailored to their use. The **lighTram®** is available in an overall length of 10.7 to 24.7 metres and impressively demonstrates the leading role played by HESS in e-bus systems.

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