



## HST CONNECT MAASTRICHT-LIÈGE

### General introduction

The HST Connect Maastricht-Liège project focuses on establishing a direct connection between Maastricht/Limburg and the HST network in Liège. This will lead to greater territorial cohesion through the improvement of sustainable transport and will reduce the travel time considerably. Furthermore, the traveller will have to pay less, as this direct connection will avoid the necessity to buy an expensive train ticket for the short transnational track and a separate HST-ticket. At the moment it is not possible to buy a direct Thalys-ticket from Maastricht to Brussels or Paris. The only current possibility to buy a Thalys-ticket is to buy one via Rotterdam. One of the aims of the project is to make it possible to simply buy a ticket from Maastricht to Brussels, Paris or London through the Internet. Furthermore, the current price for a ticket from Maastricht to Liège is higher because travellers have to pay an extra supplement for crossing the border. Another important aim of the HST Connect Maastricht-Liège project therefore is to lower ticket prices, for instance through the inclusion of Maastricht in the Belgian railway pricing system. The project will lead to a further integration and improvement of the transport functions of the Maastricht station and its direct surroundings. Finally, the project will strengthen the current economic (re)developments in the direct Maastricht station environment.

### Finances

The HST Connect Maastricht-Liège project is co-financed by the European Union (ERDF, € 907.000) the Province of Limburg (€ 400.000) and the City of Maastricht (€ 400.000) and is strategically supported by the City of Liège (€ 30.000).

### Local and regional context: improving HST Connectivity

Being the second tourist city in the Netherlands (16 million visitors annually) and listed number 27 on the world list of congress cities, many travellers and tourists visit Maastricht. Recently, several European multinationals located business units in the city and 144 internationally oriented institutes are present. Public transport in and around Maastricht is used frequently, but international travellers are not advised to take the train in Maastricht. The connection with Liège on the other side of the border is of utmost importance, but it is retarded and inadequate (i.e. it takes 83 minutes for HST connection on the 33 km trip).

Attracted by the investments of the Liège HST station and the cross-border possibilities, Maastricht would like to establish a direct connection with the HST network. Bringing all partners together has already led to the objective to change the time schedule for the current international trains. The regular Thalys in Liège leaves exactly at the moment that the regional train from the Netherlands arrives. The objective in terms of HST transport is to boost the number of passengers by 500% within the project period. The Councils of Liège and Maastricht have signed a joint convention in with the connection by rail becomes a major political priority. Both cities will gain. Liège as a centre of TGV, transport and infrastructure and Maastricht as a tourist and business destination with an improved (international) accessibility.

### Current state of affairs

A market research study (currently executed) will show what kind of a train connection will be most efficient: a Thalys-connection, a Belgian High Speed Train to Brussels or an improved shuttle service between Maastricht and Liège, offering an excellent correspondence with the international trains stopping in Liège. The main result should be that Maastricht and Limburg travellers should be able to travel to Brussels within the hour.

### More information

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