

Summary:

The Oslofjord Link – traffic and regional impact

The Oslofjord Link was opened 29. June 2000. The link is 27 km long and includes a 7 km tunnel underneath the Oslo Fjord. The tunnel is fairly steep (7 %). For traffic from southeast to Drammen west of the tunnel, time saving is 20 minutes outside rush-hours and the tunnel route is 25 km shorter than the route via Oslo.

The traffic is to a large extent local. Compared to forecasts, long distance through traffic has not met expectations. The average daily traffic in 2001 was 3900 vehicles, that is somewhat lower than the 4200 forecast for the planned opening year 1999.

Forecasts for private cars seem to be reasonably correct. The actual share of trucks, however, was only 6 % while the estimated share was 16 %. High toll fees and cumbersome payment procedures may be the reasons for this shortfall. A new pricing regime with lower fees for the largest trucks and the introduction of electronic payment devices allowing large transport firms to include several cars in the same discount scheme may boost heavy traffic.

The link seems to have needed at least one year to establish itself. The traffic volume during the second half of 2001 was 16 % higher than in 2000. There is little evidence to claim whether or not this is typical for new toll financed links with alternate routes.

30 km further south there is a ferry route across the Oslo Fjord at Moss – Horten. The ferry lost about 10 % of its private car traffic when the Oslofjord Link was opened, while truck traffic was only marginally affected. 22 % of the truck drivers using the Oslofjord Link had considered to use the longer route via Oslo compared to only 14 % of private car drivers. Few had considered the possibility of using the Moss- Horten ferry (3 %). There seem to be fairly clear geographical boundaries between the catchments areas of the two connections.

The main reasons for route choices were “shortest route” or “quickest route”. For the Oslofjord Link, aversion against “going into the Oslo traffic” was reported as a reason. On the Moss- Horten ferry “break from driving” was reported as a common reason.

On direct question, very few ferry travellers reported “fear from accidents” or “fear from tunnels in general” as reasons for not choosing the Oslofjord Link. Some truck drivers reported “steep tunnel” and “(low) standard of connecting roads” as reasons for not choosing the Oslofjord Link.

So far, there is little evidence of any regional impacts of the new link. Few travellers with the purpose of commuting or shopping use the link. The municipalities at the Hurum peninsula on the western side of the fiord have just started planning of new housing and industrial areas. In a longer term perspective

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and subject to completion of connecting roads, introduction of a regional land use policy and changes in regional goods distribution, the new link could, however, play a significant role in alleviating the traffic density on through roads in Oslo.