

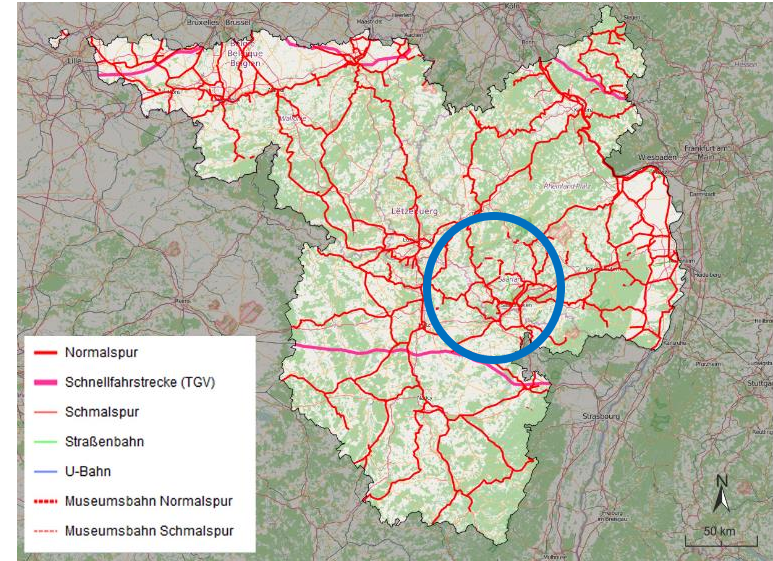


The Current Situation of Rail Transport in Saarland

Dr. Carsten Peter / IBS Congress 2025

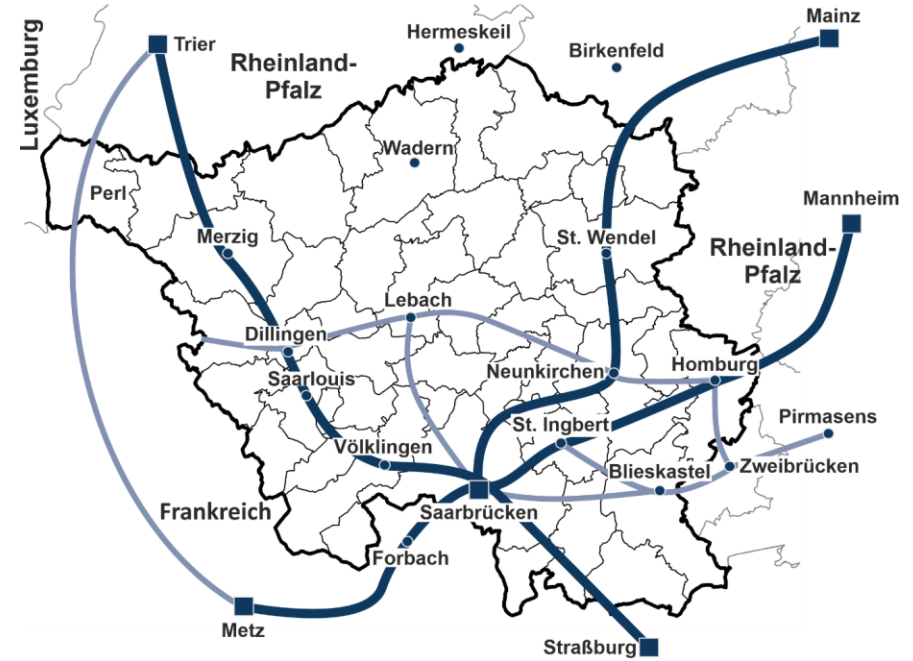
Saarland is a border region in southwest Germany and in the heart of Europe

- 19th century: emergence of railways in Saarland as part of broader German and French networks
- 20th century shifts: impact of war, border changes, and industrial activity
- 21st century: Introduction of High-speed connections and integration in cross-border networks



Important corridors

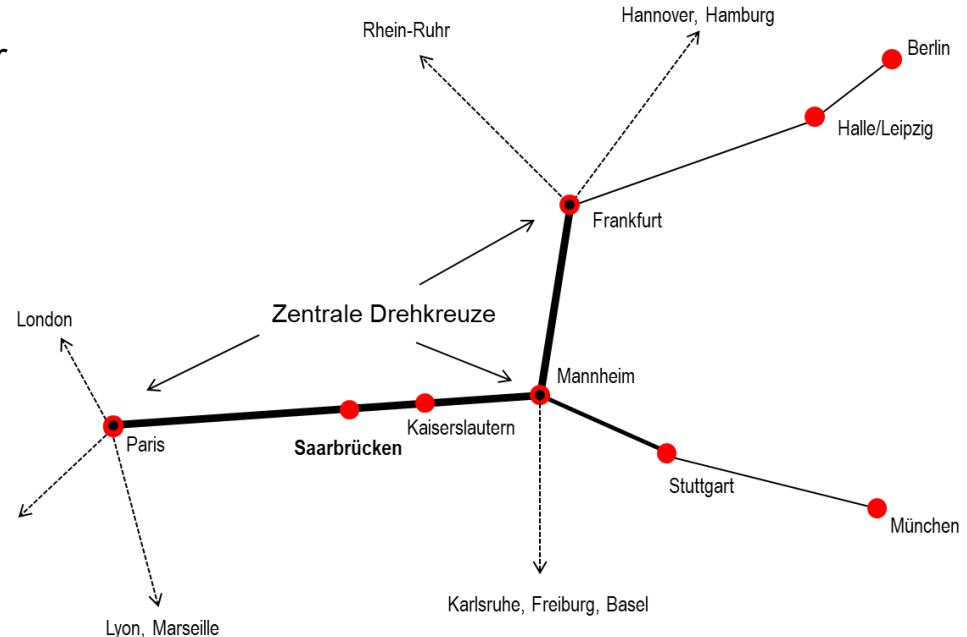
- Mannheim – Kaiserslautern – Saarbrücken
=> France / Western Europe
- Cologne – Koblenz – Trier – Saarbrücken
=> France / Switzerland
- Frankfurt – Mainz – Neunkirchen –
Saarbrücken (diversion connection)



Source: MWIDE (2000) VEP Saarland

Hubs for international and regional mobility

- Saarbrücken Eurobahnhof – main hub for High-speed trains, national and regional connections
- Secondary stations and regional lines: Homburg, St. Wendel, Neunkirchen, Völklingen, Saarlouis, Merzig
- Cross-border connections nonstop to Metz, Strasbourg and Luxemburg (direct only bus)



Freight Transport driven by border situation

- Cross-border and international connectivity: approx. 90% of rail freight to and from Western Europe passes Saarland
- Important switch yard and related infrastructure in Saarbrücken
- Key cross-border routes: Mannheim-Saarbrücken-Forbach (France), Forbach-St.Avold-Luxemburg, Forbach-St.Avold-Paris/Lyon (French rail network) => Spain, Portugal
- Challenges: international timetables, interoperability of safety system, different voltage, qualification of train drivers, border controls

Freight Transport driven by local industry

- Rail Infrastructure for production sites like steel works (e.g. Dillinger Hüttenwerke, Saarstahl)
- Rail siding of industry plants (e.g. Gebr. Meiser GmbH, HIL GmbH)
- Freight terminals (rail/road) in Saarbrücken, Homburg/Kirkel, Dillingen, and Beckingen
- Terminals in neighboring regions (e.g. LUX, Trier)
- Terminal projects in Überherrn and Neubrücke (not realized)
- Cargo transport by Deutsche Bahn AG and other operators
- Special: RhineSaarMoselContainer Express operated by Frankenbach Logistics (Saarland-Mainz)
- Modes of operation: container, bulk goods, automotive, and industry-linked freight

Infrastructure and transformation

- Infrastructure age vs. modernization needs
- Maintenance funding and investment levels
- Track capacity and bottlenecks on key corridors (comprehensive overhaul of main connection Mannheim-Saarbrücken in 2029, speed-up of ICE-connection)
- Cross-border interoperability and timetable coordination
- Freight capacity and competition with road transport (dry port Athus, port of Antwerp, ports on Rhine)
- Service frequency and punctuality for passengers

Complete and upgrade of infrastructure

- Electrification of existing gaps (85% already overhead wire)
- Reactivation of rail lines with potential for freight traffic (e.g. rail siding) – Valley of Prims, Bist and Rossel
- Station upgrades for accessibility and passenger experience
- Intermodal and freight facility enhancements due to transformation of industry (hydrogen, scrap metal, military equipment)

Rail as backbone of Saarland's mobility?

- Expected timelines for major projects
- Strategic priorities: reliability, cross-border integration, modal shift from road to rail
- How stakeholders (regional government, DB Netz, operators, EU bodies) collaborate
- Future of rail infrastructure depends on the success of economic transformation
- Further factors of uncertainty: demographic change and the security situation

