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Traffic problems in South Tyrol: only tourism is to blame - is that really true?

HGV Media conference 16.6.2022

Prof. Dr. Thomas Bausch

PROBLEM SITUATION

1. Regularly occurring congestion situations in the transport network (roads and public transport) in South Tyrol
2. Overloads occur mostly during holiday periods, but often also temporarily (morning / noon) on weekends (arrival and departure days)
3. Subjective feeling of the population: Tourism is the sole cause of traffic problems in South Tyrol
4. Conclusion of the population: if tourists arrive by train and then use public transport in South Tyrol, the problems will disappear.

IS THAT THE REALITY?

SÜDTIROL NEWS

Newsticker Wetter Verkehr Horoskop Trauer

Lokal Italien Chronik Politik Wirtschaft Sport Unterh

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Viele nutzen den Feiertag

Christi Himmelfahrt sorgt für Staus auf Südtirols Straßen

Donnerstag, 26. Mai 2022 | 12:49 Uhr

APA/APA (dpa)/Sina Schuldt

Schriftgröße

Bozen – In Deutschland und Österreich ist heute Christi Himmelfahrt. Ein Feiertag, den viele für ein verlängertes Urlaubswochenende nutzen. Dementsprechend groß ist der Reiseverkehr.

Das merkt man auf den Südtiroler Straßen. Es staut und stockt, vor allem entlang der Brennerautobahn und der Brennerstaatsstraße. Der Verkehr kann Medienberichten zufolge in den nächsten Stunden auch noch zunehmen.

ANALYSIS APPROACH

1. Data basis for the analysis: Data from the National Institute of Statistics for 2002 - 2019 (pre Covid)
2. Sources: Statistical yearbooks 2002 - 2021, database queries on transport and on tourism
3. Comparison traffic volume*
   - in November (month with minimal tourism) and
   - August (month with maximum tourism)
   - Detailed analyses for weekdays 2 weeks around ferragosto and mid-November
4. November figures describe the base load; August figures describe the peak load in the transport system
5. Consideration of the traffic counting points
   - Vilpian - Vilpiano MEBO (traffic axis to the centre of Bolzano)
   - St. Lorenzen – San Lorenzo di Sebato (traffic axis Pustertal West – Val Pusteria west direction Brixen – Bressanone and connection Gardertal – Val Gardena)
   - Bruneck Ost - Brunico East (traffic axis Pustertal –Val Pusteria East - direction Lienz and top tourist attractions)

* 2019 November accounted for 1.75% of overnight stays
-> minimal additional traffic due to tourism accounted
August accounted for 17,4% of overnight stays
-> maximal additional traffic due to tourism accounted

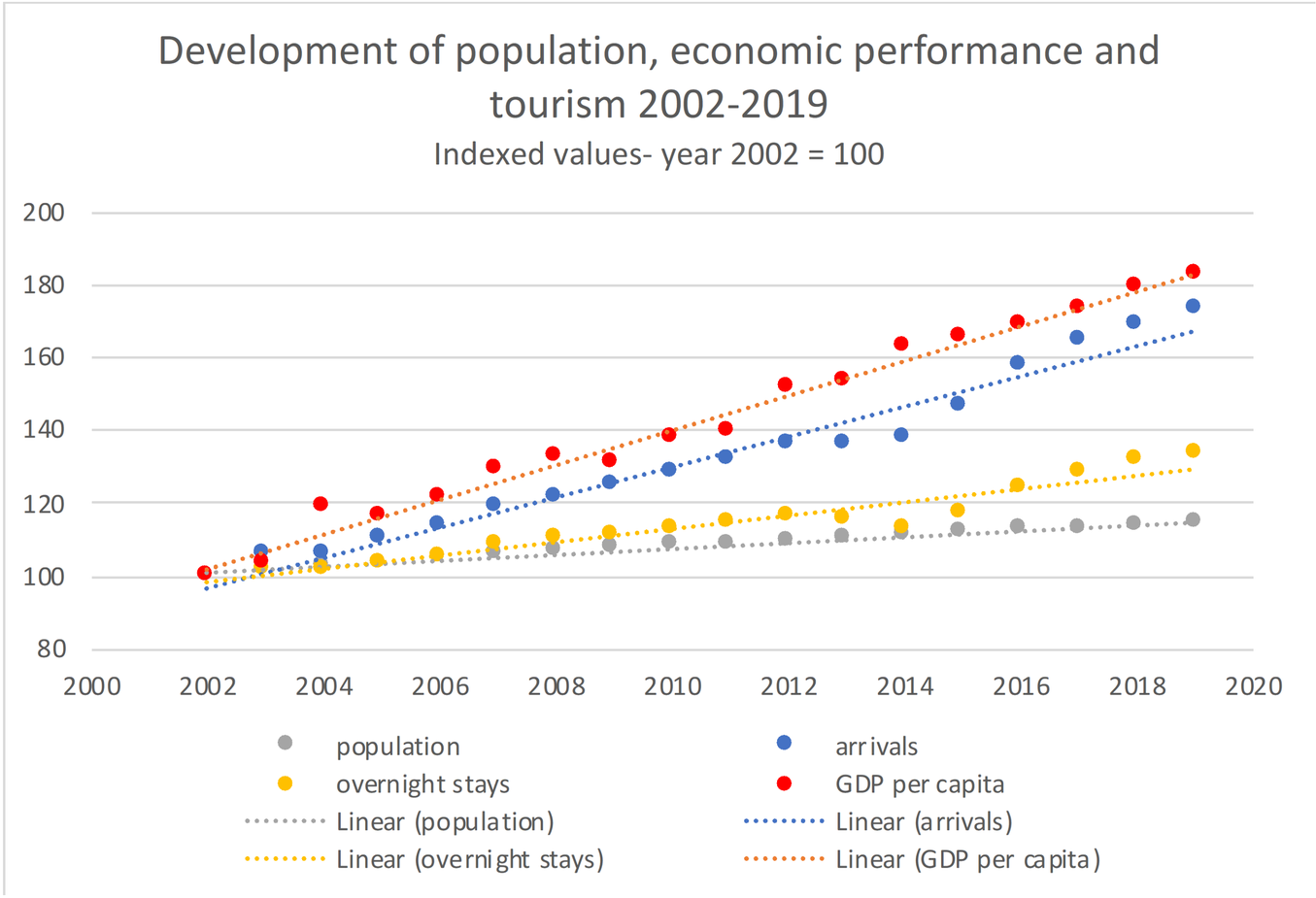
DEVELOPMENT 2002 - 2019

1. Continuous population growth from 467 to 533 thousand
   -> 66,000 more citizens on the road

2. Enormous economic growth
   (82% growth in 18 years)
   -> increase in traffic from all sectors of the economy
   -> more prosperity, households equipped with more cars

3. Number of employees has increased by almost 80,000 (more than the population)
   => more mobility to exercise the profession

4. Tourism arrivals increased more than overnight stays
   -> stronger growth in arrivals and departures



DEVELOPMENT BASE LOAD

For November (base load without significant tourism), an almost linear growth of

- population (BZG Pustertal / BZG Burggrafenamt)

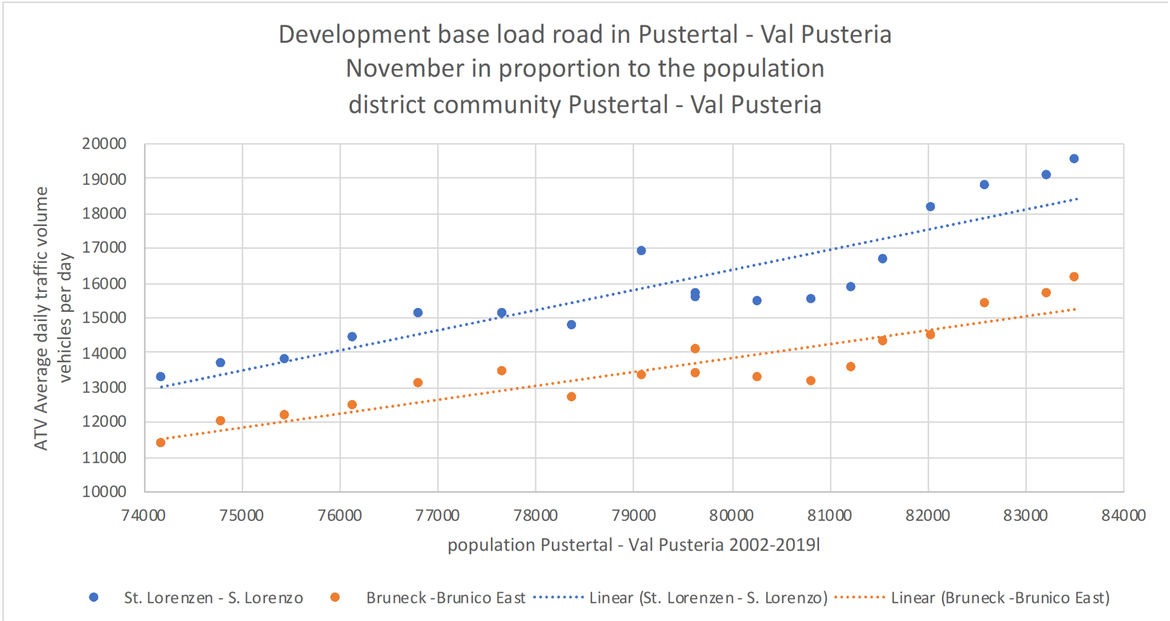
and

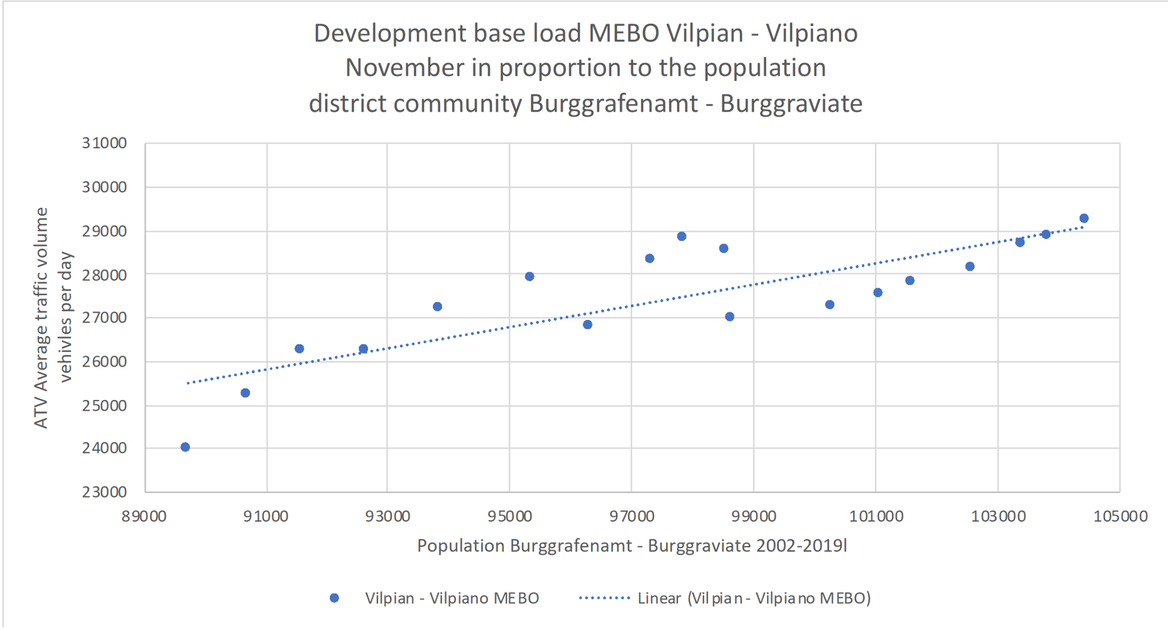
- Traffic volume in Pustertal - Val Pusteria (St. Lorenzen -San Lorenzo di Sebato/ Bruneck Ost- Brunico East) and on MEBO (Vilpian - Vilipiano)

At 46% in St. Lorenzen – San Lorenzo di Seabto and 42% in Bruneck Ost – Bruneck East, the base load has grown much faster than the population (BZG Pustertal 12.5%).

The base load on the MEBO at Vilpian - Vilpiano grew slightly less (22%), while the population of the community district Burggrafenamt – Burgraviato grew slightly more (16%).

Base load in the transport network without tourism increased significantly





DEVELOPMENT BASE LOAD

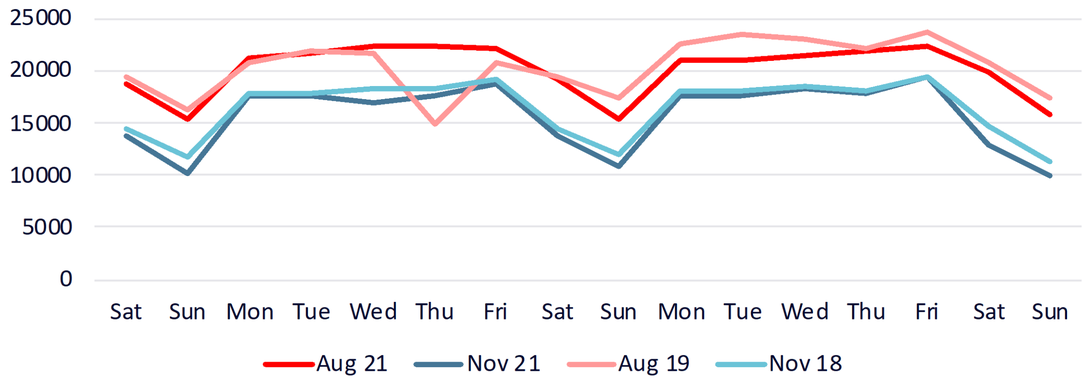
On important transport axes that connect economic centres with the surrounding area and beyond, high base loads are evident (small differences between November and August). In addition, it becomes visible

- In November, clearly pronounced weekly patterns with the highest value on Friday and the lowest value on Sunday.
- In August also clear weekly pattern (2019 ferragosto fell on a Thursday -> low value, as no rush hour traffic)
- The very similar weekly patterns between August and November underline that the base load dominates compared to tourism at these counting points .

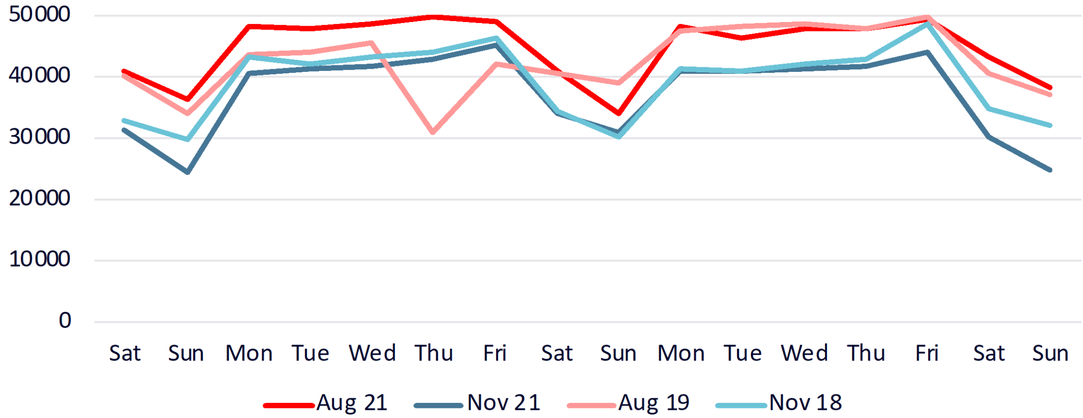
Weekly patterns on traffic axes confirm importance of base load by locals / other economic sectors

Comparison Week before and after "Ferragosto" (red) against last two weeks of November (blue)

St. Georgen - San Giorgio daily traffic volume



Frangart - Frangarto Mebo daily traffic volume



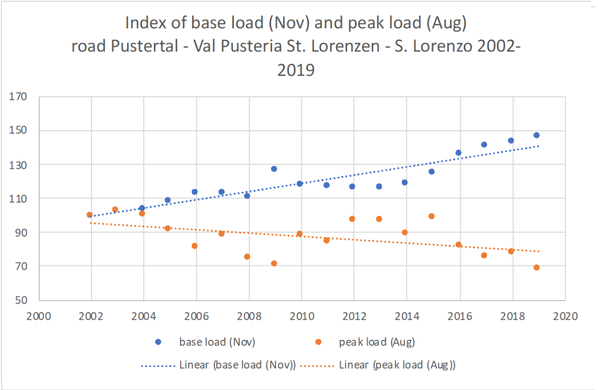
August: 2019: Sat 10 – Sun 25 / 2021: Sat 7 - Sun 22
November: 2018: Sat 10 - Sun 25 / 2021: Sat 13 - Sun 28

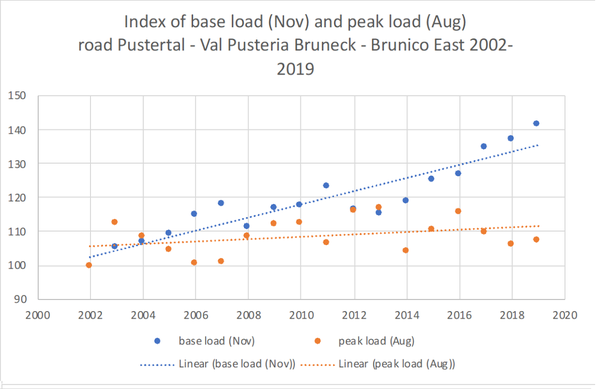
DEVELOPMENT AUGUST

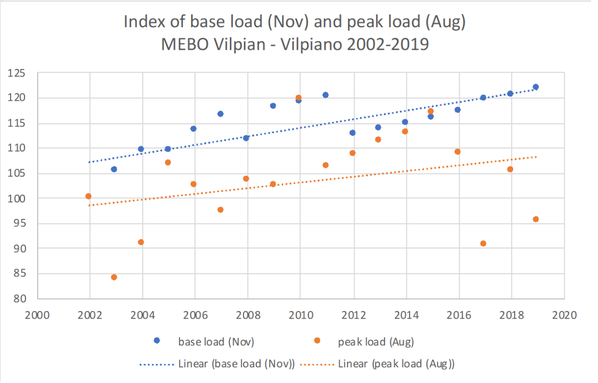
No exact data on the base load is available for August. The following assumptions are made for consideration:

- The growth development of the base load in August is comparable to the rest of the year, as the central factors of population growth and economic growth act throughout the year
- Because of the holiday season, it can be assumed (but not certain) that the base load is lower than November, since
  - Companies and authorities are temporarily closed
  - Locals have gone on holiday themselves

  This is opposed by the fact that
  - Those staying at home / not travelling during this period and making more leisure trips
  - More trips for visits from friends / relatives take place





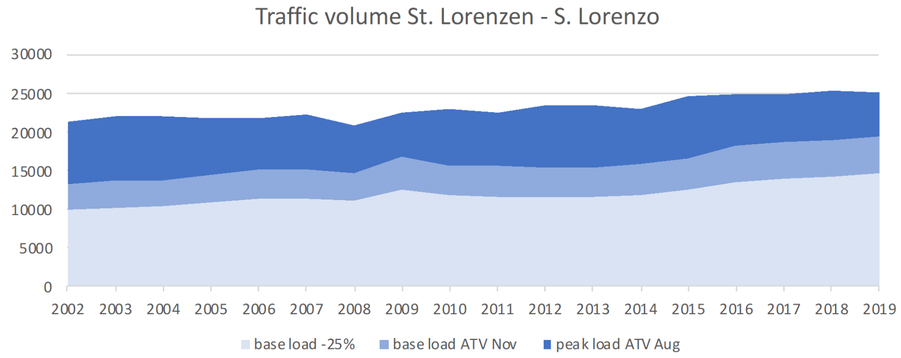


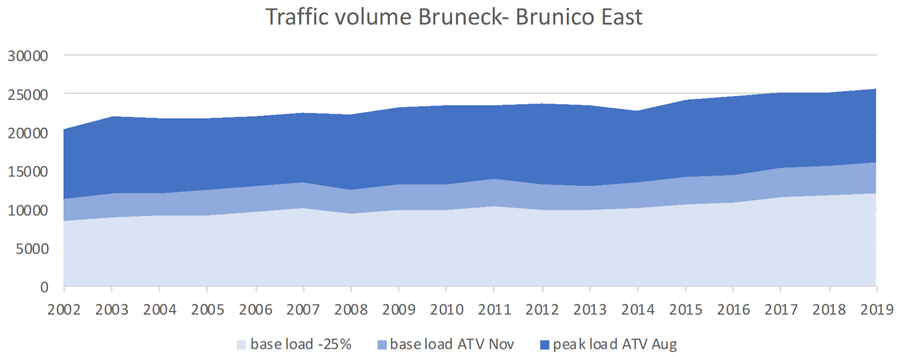
DEVELOPMENT AUGUST

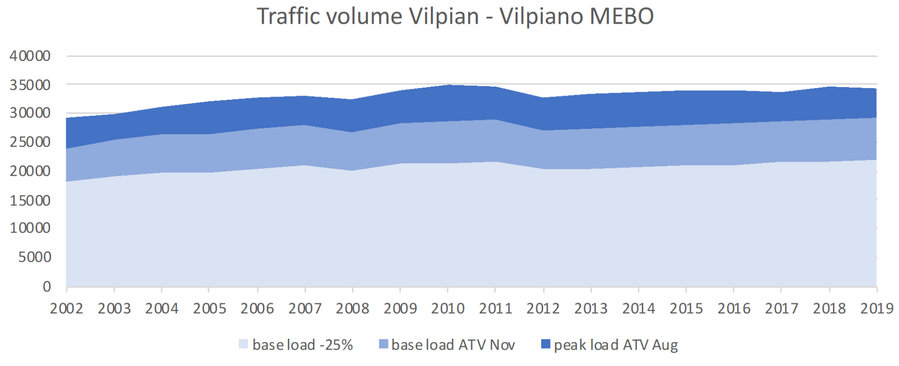
If we assume for August that the base load is comparable to November or 25% lower than in November due holiday time effects, it can be seen that

- The additional burden of tourism has not increased over time
- The tourist share on MEBO lies between 30% and 40%
- In St. Lorenzen – San Lorenzo di Sebato, the share of tourism tended to be stable or decreasing in recent years.
- In Bruneck East – Brunico East there is a slight increase in the tourist share, but the main growth comes from the base load

The increasingly observed congestion effects of the transport network can be explained by the increased base load and not by the growth in tourism.







DEVELOPMENT AUGUST

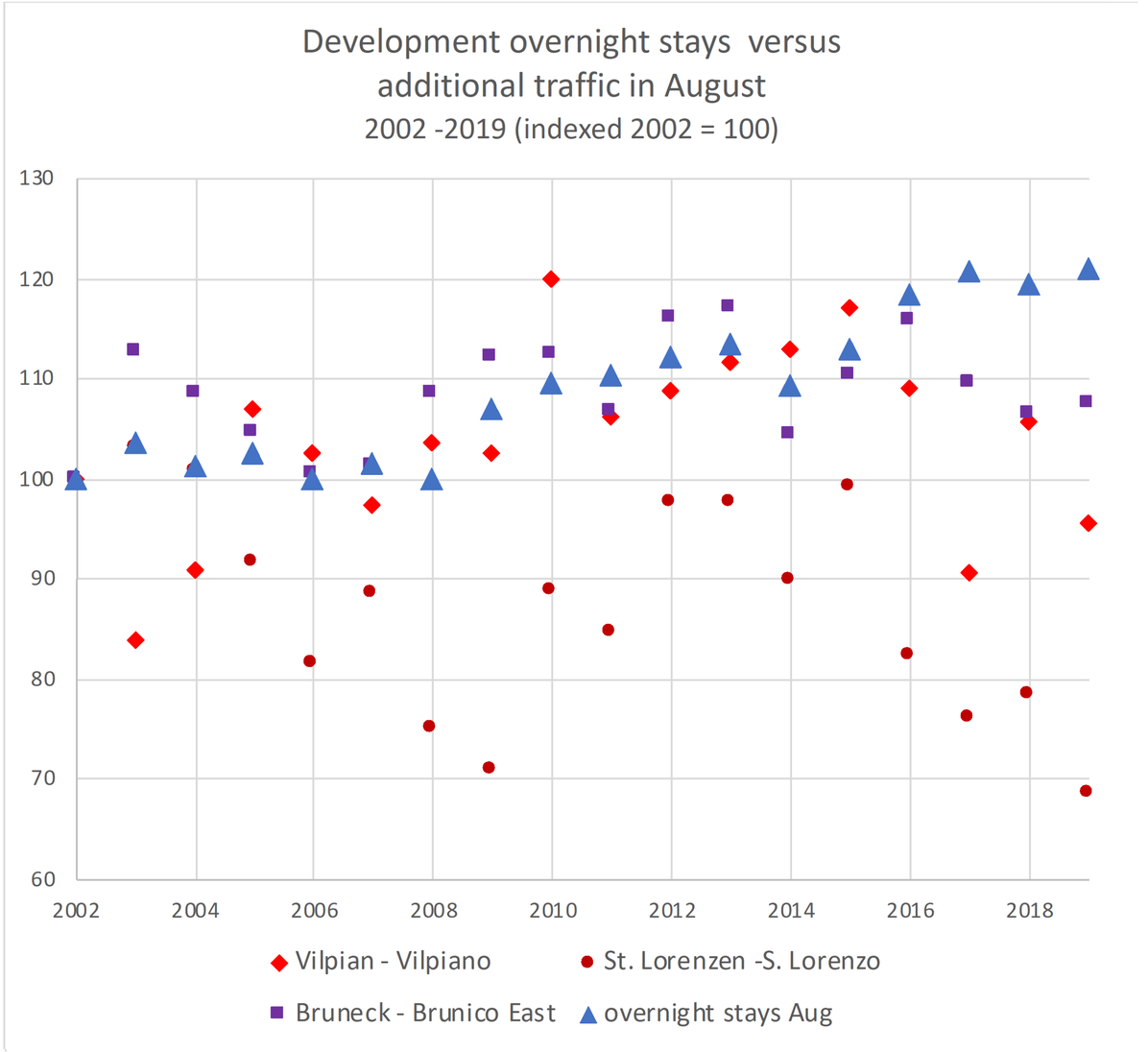
Looking at the difference between base load November and peak load August

(= additional traffic caused by tourism - minimum estimate)

no statistically significant correlation can be found for the counting points considered. For Bruneck Ost – Brunico East there is a slight upward trend that can be justified by tourism.

Moreover, the peak values in August from 2002 to 2019 NEVER occurred on weekends, but always on weekdays. This is also an indication of the role of the high base load on working days.

A decoupling of tourism growth from traffic growth can be observed on the supra-regional transport axes



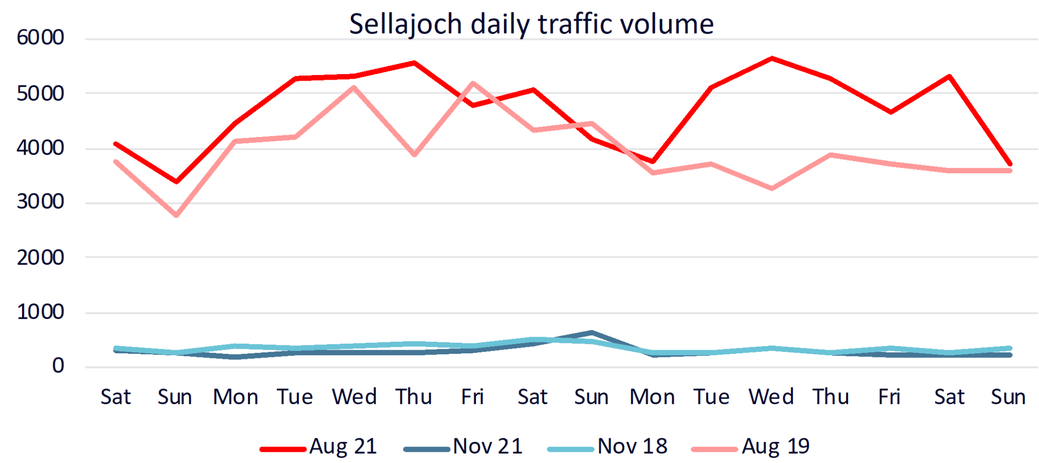
DEVELOPMENT AUGUST

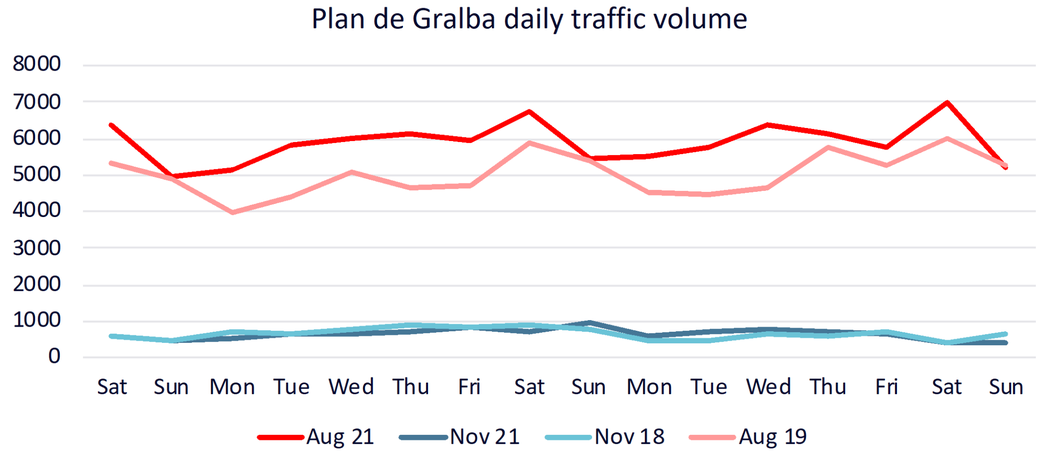
The connection between base load and peak load or the decoupling of traffic growth and tourist growth does NOT apply to tourist experience routes and access routes to particularly tourist-intensive holiday resorts.

- At the Sellajoch – Passo di Stelvio, the base load is extremely low. In August, it can therefore be assumed that the majority of vehicles have a tourist background. This is also reflected in the high proportion of motorcyclists (sometimes up to 30%).
- At the Plan de Gralba there is also a regular peak on Saturday as the arrival / departure day from and to Corvara / Val Gardena.

Tourist hot-spots and access routes to high-intensity and off-the-beaten-track tourism centres follow the general tourism development

Comparison weelk before and after "Ferragosto" (red) against last two weeks of November (blue)





August: 2019: Sat 10 – Sun 25 / 2021: Sat 7 - Sun 22
November: 2018: Sat 1 - Sun 25 / 2021: Sat 13 - Sun 28

DEVELOPMENT AUGUST

Assuming that the long-term linear growth of both the population and the economy continues, the base load will approach the capacity limits of the transport system as early as 2030 without fundamental intervention in the transport system.

Assuming an effective "bed freeze", tourism will no longer grow significantly at peak times.

	ATV counting station (average daily traffic volume)		
	Vilpian MEBO	St. Lorenzen	Bruneck East
	forecast base load 2030		
November 2002	23.994	13.291	11.403
November 2019	29.256	19.535	16.143
yearly growth base load	198	314	211
linear forecast November 2030	31.431	22.994	18.465
	forecast peak load 2030		
August 2002	29.342	21.429	20.337
August 2019	34.362	25.114	25.731
yearly growth base + peak	223	231	240
linear forecast August 2030	36.819	27.652	28.374

Projection based on average value 2002 - 2006 in relation to average 2015 - 2019 . Base year for projection 2019

Tourism will continue to contribute to solving the traffic problems in the future BUT: without a change in transport policy on the part of the locals and the economy, traffic gridlock will occur by 2030 at the latest, even without tourism.