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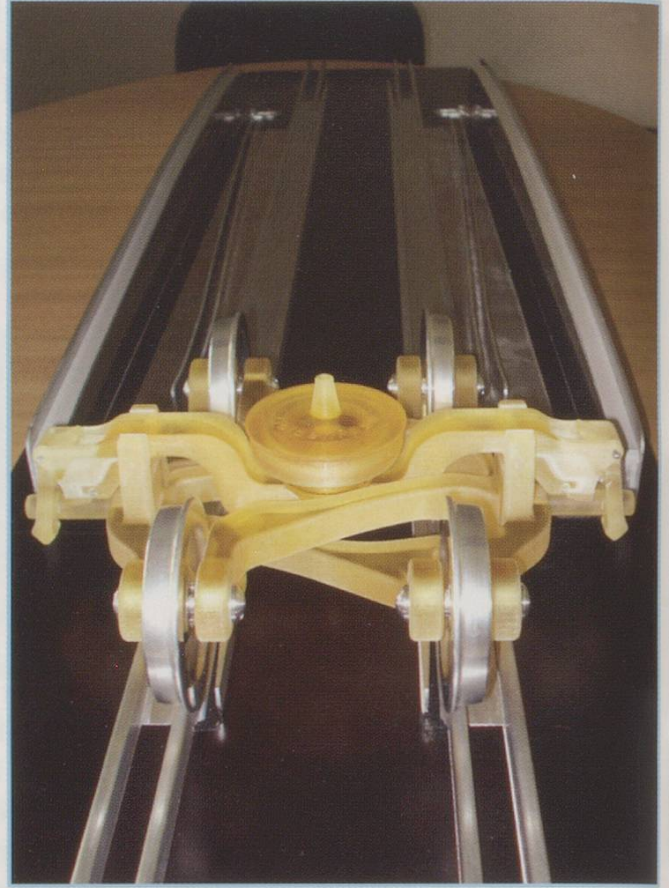
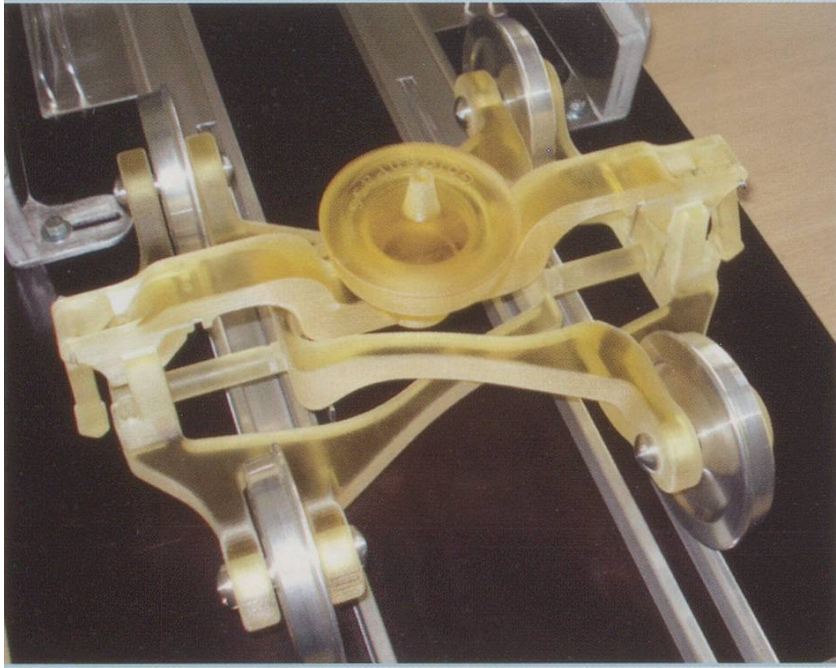
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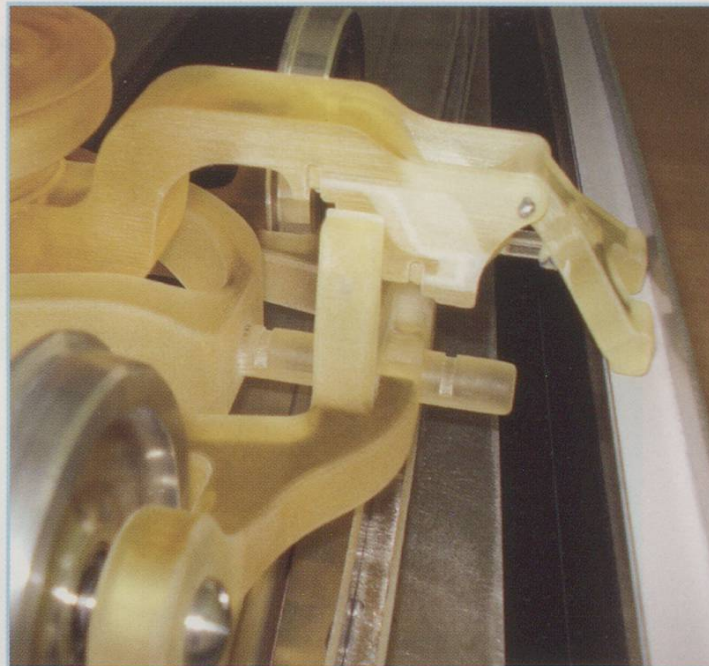
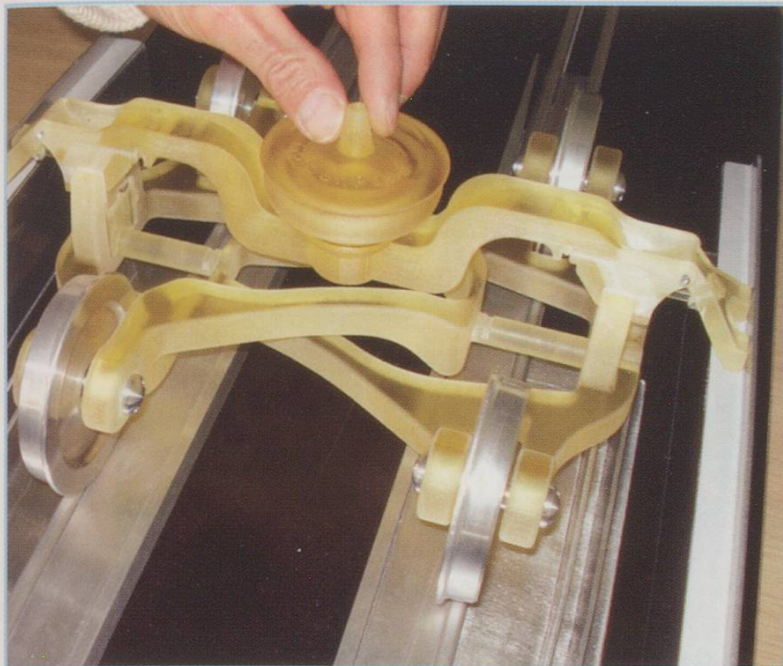
GOLDEN PASS TO INTERLAKEN?

It has been a long held dream of the MOB that their very successful metre gauge Golden Pass trains should be able to travel through to Luzern utilising the similar gauge tracks of the Zentralbahn over the Brunig Pass. The problem has of course been that the lines from Zweisimmen to Interlaken Ost are standard gauge. Over the years there have been several proposals to lay a third rail on the route but these have always failed on the grounds of excessive costs. A recent estimate put these at CHF205m. However in October 2008 the MOB unveiled plans that could lead to through Golden Pass trains running at least to Interlaken Ost.

The current proposal revolves around the use of an innovative design of bogie that would allow the gauge to be changed en-route. The layout of the bogie is difficult to explain. A primary component is a main transverse element that supports the coach body through an air suspension unit. On the outside of this cross beam are outriggers that interact with lifting rails at the gauge change point. Underneath the cross beam the pairs of wheels on either side of the

bogie are connected by trapezoidal frames that in their turn are locked together when the bogie is moving. The wheels themselves are on stub axles at either end of the frames.

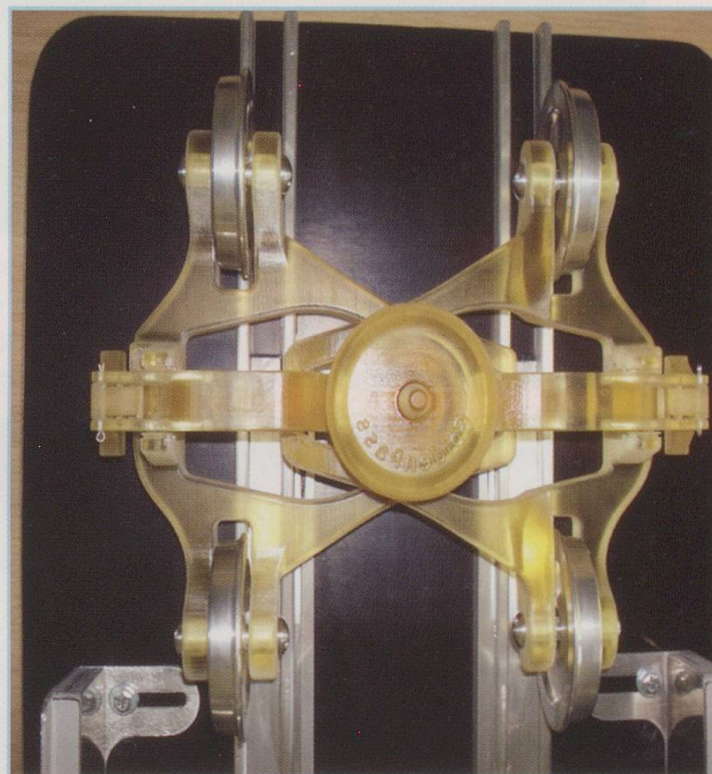
During the change of gauge process as the coach moves forward the body is supported and lifted by some 200mm as the outriggers meet the outer-lying lifting rails. This allows the wheel frames to uncouple and the two halves of the bogie to move away from (or towards) each other around a central pivot. When this action is completed the body is then lowered. The raising and lowering process also allows the distance between the rail and the body to be adjusted to match the different platform heights on either the metre or standard gauge lines. It is anticipated that with such a bogie-based adjustment system the bodies of existing MOB metre gauge coaches could be used following necessary modifications. As the provision of cog wheel brakes (required on the rack section of the Zentralbahn) is not planned at this stage, and would be difficult to introduce, it means that direct trains could only run between Montreux and Interlaken Ost, with the change of gauge



taking place at Zweisimmen.

If trials planned for 2010 are successful the following year could see adjustments to the infrastructure at Zweisimmen, modifications to the existing rolling stock being carried out, and 35 of the new bogies (and possibly additional coaches) ordered. The total cost is estimated at some CHF44m which will be substantially funded by the Cantons of Vaud, Fribourg and Berne. The plan would then be that with effect from the timetable change in December 2012 three train sets would run between Montreux and Interlaken Ost followed in 2014 by five train sets operating a 2-hour regular timetable. Between Zweisimmen and Interlaken East it is proposed that modified BLS RBDe 560 railcars (or similar) would be utilised to haul the gauge-change coaches.

Will this innovative proposal be successful? In engineering terms there is no doubt that the bogies could be made to work but the timescale of the development period seems to be overly optimistic and it is unclear if all the potential costs and maintenance issues have been fully thought through. As the bogies will only be suitable for use under loco-hauled stock there will have to be a time-consuming engine change at Zweisimmen, hence the conventional economic wisdom of using multiple unit



trains will not be applicable. The bottom-line is that with a change of train still needed at Interlaken Ost will the expenditure be worth the effort? Only time will tell.

The editor has based this article on MOB Press Releases courtesy Hans-Jürg Spirgi, information on their website and in the technical press, and on German-English translations kindly provided by SRS Member William Venton.