

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2018)
Heft: 136

Rubrik: Swiss news

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 02.04.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Swiss News

RhB - Breakthrough in the new Albula Tunnel.

On 2nd October, the Rhätische Bahn tunnellers, working from both portals, met and broke-through to complete the basic bore of the new Albula Tunnel. The crew from Spinass were the first through and they handed over the statue of the patron saint of tunnelling, Saint Barbara, to their Preda colleagues. It has taken 3 years for the headings from Preda and Spinass to meet, an achievement because work stops in the winter conditions at 1,820m altitude. In total, 250,000 m³ of rock have been removed. The excavated material serves as the raw material for concrete and ballast production, and has been processed in the plant at Preda. The new tunnel is 5,860 m long, and its planned cost is CHF345m. There remains now, the completion of the tunnel lining, the preparation of the tunnel bed, and the installation of rails, communications systems etc. When the new tunnel opens, in the winter of 2021-22, twelve side passages into the adjacent old tunnel will form part of a safety system that utilises the former 1903 tunnel. In coordination with the program for the work on the tunnel, the stations at each end will be modernised. Both Preda and Spinass stations will be upgraded to state-of-the-art technology during 2020 and 2021 and upgraded for disabled access. At Spinass the platform will be raised and extended and the passing loop will be extended. Preda will receive an additional, third track so that the winter season 'sledge train' operation can be handled separately on track 1. Regular trains will use tracks 2 and 3, for which a central platform will be built, accessed by a new passenger underpass.



SBB 460 016 entering Thun, with classic train of EW IV cars.

Photo: Bryan Stone

SBB - Renovation of 200 EW IV passenger coaches.

Between 1981 and 1992 the SBB purchased 496 new EW IV series coaches for long-distance trains. Together with others later taken over from BLS, there were in all 550 of these, and some variants such as Buffet/Restaurant and also baggage cars. This comfortable equipment is a general favourite for regular travellers, and they have been renovated and substantially updated since. Despite some withdrawals, they are fully engaged, mainly in German-speaking Switzerland, in Inter-Regio traffic, and strengthening services for IC lines. They might have gone earlier, but the late delivery of the new Bombardier trains, and steadily rising passenger numbers, mean their present use will continue at least beyond 2020. A problem thus arose when, among coaches renovated some 20 years ago, corrosion in side and under floor structure was discovered. Water had penetrated window seals undetected,

collecting in accessible parts, causing long-term damage despite standard protective measures. Given the shortage of rolling stock, a priority programme has been implemented for 200 coaches. Olten Works was not able fully to handle this additional workload, so 25 coaches will be renovated by Josef Meyer Rail AG in Rheinfelden AG, whose usual work is with intermodal and tank wagons.

Basel - A major new intermodal terminal.

After years of debate, the Federal Council has now approved the construction of a new intermodal terminal north of Basel Badischer Bahnhof, on Swiss territory but using some 110,000 sq.m. of land formerly occupied by a redundant marshalling yard DB. At this stage CHF130m are authorised for this important project. Although at first a rail/road interchange is foreseen, the project aims to service a new (third) dock basin to be built for the Basel Rhein-Harbour, property of Basel Stadt. The growth of Rhein shipping of containers, mainly through Rotterdam, which will continue their journeys by rail or road, and the overall growth of intermodal traffic, make this project inevitable, despite some sectional interests. Also, the small and outdated terminal at Wolf, near Basel SBB, which cannot even handle full trainloads, can finally be closed.

The 'Summer Timetable'.

As we were warned, the extensive track repairs, new works and rebuilding of this summer led to substantial modifications in services, so that the overall effect was of an alternative timetable affecting many services and connections. Information had been good, carried also by local and regional media; popular acceptance seemed reasonable, though a few indignant readers' letters talked of missed trains and longer rides. The most complex was the complete closure between Lausanne and Puidoux-Chexbres, affecting almost all services on the national axis Zürich-Geneva. Trains used the steep single track between Puidoux-Chexbres and Vevey, with reversal at Vevey, a lengthy and adventurous solution; many trains were cancelled, and the alternative via Neuchâtel was certainly popular. Between (Basel) Sissach and Olten, some trains ran south on the usual route, some, for Zürich, went back to the Bözberg, as they always used to, and northbound trains from Olten had the excitement of the old Hauenstein, Switzerland's first main line, built by Thomas Brassey but now otherwise a rustic branch. The freight for the Lötschberg also went this way, but in the summer, trade with Italy is not quite so hectic. It all finished on 26th August and on a trip from Basel to Spiez on 28th August all was normal.

Swiss Statistics.

It was announced in the autumn that Switzerland is world champion at train riding. Each Swiss averages 72 single journeys/year by rail; second comes Luxembourg with 38 annually for each resident. Switzerland also has the most train-kilometres/head at 2,463, with Austria next with 1,425 train kilometres/head. In their small country the Luxembourgish cannot travel too far!

Zürich Statistics.

What does public transport cost? Recently published are some interesting statistics for 2017. The entire Zürich-Verkehrs-Verbund, ZVV, achieves cost cover of 67%. This has risen over five years from 62%, despite rising service volume. The total annual support from public funds, is CHF328m, CHF50m down from 2007.

Passenger service returning?

In October a working party of local and national politicians from Cantons Zürich and Aargau asked the Federal Government to consider reopening the Rhine Valley line between Koblenz (AG) and Laufenburg to passenger traffic, to allow through semi-fast Winterthur - Basel trains. This would reinstate the service withdrawn in 1990. With modern rolling stock Winterthur - Basel (with stops in Bulach, Koblenz, Laufenburg and Rheinfelden) should be feasible in under 60 minutes, a lot less than the current 90 minutes via Zürich. The initial reaction from the SBB is that the line has insufficient capacity to accommodate regular passenger traffic. This is probably true, since after the withdrawal of local passenger trains in 1994, the infrastructure was simplified by extending signal block sections and lifting passing loops. Whatever the outcome, it is unlikely that any trains will be reinstated within the next 10 - 15 years.

Jungfraubahn halted by rock fall.

On the morning of 2nd August, before the start of operations, some 70Kg of boulders fell onto the track in the tunnel near to the Jungfraujoch Station, blocking the track. The so-called 'Vorstellwagen', a works train that inspects the route before the first tourist trains, drove into it and derailed its front axle. The train crew were not injured and walked the last few metres of the route. The track was cleared so that operations could start at 16.00. The reason for the rock fall was not immediately clear but the JB was working with a geologist to investigate this unusual rock fall.

Kursbuch - Good news.

The Verkehrsclub der Schweiz (VCS) now claims 12,000 sales for the Kursbuch (that lists timetables for railways, cableways and ships) that they published in Dec 2018, after the SBB/CFE had given it up. At the end of August 2018 VCS sent out invitations to order (paid in advance) the 2019 timetable. Many members were interested, so contact details are Verkehrsclub der Schweiz, Aarbergerstrasse 61, Postfach, CH 3001 Bern; vcs@verkehrsclub.ch. They will send details. You may write in English, and pay by electronic Bank transfer. For local needs, ask about regional timetables that are often free, and unlike the new Kursbuch, normally have PostAuto and local bus services in them. An example is the 'Fahrplan Berner Oberland'. This is valid for 12 months, with all trains, buses, ships, and mountain lines listed, and available at stations, tourist offices, or Post Offices.

PostAuto - A favourite journey is no more.

For many years my family were regular users of the service from Meiringen station to Engstlenalp, a 50 minute trip up the Gental to a 2,000m high valley. We always thought that a steady stream of hikers and mountain walkers frequented it, and on many occasions a duplicate bus had to be turned-out to handle the demand. Obviously this was not always the case as we learned in Summer 2018 that it was this season withdrawn by PostAuto - probably due to a revenue shortfall. Although it appears that a replacement, locally operated private bus from Innertkirchen exists, unusually for Switzerland, we could find no details.

PostAuto - The financial scandal continues.

On a more serious note than the withdrawal of a favourite PostAuto route is the news that the total sum to be repaid by PostAuto is not now CHF78m as first said, nor CHF95m as assessed in summer, but CHF208m. This is compensation

for excessive subsidies justified by manipulated book-keeping. Criminal investigation still proceeds. In the autumn a Swiss newspaper published a reader's letter, the sentiments of which many will echo. "It is not the whole of PostAuto which stands disgraced, but only a handful of those who were in the know. Our respect for the several thousand drivers, fitters, etc. who provide services unfailingly and with highest professionalism, should not fail; they are the ones to whom we should now show our support."

PostAuto - Moving forward.

At the end of August PostAuto Switzerland ordered 145 new buses for a total of CHF50m. Contrary to previous statements made by PostAuto that the future lies in CO2-free buses, 140 of the buses ordered are normal diesel powered, and only five are the more expensive hybrid electro-diesels. Perhaps their financial problems are having an impact here. Pure electrically driven buses may be an alternative in the future and these are currently being trialled by PostAuto. One of these started on the 10th September on the route between Sarnen and Alpnach in Canton Obwalden. The vehicle is a 'Citea SLF-120 Electric' built in the Netherlands by CDL. The 12m long bus has a battery capacity of 180 KWh and can travel a distance of 80 to 90 km between charging. Batteries will be charged overnight in Sarnen bus garage as well as topped up during the short wait at Alpnach Dorf station. However, at the present time, such buses are much more expensive to buy than diesel powered or hybrid ones, and apparently have range and reliability issues on cross-country routes. Massive infrastructure investment would also be required to implement all the charging points needed. Charging also is time-consuming, resulting in longer layovers between services.



Schynige Platte Loco near Wilderswil.

Photo: Bryan Stone

Schynige Platte Bahn (SPB) - Bad News?

The SPB is running slowly but surely into a problem of sustainability. The Berner Oberland Bahnen (BOB), part of the Jungfraubahn group, is assessing the future of the SPB's 'nostalgia' image. The rolling stock and equipment are a century old, the workshop resources are rudimentary (and, like the BRB, achieve wonders) and new staff no longer have the historic skills needed to keep these vehicles going. Increasing difficulty with maintenance and repairs, especially with breakdowns and spare parts, are apparent. The SPB is only marginally profitable, and reserves for modernisation do not exist. The BRB in Brienz overcame this problem with several years of a refinancing appeal with its 'Friends', but the SPB could not. The BOB will experiment with surviving sets from the 101-118 series of the WAB, which were once the successors of the

SPB locomotives there too. A trial in 2005 was inconclusive as the floods of the Lauterbrunnen valley so badly damaged unit No.105 that it was broken up. However, HG2/3 No. 5, the SPB steam rack engine, is back at work, and this winter it will be re-tubed ready for next year. If you have not travelled on it previously it may be worthwhile to ride the SPB in 2019.

SBB Zug-Arth-Goldau.

The extensive works planned for this section of this alternative Gotthard route along the east side of the Zuger See, including station rebuilding and extensive double-tracking, have been held up by legal objections. The last of these has now been resolved, so that work will start in mid-2019. Most trains between Zürich and the Gotthard will run via Rotkreuz, taking about 15 minutes longer.

RhB.

The Rhätische Bahn has started a large, 10-year project in Landquart. On new ground north of the river bridge a completely new workshop, locomotive depot, headquarters and infrastructure depot is being built, scheduled for completion in 2019. Then a start will be made on double-tracking between Landquart and Malans. The next phase concerns developments in the area around the present loco depot, the entire siding layout, and the tracks and platforms of the joint SBB/RhB station. These works have a budget of CHF136m with further rolling stock workshops planned. Your Swiss News Editor first saw Landquart in 1967, and walked at track level, over the boards, to change trains, and later to visit the monumental old locomotive roundhouse. Times change!

Blonay-Chamby - 50th anniversary parade

What was Switzerland's first museum railway, was an abandoned section of the Vevey Electric Railway, CEV, which was rescued and put into operation in 1968. The first operations utilised the Mallet locomotives of the German metre gauge Zell-Todtnau line (not far from Basel) and with a Class 99 0-10-0T of the DB. Today it is one of Europe's leading museums of narrow gauge railways and has a most diverse collection of steam and electric rolling stock. For the anniversary at Whitsuntide, various friendly railways in Switzerland also sent exhibits, including the newly restored G3/4 No.208 of the Ballenberg line, and the 0-4-0T 'Ticino' (see separate report from Brienz), and my old friend Mallet No.164 of La Traction in the Jura. An extraordinary spectacle was thus a parade of 10 metre-gauge steam engines on the Blonay-Chamby line, and a great open day at the depot in Chaulin. To celebrate, the B-C plans to restore to service its Mallet loco G2x3/3 No.104, of 1925, heroine of the first 11 years, which since 1979 has been a static exhibit at Chaulin depot.

Former 'Rail-In Club', Interlaken.

Members may have seen a collection of historic passenger coaches, stored in sidings near Interlaken West. These were the property of 'Rail-in Club' in Interlaken, which were used from 1982 for specials and private parties. On the death of Herr Ellenberger, the initiator, the club was liquidated in 2013 and the vehicles were no longer used. In June 2018 they were removed, some for scrap and some for Centralbahn AG Basel (CBB). This company is a railway operating company with a fleet of private coaches kept in Germany, and also several locomotives including original SBB Re4/4 Nos.10006, 10008 and 10019, two DB Class 110 locos, and three Austrian machines. Of the 20 vehicles, 11 went to CBB's operating base in Mönchengladbach, needing substantial attention.

The Interlaken sidings are now empty.

SNCF/CFF Delle-Belfort - A long-awaited re-opening.

On 9th December 2019 passenger trains will again run, between Delle and Meroux on the route to Belfort. It is a modest start, as services are not as yet timetabled onward to Belfort as might have seemed natural, and is the long-term objective once the French sort themselves out. At Meroux, where the newly restored line crosses the TGV Station on a bridge at right angles, no connection is made! It's France!

CJ – Problems!

The CJ's 11km standard gauge line between Porrentruy – Bonfol is an 'orphan', a single line branch cut off from the organisation's main metre-gauge network, and is correspondingly difficult to service adequately. There are two second-hand 45 year old Class 566 railcar sets in service; but in summer 2018 one was in the BLS Oberburg Depot (Burgdorf) for heavy repairs. The peak-hour services had to be supplemented by bus as it simply had no suitable equipment of its own to give more capacity. These units will have to be replaced at some time with serious financial implications. A substantial threat to the CJ comes from SBB-Cargo's troubles. The CJ has built up an extensive freight business over its entire metre gauge network, between Glovelier, Tavanne and La Chaux de Fonds. This includes some 20,000 tonnes of round timber, and regular steel, heating oil, and sugar beet traffic. All this moves in standard gauge wagons on narrow-gauge transporter trucks, mostly exchanged at Tavanne and Glovelier. SBB Cargo, desperate to cut costs, plans to close all service points in the Jura leaving only Delémont and Glovelier, with Alle, Bure and Porrentruy on demand. Bure is the terminus of the military branch, which generates block trains, including tanks. It is not clear how the CJ narrow gauge network would be affected. SBB say the interchange cargo will end, but the CJ are presently renovating its transporter trucks. The government of Canton Jura is protesting. It is Switzerland's poorest canton and often feels 'left out' by the implementation of policy decisions by nation-wide organisations that appear to side-line the region.

Also in the Jura.

La Traction, is the steam operating organisation based at Pre-Petitjean on the CJ. On 29th August it sent its Portuguese 2-4-6-0T Mallet compound, No.206, to the Travys line between Yverdon and Ste-Croix as a guest loco for special running. This line, with its formidable gradients, had its own Mallets in steam days. The small Portuguese Mallet, 0-4-4-0T No.164, visited the Blonay-Chamby festival.

Lugano – Ponte Tresa...

The recent decision to extend services in the Lugano region, after 4 years' evaluation and political discussion, is now supported by an order to Stadler Rail for nine new train sets. Since street running is planned for the new network, the trains are 25 cm narrower than metre-gauge norm.

...and also in Lugano.

A short while ago in *Swiss Express* we had an article about the Funicular 'Degli Angeli', at the southern end of the city promenade that was closed in 1986. The track bed, its single car, and the operating mechanism were retained, and now, with considerable interest all around, a study has been financed by the City, to evaluate a re-opening. Even the Federal Cultural Department is supporting the project.

RailAdventure.

This is a railway operating company specialising in haulage and transfers of rolling stock for manufacturers and others. It is, for example, under contract to Stadler to haul the 33 trains for Mälåb in Sweden and the 52 trains for Merseyside in GB, on the Swiss section of their delivery journey. It has just purchased two Class 620 Re6/6 locomotives, Nos. 003 and 004, which were among the class prototypes ordered by SBB in 1969. No.620 003 is now in service; No.620 004 is in Bellinzona being renovated.

BLS News items.

1. Lötschberg old tunnel

The BLS have renamed the old Lötschberg Tunnel as the Lötschberg-Scheiteltunnel to avoid confusion with the Lötschberg Base Tunnel. The double-track in the old tunnel is 40-years old, and the drainage is poor. All is to be replaced in a project running to up to 2022, with a lower track set in a concrete bed, giving a loading gauge allowing 4m corner height, urgently needed for intermodal trains. Present traffic is a passenger service hourly each way, then the auto-transport trains, half-hourly (and in the high seasons, summer and winter, much more frequent) and surprisingly, up to 50 freight trains daily. For the four years this will take, the 'Lötschberger' regional services through to Domodossola will continue, although with some timetable changes. Some stations on the South Ramp will be served only by bus. It is constantly being noted in the Swiss press that the Lötschberg Base Tunnel is at or beyond its limits; we hope the politicians who held back its original completion with full double-track are turning in their graves at the costly measures now needed to keep things going!

2. Tunnel record

On 20th September the BLS celebrated carrying 50,000,000 cars through the Lötschberg tunnel since the inception of the Motorail service in 1960. The service is very important to BLS and the cantons of Berne and Valais. Currently the track through the tunnel is being upgraded in a 4-year programme described above..

3. BLS Cargo

In 2017 BLS Cargo ran 17,529 freight trains, mostly intermodal blocks for various integrators, with revenue over CHF200m. The disruption at Rastatt was a fearful challenge, but BLS's new partnership with SNCF Logistics, which is a 45% shareholder, and also its Captrans operations in Italy and Germany, proved beneficial. It has undoubtedly won cargo through its management of the Rastatt crisis. BLS Cargo has altogether 55 multi-current freight locomotives, of which 15 are new Siemens Vectron locos, which can run in Italy, Germany and Holland.

4. Watching the action

Readers may have noticed that the BLS workshops in Spiez are being completely rebuilt. Passing on the 28th August we saw a large area cleared of buildings and tracks, once alive with locomotives of all varieties. The thoughtful will ask, '*How do they manage?*' One answer is that locomotives for the freight trains are presently stabled on the tracks alongside Spiez station. So walk in and go to Platform 5 to see them all, but keep a watch out for signals as the Lötschberg freights roll through, often on the passenger tracks. An hour suffices to see many trains and engines. Morning is better than afternoon, for light and shade, and lunch can be taken in the Migros restaurant across the road, with a spectacular view over Spiez, its harbour and the mountains.

5. More investment

BLS has announced plans to modernise its Bönigen works at a cost of CHF100m and to centralise all heavy maintenance there. Construction will start in 2019 and finish 2025. The rebuilt Spiez works, and the yet to be built new works west of Berne, will subsequently concentrate on light maintenance.

6. Tunnel opening.

On 25th August the BLS officially opened the Rosshäusern tunnel on the Berne-Neuchâtel line. The new tunnel is 2 km long and double-track. It replaces the bottleneck of the old single-track tunnel. Construction cost CHF265m and due mainly to geological problems, took 6 years.

SBB News items.

1. Internet provision

As promised earlier this year, the SBB is going ahead with its plans to provide free fast Internet connections in its long distance services. New signal masts have been built and signal amplifiers installed in many carriages, Testing should start in the next few weeks.

2. Seat reservations

SBB has also promised to revamp its seat reservation system for long distance travellers. Planned is a simple to use reservation system with a visual map of the seating similar to that used when booking air travel. On some trains food and drink could be ordered in advance at the seat. The SBB has given no time indication for the implementation of this system.

3. Zürich changes

On October 2, 2018, the SBB changed all 200 of its ticket machines in the ZVV (Zurich Transport Authority) area to the standard SBB screens.

4. Olten works

The new maintenance shop at the SBB's Olten works entered service in early September 2018. Olten is now capable of not only servicing single passenger carriages, but complete 150m-long regional passenger train sets in one go. The unique under-floor lifting gear can raise a train set 2m, which allows under floor maintenance at the same time as above floor maintenance to take place, thus reducing the amount of workshop time.

5. Ticket machines

As previously announced SBB has confirmed that they will be reducing the number of ticket machines throughout the network. The current 1st generation machines are becoming life-expired. Despite objections to the proposal SBB argues that few people now use the ticket machines, preferring to purchase tickets online or by smartphone. However casual observations at local stations in Canton Aargau by one of our correspondents show regular ticket machine use. No guarantee is currently being given that a station will retain at least one ticket machine.

6. Class 502s arrive

SBB's new double-deck Bombardier InterCity trains will, after several months of trials, be entering service on the 9th December 2018 on the route Geneva Airport – Bern – Zürich – St. Gallen. Other routes will follow as deliveries continue.

7. SBB Cargo International

All 18 Vectrons have now been delivered. They are primarily in use on Trans-Alpine intermodal freight between Germany and Italy.

8. Reduced seating capacity to Italy

Until the end of 2018 six RABe Class 503 'Astro' units will

be unavailable due to faults with springs in the bogies. Alstom will replace the springs under guarantee, but this involves the bogies being removed and rebuilt, which will take time. In the meantime, passengers travelling to the Ticino and Milano have been warned that some trains may have limited passenger accommodation. The services affected are Frankfurt-Basel-Milano, Zürich-Milano-Venice and Genève-Milano.

9. Withdrawn locos

Some 17 Re4/4 II have been withdrawn between January and July. Several are stored, and may be re-used. Bm4/4 No.18443 was also scrapped.

Lausanne.

In the driest Swiss summer ever recorded, Lausanne went astray. On 11th June the city recorded its heaviest rainfall ever. Some 40 litres per sq.m. fell in 10 minutes in a thunderstorm. The main subway under the CFF/SBB station became a river, and it took two months to repair the resulting damage and restore it. During the storm and resulting flood the trains ran – although few could reach them!

MOB/RhB – A correction.

Our recent note that two MOB locos are to go to the RhB has subsequently been seen as incorrect. In practice only one, No.8003, was transferred in September 2018, as the MOB now needs the other one.

A new railway.

Under the name 'Limmatalbahn' a light railway is being developed from Zürich Altstetten to Killwangen in Canton Aargau. Stage 1 from Altstetten to Schlieren is currently under construction. There has been considerable opposition to the construction of Stage 2 from Schlieren through Dietikon to Killwangen, but in a referendum on 23rd September the electorate of Canton Zürich voted for Stage 2 to go ahead. There is now much discussion in and around the Baden area as to whether or not the railway should be extended a further 6km into Baden and especially which route it should take. This will be a long drawn-out process and no doubt will require a referendum in the Baden area.



New AB stock lined up at Appenzell. Photo: Georg Trub via the Internet. Forwarded by Jason Sargerson.

AB News.

The Appenzeller-Bahn's St Gallen to Teufen route, including the new Ruckhalde tunnel, was scheduled to reopen to timetable traffic on the 7th October. The route through the new tunnel will be 6.98km as against 7.16km of the old line. The AB's new units ABr4/12 Nos.1000-1005, are now in service between Gossau and Wasserauen.

BRB.

Apart from its Snowdon adventure the BRB has been busy completing its programme of summer track renewal. This was very weather-dependent and it was a close run

thing. Snow clearance cost four times the budgeted figure after a record winter in 2017/8.

New in Zermatt.

On the 29th September Zermatt Mountain Railways opened its new 3S cable railway to the Klein Matterhorn. The new 3S 'Mountain Glacier Ride' has a passenger capacity of 2,000 persons/hour. Each cable car has a glass bottom enabling passengers to look down. The new cable railway cost CHF55m and is the biggest single investment in the history of the Zermatt Mountain Railways. Plans are now being made to link the Klein Matterhorn from the Italian side.


Stadler Rail.

This Swiss company, with production facilities in a number of European countries (and the USA), has now started to turn-out the first of numerous units it is building for Britain's East Anglia services. Reports reach us that trial running is in progress in various parts of Switzerland as well as on the Velim testing facility in the Czech Republic. On 13th August Stadler was awarded a contract (supported by the Welsh Assembly) for 36 new tram-trains; 11 Flirts, and 24 units with battery, diesel and overhead power supply, to run on the 'Wales and Border' franchise. It is also producing equipment for Merseyrail and the Glasgow Subway. The first of 17 four-car units for this unique 4ft (1200mm) gauge operation was on display at InnoTrans in Berlin during September. They will enter service in 2020.

Basel BLT/BTB - A personal note.

Your Swiss News Editor has just concluded the English draft of a history of the metre-gauge Birsigthalbahn, (BTB), the unusual border crossing light railway near Basel, which is now swept up in Line 10 of the BLT. This history was first published in German in instalments for a Basel newspaper. It is now scheduled for publication by SRS in 2019. Just as I finished, I heard that our familiar old railcar No. 8, built by Schindler in 1951, which ran, after being sold in 1986, for over 30 years for Stern und Haffel on their Austrian lines, has again been sold for €6,000 to a museum line near Sibiu in Rumania. It will be used on a 7km line to serve the local zoo. At the same time it was announced that BLT had sold six of the 1976 batch of Schindler-built Be4/8 trams (used on Line 10) to Gotha Tramways (TWSB) for use on the German city's recently rerieved tram network in the State of Thüringen. Swiss quality keeps on giving.

Good news from across the Atlantic.

Some editions ago we reported that the Manitou and Pikes Peak cog railway, that uses Swiss-built equipment, was threatened with closure. The line is now to be called Pikes Peak Cog Railway and will be redeemed following a 27th June decision to reconstruct the whole railway including track and rolling stock. A budget of \$100 million is broadly planned. It is unclear if Swiss expertise will again be called-for. 

Editor's Note

Sometimes these reports contain prior notice of planned work and interruptions of normal services. These are without guarantee - see the first item! Readers must check locally, or on websites when travelling, to avoid disappointment, but also because such projects can change even at short notice.

Swiss News is compiled by Bryan Stone and includes input from other SRS members including Robert Amstutz, Michael Donovan, Mario Gavazzi, Ernst Leutwiler, and others.