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Swiss News

Federal Parliament approves new rail infrastructure budget.

A major political decision in Bern on June 4th 2019 assures that rail infrastructure works, for the next 15-20 years in Switzerland are now securely financed. Both houses of the Parliament have now approved the budget of CHF 12.9 billion francs for the modernisation of the rail network in the period up to 2035.

Only a handful of right-wing members voted against the programme, which includes some 200 projects to be carried out, many of them on the principal national route Genève – St. Gallen. The big ones, to name a few, are:

- New stations, Winterthur Grüze and Thun Nord.
- Detailed planning for the Basel ‘Heart’ line (from SBB station underground to Bad. Bahnhof).
- Detailed planning of the direct lines under the lake at Luzern, to avoid reversal.
- Doubling the remaining single line sections of the Lötschberg Base Tunnel.
- Brüttenertunnel, between Zürich and Winterthur.
- Zimmerbergtunnel II, on the route Zürich – Zug – Luzern.
- New route Neuchâtel – La Chaux de Fonds (avoiding reversal at Chambrelieu).
- New station layout, Zürich Stadelhofen.
- Double track, Duggingen – Grellingen.
- Airport connection, Basel.
- Electrification of the Rhein north bank line (partly in Germany).

Recalling that many heavy works are already in hand, readers will note that the objective is not now ‘higher speed at all costs’, but sustained frequency and higher capacity. The routes Genève - Lausanne - Echallens; La Chaux-de-Fonds - Neuchâtel; Fribourg - Olten - Zürich - Wil; Zürich - Luzern, and Aarau - Wettingen - Zürich, and some other regional lines, are now planned for a systematic round the clock service every 15 minutes; most other main lines will be served half-hourly.

Basis for this work is that passenger traffic in the next 20 years is expected to increase by 51% and freight on major routes by 45%. These are not fantasies, but an extension of existing demand growth, given changing patterns of residence and mobility. Capacity is also urgently needed for the conflicting demands of passenger travel, and international European freight using north-south paths. Highway space is already at a premium and congestion has increased rapidly in the last ten years. The budget is therefore, for a prosperous Switzerland, not a luxury but a matter of survival. But it will mean a lot of holes, steel and concrete. *Bryan Stone*

SBB FV Dosto (Class 502) operational stability improving

By the end of April the new trains were achieving an average distance of 8000 km per failure (the figure the previous December was as low as 900 km). Encouraged by the improvement, SBB intended to accept more units from

Bombardier in May and June and hoped to have 21 trains available for service in time for the June timetable change.

The door problems appear to have been overcome. New software and the replacement of sensors that were stopping doors from closing, have eliminated failures from that source.

The dissatisfaction with running noise and vibration has been addressed by altering the wheel profile and modifying the tilt control software on units 502 006 and 502 007, both of which are still in the hands of Bombardier as test trains.

Furthermore, SBB has commissioned independent experts to measure the slope of all the door ramps in each train it has accepted. The maximum slope allowed is 15% and the average measurement was 14.8%. Accessibility campaigners, Inclusion Handicap, continue to fight their case with the courts and a decision is still awaited.

All accepted trains are still to be found on IR13/37 Chur-St. Gallen-Zürich-Basel SBB. Concentrating them on one route allows drivers and train crew to obtain more operating experience, which is believed to be contributing to the improved service stability. Operation on IC3 from Basel SBB – Zürich-Chur is anticipated for the December timetable change, but SBB is still not prepared to give any commitment on a date for service introduction on the flagship route for which the trains were intended, IC1 Genève – St Gallen.

The improvements are doing little to repair SBB’s damaged image, however. SRF-Rundschau broadcast an investigative report on 15th May in which Marcel Lumsky, leader of the FV Dosto project, was confronted with photographs by “whistle-blowing insiders” of the many manufacturing defects with which the new trains have suffered.

According to a report in Blick newspaper on 25th May, the tight rolling stock situation, that the absence of the Class 502 has produced, is forcing SBB to hire two trains from the Südostbahn (SOB). Scratch rakes sometimes include 40-year old Bpm 51 second class carriages. These non-air-conditioned vehicles should all have been withdrawn from service last autumn but are now expected to soldier on until 2022.

First Giruno service

On 8th May a Giruno operated a Zürich – Erstfeld and Erstfeld-Basel SBB diagram. As an additional first, this was the first commercial run of a long distance train in Switzerland with ETCS Baseline 3.

As from 13th May a Giruno was diagrammed for two return services a day on IR36/IR37 Basel SBB – Zürich. The intention is to gain as much passenger experience before introduction on Basel SBB-Lugano/Chiasso in December with extension to Milano Centrale planned for spring next year.

IC2000 renovation

By the time this edition of *Swiss Express* appears the first complete modernised train should be in operation.

SBB to trial free 3G/4G internet access

Unlike their counterparts in other countries SBB has not so far introduced wireless internet access via WiFi on its trains. As readers will know, the drawback of WiFi is that the bundling together of a number of internet connections results in “bottlenecks” which strangle individual passengers’

connections. Lineside reception via 3G or 4G is very good in Switzerland so the railway is to experiment with providing free access under an initiative to be known as “SBB Free Surf”.

The facility will at the outset only be available to customers of Swiss networks “Salt” and “Sunrise” and will be trialled on IC 5 : Genève-Aéroport - Biel/Bienne - Zürich HB - St.Gallen and IC 51 : Basel SBB - Biel/Bienne. Talks are also taking place with provider “Swisscom”. What solution will be found for foreign tourists or those without a Swiss SIM card is not clear, but SBB has said it intends to introduce WiFi to international services next year.

SBB Timetable changes for 2020

The main alterations envisaged in the December 2019 timetable change are alterations to international connections and the introduction of the Léman Express.

TGV Lyria services are to be altered to coincide with the introduction of TGV “Euroduplex” trains. The amendments are causing unhappiness in the areas affected. From December there will only be three Lausanne – Paris services daily via the traditional route via Vallorbe, Frasné and Dijon. Instead an additional train pair will run via Genève, Bellegarde and Ambérieu. Canton Vaud is unhappy, reminding Lyria that only a few years ago the Federation had contributed a double-digit million franc contribution to the improvement of the power supply on the Jura route.

In addition, Bern will lose its single direct TGV service to the French capital. There will be six daily connections to TGV services at Basel SBB but with an extra half-hour journey time Bern politicians are unhappy.

DB will replace ICE1 units with new ICE4s on Basel – Zürich/Chur and Bern-Interlaken. 100 of these trains will be “Swiss-fitted” so it is hoped that fewer substitutions will be needed at Basel SBB when trains fail in Germany.

Zürich – Stuttgart remains hourly with seven direct trains and a further seven with a change at Singen as DB IC2 trains are not yet ready.

Léman Express update

The introduction of the Léman Express network around Genève will result in the largest international S-Bahn service in Europe. The new network will comprise 45 stations and some 230km of route mileage. Coppet – Genève – Annemasse will be served every fifteen minutes with hourly extensions to Annecy, Evian-les-Bains and St-Gervais-les Bains-Le Fayet assuming the new international fleet of 40 SBB Flirt and SNCF Alstom Régiolis trains are approved in time (see below).

An open day was held over the weekend of 29th/30th June at the four still unfinished stations; Lancy-Bachet, Genève-Champel, Genève-Eaux-Vives and Chêne-Bourg. The event, which was well attended, gave local people the chance to learn how the stations and their surroundings will look once finished. An evacuation exercise with volunteers to test the safety arrangements will be held on September 13th with 1000 volunteers.

Ilkka Huotelin

Approval delay to affect start of CEVA services?

The fleet to operate the new Léman Express S-Bahn

comprises, 23 SBB Stadler Flirts of Class RABe 522 and 17 Alstom Régiolis operated by Région Rhône-Alpes. As of May neither class had received approval from its opposite country's authorities, even though both share the same Alstom ETCS equipment with integrated KVB. Particular difficulties are apparently being experienced with acceptance of the Class 522 in France.

Unit 522 229, which is being used as an ETCS testbed by Stadler, could be seen on test over the summer on the preserved Emmentalbahn. It was stationed overnight at an electrified siding at Affoltern-Weier.

SBB rebuilding works timetabled for 2020

The new timetable will be affected by the ongoing Zugersee Ost blockade, and four-tracking at Liestal (work started on June 3rd) and on the Aarau-Olten corridor.

From October 2019 to April 2020 Zürich Flughafen track replacement will mean fewer trains are routed through the station with some long-distance services diverted.

Luzern commuters can look forward to a total closure of Hauptbahnhof over the weekend of 7th and 8th November 2020, when the station power supply will be renewed.

Liestal remodelling

As mentioned above major work at this station commenced on 3rd June. The CHF 380 million project will not be completed until 2025 and involves not just the creation of an additional platform to create four through roads but also a terminal platform for the S-Bahn service to Basel which will enjoy a 15-minute interval service.



Artists Impression of the new layout at Liestal. The Waldenburg narrow-gauge line is on the left, the new S-Bahn platform will be at the far end of the station.
©SBB CFF FFS

Lausanne station rebuild

The Bundesamt für Verkehr (BAV) has given the green light to the rebuilding of Lausanne station. The work is estimated to cost CHF 1.2 billion and will include platform extensions to accommodate 400-metre trains, wider platforms (which will be made possible by removal of the through road) and three new underpasses.

Alfred Escher can finally ride through the Gotthard Tunnel

Alfred Escher (1819-1882) was the driving force behind the Gotthard Tunnel but he never travelled through it during his lifetime. Now, 200 years after his birth, he is being given the chance by both Gotthard Panoramic Express and “Wood-

vetia”, (www.woodvetia.ch, an initiative of Swiss timber industries to showcase the products of Swiss forests). A life-size wooden figure of Escher will travel in the Gotthard Panorama Express from 1st June until the last service of the season on 20th October.



Photo: Mario Gavazzi

First Smoking Zones set up in Swiss railway stations

Railway operators in Switzerland have never sought to impose a ban on smoking outdoors on railway premises. As members who visit Switzerland regularly will know, smoking on platforms is prevalent and it is estimated that the butts of two-thirds of all the cigarettes smoked there end up on the track. Implementing a ban had previously been rejected as not consistent with the Swiss tradition of tolerance, but the absence of one is a major source of customer complaints.

This situation should now change. In future smoking on platforms will only be allowed in marked areas, as in Germany. For the largest stations with the longest platforms two areas per platform will be permitted. For medium-sized stations the quota will be one per platform and at the smallest stations a dedicated area will be provided near the station entrance.

The first stations to have the new smoking zones are Burgdorf, Lyssach, Hindelbank and Schönbühl, all in canton Bern. The plan is for almost 1,000 stations to be converted by the end of October and all stations across the country by mid-2020.

However, for the time being, there is no legal framework for fining smokers who don't stick to the zones. The project is based on "the entrepreneurial freedom of transport companies, not on a legal mandate", said the Verband öffentlicher Verkehr (VöV) which is behind the initiative.

Basel to Winterthur via Laufenburg in prospect again?

The idea to re-open the direct Basel-Winterthur line via Laufenburg has not gone away. Questions have now been lodged with Parliament in Bern. New through semi-fast services would cut 15 minutes off the present journey via Zürich HB. The line runs along the Rhine, is used by a handful of freight trains a day; most of its signalling and crossing infrastructure would need to be replaced and it is doubtful if it could generate enough passenger volume to justify reopening.

Robert Amstutz

Automatic couplings

Some 25 locomotives and 100 wagons of SBB Cargo have been fitted with automatic couplings since early May. They are currently running as container-carrying block trains between the terminals of Dottikon, Dietikon, Oensingen, Renen and Cadenazzo. Biasca and Mendrisio will also be served.

The difficulty in recruiting marshalling yard personnel, pressure to increase efficiency and reduce costs are behind this pioneer experiment. The wagons can be coupled automatically, but need manual intervention to uncouple. Further experiments are scheduled with a system for an automatic brake test, which should reduce the time needed for this task from the current 40 minutes to 10 minutes for a 500m train. A further anti-collision system is also being trialled.

Robert Amstutz

New display panel at Luzern

A new 100 metre long digital display panel has been erected at Luzern Hauptbahnhof. It displays onward public transport connections within the city and also advertises local exhibitions and places to visit.

Bellinzona works will now definitely close

In Canton Ticino a referendum was recently held to retain the old SBB workshops. It was voted against by a majority of 2:1. The SBB is now free to build a new facility in Castione and to hand over the old site to developers. The old works employed some 400 workers. The new works will employ 200- 230.

Robert Amstutz

BLS takeover of Bern-Biel/Bienne and Bern-Burgdorf-Olten delayed until 2021

The BLS will not be taking over these RE services from SBB as intended in December this year, as the appeal against the franchise award by the SBB is still outstanding. This was the decision of the Bundesverwaltungsgericht (Federal Administrative Court). The changeover is now scheduled for the December 2020 timetable change.

Eight new "MUTZ" trains are on order for these services. BLS say they are looking into alternative scenarios to bring them into operation.

The actual award procedure shows that new applicants for long distance services are currently at a disadvantage and the Bundesamt für Verkehr (BAV) intends to review it. The BLS welcomes this and says it is convinced more applicants would contribute with solutions to assist in controlling rising passenger numbers and cost pressures, if the process were improved.

Meanwhile, according to the weekend press of 1st/2nd June, SBB is alleged to have made an offer to the Bernese government to purchase the BLS. SBB denied it had any such plans and BLS made no comment.

BLS wants reform of subsidy provision

Following on from the above snippet, in a recent response to government proposals for modification of the subsidy regime, BLS has argued strongly that providers of public transport at a regional level must be allowed greater

financial freedom in the future. According to the company, transport operators have little incentive at the moment to seek efficiency savings or to improve the customer offering. If a company is able to reduce its operating costs it simply sees the corresponding subsidy reduced the following year.

Traverso enters service

At the beginning of June, Südostbahn (SOB) introduced the first of its new eight-car copper-liveried Stadler Flirt "Traverso" trains into regular service on their flagship Voralpen-Express (VAE) St. Gallen – Luzern route. In peak hours between St. Gallen and Rapperswil, the train will be strengthened with one of the four-car silver-liveried Flirts built at the same time (Class 526 00x). The December timetable change will see all six of the eight-car sets replacing the existing 40-year old VAE stock.

The VAE order was placed with Stadler in June 2016 and called for 6 eight-car and 5 four-car trains. Eleven further eight-car trains were ordered at the end of 2017 for the "Treno Gottardo" service which will start in December 2020, when through Basel/Zürich – Locarno services via the Gotthard Bergstrecke recommence, without the change in Erstfeld. In 2018 SOB placed a third order for 7 eight-car and 5 four-car sets for new Bern – Zürich – Chur through services, to be branded "Aare -Linth", which are due to commence with the December 2021 timetable change under a long-distance SBB concession. The total cost of the entire fleet will be CHF 480million.



In early June, at least one Traverso was observed on test on the Rhône Valley route by Jason Sargerson. Here is the Class 526 at Brig station. *Photo: Jason Sargerson*

BLS to pay back subsidy

Following on from the Postauto subvention scandal of last year it has now come to light that BLS has received CHF 29.4 million too much from the Swiss government. The fault lies with a calculation model which BLS was required to use by the government. BLS's auditors discovered the calculation error. In contrast to the issue with Postauto, all involved are in agreement that there was no intent to defraud. BLS has agreed to pay this money back over four years by receiving a reduced annual subsidy. *Robert Amstutz*

More Aem 940 shunters appearing

By November last year SBB had accepted 3 of 5 pre-series Alstom Prima H4 dual-mode locomotives of Class Aem 940.

They have been extensively tested on shunting and infrastructure duties and were to be seen last spring in the hump yard at Limmattal. Series delivery of 42 units is scheduled to begin this autumn.

Cadenazzo – Locarno doubling work

Work will shortly commence on the doubling of 4km of track on this line. The affected stretch will run from the bridge over the River Ticino north-east of Cadenazzo to the halt at Gordola where the railway crosses the River Verzasca. The stations at Riazzino-Cugnasco and Gordola will receive 220 metre platforms, those at the latter station being repositioned 200 metres to the east.

The doubling is necessary for the planned implementation of both a half-hourly Lugano – Locarno RE service to operate via the Ceneri Base Tunnel, as well as an improved Bellinzona – Locarno offering which will eventually incorporate the future SOB Traverso operated Basel/Zürich – Gotthard Bergstrecke – Locarno trains, although these will not stop at the minor stations.

St. Margrethen – Bregenz improvements

A 3 km stretch of the ÖBB line between Hard-Fussach and Lauterach will be doubled, in work scheduled to take place from this autumn until year end 2021. Work should have started last year but objections from residents have delayed the project. Hard-Fussach station will be rebuilt; a new stop created at Lauterach West; bridge supports will be renewed and noise walls installed. The total cost of the work will be €97m and will help improve Zürich to München long distance services. The Rheinbrücke outside St. Margrethen was rebuilt during 2010 – 2013.

Bridge refurbishment near Koblenz

During the summer months of 2019, 2020 and 2021, the single track, iron girder railway bridge over the River Aare between Felsenau and Koblenz on the Stein-Säckingen to Koblenz line will be refurbished. The bridge was built in 1892 by the Schweizerische Nordost Bahn (NOB), is 236m long, on a curve and has five impressive load-carrying girder spans.

The bridge has been refurbished several times since 1892. In 1932 the trackbed trough was replaced. In 1944 the bridge was electrified and in 1952 the buttress heads were renewed and strengthened. In 1984 a cladding was built over the bridge supports - in 1998 and 2004 after heavy flood waters, these were further strengthened.

The projected work will involve the creation of sheet pile boxes to allow the pilings to be renovated or replaced. This will involve major construction work in the river bed. The work will need to stop during the winter months so as not to affect fish breeding in the river. The pedestrian walkway along the bridge will be closed throughout the 28 month refurbishment. *Robert Amstutz*

No service at Altdorf in 2020

As a result of the rebuilding of Altdorf station no trains will stop here in 2020. Travellers will need to travel by bus. Many visitors to the capital of Canton Uri do so already as the station is some way from the town and currently only served by an hourly S-Bahn. The rebuild costing CHF 50m

will see platform lengths increased to 420m to accommodate InterCity stops. The siding currently used by fuel supplier Hubrol on the north-east side of the station will be relocated. Planning approval was expected in August and completion is anticipated for the end of 2021. The express buses that currently take the Seelisberg Autobahn Tunnel and which now terminate at the Tell monument in Altdorf will then also call at the station.

Singen – Etwilen to be restored

The erstwhile SBB Etwilen to Singen line was severed in 2003 by the construction of a roundabout on Georg-Fischer Strasse in Singen. The Singen Town Council has now approved the financing of the track's reinstatement, at this point at a total cost of €385,000 of which the Germans will contribute €205,000 with the remainder to come from Museumsbahn SEHR and RS. The work will be carried out during the Baden-Württemberg summer holidays so that we may see a restored through service this year.

Catenary renewal between Bad Zurzach and Koblenz

SBB has announced that the catenary and supporting masts will be replaced in the period March to December 2020 on the 6 km line between Bad Zurzach and Koblenz at a cost of CHF 4.1.Million. Half the masts stem from the 1940s and the rest from the 1950s. The catenary is over 30 years old. To minimise disruption, the mast will be mounted where possible on the opposite side of the track to the existing masts. The route will be closed after 22.00 each night and train services replaced by buses.

Robert Amstutz

Improvements at Basel SBB

SBB have erected a football pitch-sized work deck over the platforms in the trainshed of Basel SBB. Work will last until 2023 and involves corrosion protection, the installation of new and brighter lighting and an improved public address system. The estimated cost is CHF 34m.



Peronhalle-Basel.

©SBB CFF FFS

SBB to run sleeper trains again?

In an SRF news programme broadcast on the 30th May, Armin Weber, SBB's International Passenger Traffic Manager, confirmed that SBB was actively looking at a re-entry into the sleeper market in cooperation with Austria Railways (ÖBB). This was a surprising announcement given SBB's previous position, that competition with the low-cost air operators was impossible. The climate debate and political pressure are believed to have prompted the change of heart.

Herr Weber confirmed that new rolling stock would have to be ordered and any service introduction would be in 2022 at the earliest.

ÖBB have thirteen new sleeper trains on order to replace their existing fleet by 2022.

No vegan menus in SBB restaurant cars

The SBB has come under criticism from vegans for not having any vegan menus in its restaurant cars. The problem is not that SBB is refusing to offer such meals, but rather a logistical problem of insufficient storage space in the kitchen to cater for all tastes. No doubt more to follow.

Robert Amstutz

Stadler supplies further locomotives to European Loc Pool

European Loc Pool and Stadler have signed a contract for the construction and delivery of ten electric Co Co locomotives. This purchase is part of a framework agreement for a total of 100 locomotives which was announced on 20th May 2019.

The six-axle locomotives have been ordered in multi-system configuration for Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy (15 kV + 25 kV AC and 1.5 kV + 3 kV DC). If required, they can be equipped with one or two additional 900 kW diesel engines, and all of them have ETCS and radio remote control as standard features.

Stadler say that thanks to a Co Co axle configuration and output range of 9 MW, ELP locomotives are characterised by outstanding tractive effort. On many EU freight corridors, a single Co Co-hybrid locomotive can replace two Bo Bo locomotives for the same train weight. This will substantially reduce the cost base for freight rail operators and minimise wear and tear to the track infrastructure. Sophisticated bogie technology will cut track access costs.

Together with the hybrid locomotives on order, the ELP fleet now comprises 30 locomotives, all of which meet the latest technological requirements and can be used on both electrified and non-electrified tracks.

In hybrid configuration they are able to switch from electric to diesel traction whilst on the move. ELP is the first Stadler customer ordering this type of locomotive and it is also the first time in Europe that a TSI-compliant 9 MW power locomotive has ever been purchased.



Euro_ms.

©Stadler

SBB Cargo to dispose of Re482 locomotives

SBB Cargo is to dispose of its fleet of 50 Bombardier TRAXX locomotives of Class 482. The expense of refitting the 16 year old machines with ETCS cannot be justified.

Nos 482 048 and 482 049 are now with north German operator Hamburg Rail Service (HRS) of Ahrensburg, Schleswig-Holstein. Maintenance will still be carried out by SBB. Another five units are now on hire to Locon Logistik and Consulting of Berlin.

MOB loco now with RhB

On 3rd April MOB Ge 4/4 8003 was transferred on a low-loader to Landquart. RhB has purchased the DC loco and will convert it to AC operation. It will presumably receive fleet number 653 with RhB.

RhB universal driving trailers Bt 52801 – 52808 now in service

RhB ordered 13 low-floor universal driving trailers in 2013. Following the exercise of an option for 9 additional Capricorn trains, the order was subsequently reduced to 8.

The first could be seen in early 2018 in Landquart but major alterations proved necessary including repositioning of vacuum pumps from the roof space to the underfloor area. Last autumn they could be seen on test between Landquart and Davos Platz.

Since 20th March 2019 they have been seen in service on the vacuum-braked Engadin push-pull trains operating with non-dual-braked Ge 4/4s. There they have replaced BDt 1721-3 and BDt 1751-8. Only three have been needed as a consequence of the Engadin blockade between Susch and Scuol-Tarasp. In the second week of April a fourth was due to appear on the Arosa line.

Each of the new driving trailers is dual-braked and fully interoperable with both Ge 4/4^{II} and Allegra ABe 8/12. Each has 33 seats, two wheelchair spaces and an accessible toilet. Luggage racks are positioned behind the seat backs.

RhB Erlebniszug Rheinschlucht

From 2nd June to 27th October RhB are operating a Sundays-only special excursion service that makes three return journeys from Landquart via Chur to Ilanz. The train consists of two standard carriages, a number of open observation carriages and a luggage van for cycles and canoes. As the name of the train suggests the train is intended to encourage open-air activities in the Rhein Gorge. Standard second class fares apply.

RhB first Capricorn arrives in Landquart

The first completed Capricorn train, unit 3111, arrived in Landquart on Thursday 27th June. Service introduction is expected in late autumn.

Engadin blockade extended

On 19th June it was announced that the closure of the line between Susch and Scuol-Tarasp would be extended to the 6th October, due to difficulties encountered with works in the Magnacun tunnel.

Former Trogener Bahn Be 4/8 now in Neuchâtel

The five former Appenzeller Bahnen Be4/8 Nos 31 – 35,

previously used on the Trogen section and made redundant following the inauguration of the new through line in St. Gallen, were sold late last year to transN for operation on the Place Pury – Boudry “Littorail” in Neuchâtel. Following an extensive refurbishment by Stadler at Kreuzlingen, the first has now reached its new home.

Carrying its new livery and transN fleet number 032, it was photographed by Martin Fisher on the 6th June at the Place Pury terminus in Neuchâtel. Martin was unsure as to whether this was a test run or service journey as he says the tram was being driven cautiously and under supervision.



Photo: Martin Fisher

New access to platforms at Interlaken Ost

A major hindrance to passengers at Interlaken Ost has been the need to use underpasses to reach the platforms. Readers familiar with the location will know that they can become excessively crowded at peak times. This hindrance has now been removed. At the west end of the station a new access has been created from Höhweg (Englischer Garten) directly to platforms 1 to 5 for the trains of the BOB, ZB und BLS.

Aargau Verkehr AG (AVA) introduces new “Saphir” trains

“Saphir” is the name that has been given to five new Stadler ABe 4/12 units numbered 70-74 for Aargau Verkehr’s Wynental- und Suhrentalbahn section (WSB) which were formally launched into service on 20th May last.

Aargau Verkehr was founded in June 2018 following the merger of the WSB and the Bremgarten-Dietikon-Wohlen Bahn (BDWM). The forthcoming Limmattalbahn light railway extension of the Zürich tram system also comes under AVA’s aegis in September.

Rigi Bahnen announces new rolling stock order

At its Annual General Meeting held at Rigi Staffel on 23rd May Rigi Bahnen announced that it has ordered six new Bhe 4/6 trains from Stadler. The first should arrive in the spring of 2021 for testing with entry into service scheduled for the following autumn.

JB Group posts record results

In the June edition of Swiss Express we reported that the Berner Oberland operator had recorded the best results in its history, with a profit of some CHF 47.8m on a turnover of CHF 213m (up 10%). An astonishing 1,067,000 visitors

were welcomed to Jungfrauoch and it seems that the mountain will be even busier in 2019. The first three months of the year saw visitor numbers to the summit increasing by 7% compared to the first quarter in 2018. Better snow conditions meant that traditional skiing traffic also increased.

CHF 320m is being invested in new infrastructure connected with the V-Bahn project including a new car park and station building at Grindelwald Grund. For more information on the progress of the V-Bahn, see Glyn Jones' article elsewhere in this issue.

Jungfraubahnen introduces Selbstkontrolle

Tickets on the JB have traditionally been checked the old-fashioned way with an inspection by on-board staff throughout each journey. The rise in traffic is now making a physical inspection of every ticket impractical and JB is now introducing the Selbstkontrolle system familiar elsewhere in Switzerland. Spot checks will now operate and those without a valid ticket can expect the usual supplement of CHF90 minimum. Staff will still accompany each train, however, and will now accompany their customers over the entire journey from Interlaken to Jungfrauoch by either route, changing trains with them on all three sections.

SBB "Crocodile" 14253 transferred to Bellinzona

On Sunday 9th June last Ce 6/8^{II} No 14253 was transferred from Erstfeld to SBB Industrierwerk, Bellinzona to undergo a full repaint in advance of this autumn's centenary celebrations of the type. The transfer took place by rail behind an ETCS-fitted Re 4/4^{II}.

Hans Jörg Schweizer



Ueberführung Krokodil Erstfeld-Bellinzona, 3.6.2019.
Photo: Peter Jost

RBS Gem 4/4 No. 121 taken over by Bahnhistorische Verein Solothurn – Bern

This 1912-built dual-mode electric and diesel vehicle is not just the last surviving goods motorcar of the Bern-Zollikofen Bahn, but also one of just two metre gauge goods motorcars surviving in Switzerland.

Before it was handed over by the RBS to the society, extensive asbestos removal was necessary. As with many DC-motored vehicles the arc blowout chimneys in the control desk were tightly bound with asbestos. Asbestos cement sheets were found in the master switch box and the exhaust from the diesel engine was also wrapped with the material.

The RBS bore the entire cost of the asbestos removal, but further work to make the locomotive fit for exhibition has had to be funded by the society at an additional cost of CHF 15,000. Removal to the society's premises at Egolzwil cost a further CHF 5000.

DVZO update on Bauma improvements

When the SBB rebuilt the station site at Bauma in 2014, the Dampfbahn-Verein Zürcher Oberland (DVZO) lost direct access to its loco shed. Since then the only access to its buildings for visitors, deliveries and emergency services has been on foot. Over the last year a plan has been developed under the name of "Depotareal Bauma 2020" to improve access and for the DVZO to develop its own offering to visitors.

This will not be an easy project to achieve. It will involve SBB who wish to create a property development on their own grounds and a local utilities authority, as the river Töss flows nearby. It will therefore involve public money and the contracts will have to be publicly tendered.

Over the rest of this year the plans will be further worked up. This will allow the DVZO to apply for lottery funding.

The DVZO was established in 1969 and thus celebrates its 50th birthday this year. We hope to carry a report on them in the next edition of *Swiss Express*.

Königsfelden miniature railway update

Owing to a misunderstanding with the site's owners, the miniature steam railway in the grounds of the Königsfelden psychiatric institute (Brugg/Windisch) was unable to start the season in April as planned. The problem has now been solved and the railway will run one day a month until October. (See for timings.)

Robert Amstutz

Building work commences for Basel Tram Museum

15th May saw the start of work on Basel's new tram museum at Dreispitz tram depot. The museum hopes to open in January 2020, in time to mark the 125th anniversary of Basler Verkehrs-Betriebe (BVB).

BVB and the Genossenschaft Tram-Museum der Region Basel (GTMB) announced that Basel would have its long-desired tram museum in September 2018. After successful fundraising by the GTMB and a feasibility study by the BVB, the necessary building permit was secured.

The museum will be run by the GTMB and Tramclub Basel (TCB) and will open in two stages. Initially a welcome point and exhibition will be established in the existing depot. At a later stage a separate hall will be erected for non-serviceable vintage vehicles. A suitable location for this hall within the Dreispitz complex is currently being evaluated. Official opening is planned for 17th January 2020 to coincide with Museumsnacht 2020, when over 30 museums and cultural institutions in Basel will open their doors overnight.

Editor's Note

Sometimes these reports contain prior notice of planned work and interruptions of normal services. These are without guarantee. 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 was compiled by the Editor with input from Bryan Stone, Hans Jörg Schweizer, Robert Amstutz and Ilkka Huotelin. ❑