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Milestones in 2003.

January

9 January SBB buys an additional 21 double-deck carriages and 30 driving trailers. The CHF 170 million investment is aimed at improving passenger comfort on the launch of Rail 2000.

14 January The SBB RailCity brand makes its public debut. It stands for a wide range of convenient shopping, comprehensive services and attractive office facilities at seven major SBB stations.

18 January Thousands of people travel by train for a mass demonstration against the World Economic Forum in Davos, but get no further than Chur station, where they find themselves penned in. The area around Bern station suffers large-scale damage as protestors return home.

February

4 February SBB staff present a CHF 100,000 donation to the Swiss Solidarity aid organization. A total of CHF 500,000 from the Expo Bonus is donated to charitable organisations.

5 February The Brig Contact Center is expanded into the Passenger Traffic division's service centre for telephone and Internet enquiries. Sixty new jobs are created here in the course of the year.

14 February Engineers break through in the Oenzberg tunnel near Herzogenbuchsee. The trackbed of the new Rothrist-Mattstetten section that is being constructed as part of Rail 2000 is now completely clear.

28 February The SBB Pension Fund needs reorganising. After three poor years on the stock markets, its reserve ratio has fallen to just under 80%. SBB approaches the Federal council with the request to assume responsibility for the pensions of employees who retired prior to 2001.

28 February SBB places a CHF 447 million order for 35 new double-deck multiple-unit trains for the Zurich S-Bahn.

March

4 March SBB orders another 384 touch-screen ticket machines, thereby improving services outside ticket office hours and at stations with no ticket office.

6 March SBB Cargo orders the first locomotives for Swiss Rail Cargo Italy. The Italian subsidiary is to receive three Vossloh diesel locomotives built for non-electrified lines. SBB Cargo also orders a further 128 Cargo Domino containers for its domestic services.

11 March The EW4 type restaurant cars are equipped for 200 km/hour operation, and also receive new galley equipment. The work will be completed by the start of Rail 2000.

17 March SBB Cargo purchases a large plot of land adjacent to the DB station Basel Badischer Bahnhof. By 2007, a transhipment yard for European freight traffic will commence operation at this site.

21 March Encouraged by positive experience in French-speaking Switzerland, a first test with video surveillance in a regional train is now also made in German-speaking Switzerland. Cameras reduced vandalism by 80% in the French-speaking part of the country.

22 March Two days after the outbreak of the Iraq war, special trains carry large numbers of people to demonstrate in Bern against this war. The demonstration passes off peacefully and there are no significant incidents on any of the trains.

24 March The Internet-based Click&Rail offers are extended to routes in French-speaking Switzerland. Internet sales in Click&Rail's first four months are far in excess of expectations.

April

1 April Reservations are now mandatory for bicycles on tilting Intercity trains (ICNs).

2 April Employee satisfaction has risen again at SBB. After dipping to 52 points in the previous year, it has climbed back to 59 points in 2002, the same level as in 2000 when the first survey was carried out.

3 April On-train catering services get a new name – "elvetino". SBB buys up the business during 2003 and plans restructuring measures which begin to bear fruit in 2004.

5 April SBB Cargo assumes sole responsibility for the haulage of steel from the Rhine ports to northern Italy, its partner Ferrovie Nord Cargo (FN Cargo) assuming the role of sub-carrier in Italy. The new concept means that the turnaround times for rolling stock are reduced from 5 to 2½ days.

9 April SBB's offering for young people is relaunched. The "Juniorclub" is superseded by "Magicticket".

29 April SBB presents its annual result for 2002. Passenger traffic has reached record heights, but freight is suffering from the effects of traffic disruptions and the economic downturn. The overall result has been pushed into the red by the need to set aside provisions to shore up the pension fund. The company posts a loss of CHF 12 million.

May

2 May Bern station reopens after extensive renovation and rebuilding. It is the first SBB station to assume the RailCity brand name. Switzerland's major stations will all adopt the RailCity brand, emphasising their new additional role as service and shopping centres.

5 May The Monte Olimpino II tunnel south of Chiasso comes back into service after a five-month closure. The closure had given rise to serious problems for transalpine rail traffic, with SBB losing out both to road transport and to the Brenner route.

20 May SBB Cargo orders its first batch of 18 dual-current locomotives for cross-border traffic between Switzerland and Italy.

26 May Yverdon industrial works is expanded at a cost of CHF 33 million. It will become a service centre for complete ICN trains by 2005.

27 May SBB management chooses Olten as the site for the company's new "nerve centre". Olten will be home to the Rail Control Center, which will be completed by 2010. The entire network will be controlled from here with the assistance of four regional centres.

June

13 June The Annual General Meeting re-elects the SBB Board of Directors for a second four-year period of office. Olivier Steimer joins the Board as Beth Krasna's successor. Chairman Thierry Lalive d'Epinay and the other members are all re-elected.

15 June The double-track Zurich-Thalwil tunnel – the second biggest Rail 2000 project – opens for service. Capital expenditure on the 9.4-kilometre tunnel, which increases capacity on routes to Chur, central Switzerland and Ticino, totals CHF 890 million.

26 June In its first month of opening, the Mystery Park attracts 55,000 visitors, over 30% of whom travel to Interlaken by train.

27 June SBB Cargo decides to streamline its wagon-load services. Responsibility for goods distribution is assigned to 44 team stations. The full-coverage service is retained unchanged.

July

3 July RailAway launches a major summer promotion. Over 250,000 special-offer leisure packages are sold over the next three months as a lot of people opt to spend the hottest summer in over a hundred years in Switzerland. Apart from the heat, the war in Iraq and the respiratory disease SARS deter holidaymakers from travelling further afield.

August

13 August The SBB's rolling stock starts to feel the effects of the long, exceptionally hot summer. Locomotives are overheating and coach air conditioning systems are unable to cope. SBB's own maintenance services are supported by partner railways and industry.

23 August Emmenbrücke becomes the SBB's 100th regional station to get a facelift. Completely revamped, with good lighting and a state-of-the-art passenger information system, the station is the epitome of a progressive, safe railway.

26 August SBB's half-year figures raise hopes of a positive result for the year. Passenger traffic remains at previous-year levels and freight traffic improves

September

8 September SBB management approves the purchase of 12 further locomotives for freight services to and from northern Italy. The decision means that Swiss Rail Cargo Italy will have its own electric motive power by mid-2004.

15 September RailCity Basel is officially opened. As well as improving platform access, the new overhead walkway brings a wide range of new shopping facilities into the station.

17 September The SBB "school train" sets off on tour as part of the "safe and fair" educational campaign to promote cleanliness, safety and respect for others on trains.

24 September Work starts on renewing the Lausanne marshalling yard. The work is geared to the requirements of the new wagonload service concept.

25 September Rail 2000 will use trackside signals during its first year of operation. To reduce risk, SBB decides to commence operations on the new Mattstetten–Rothrist line with conventional signals and then switch over to the ETCS electronic train control system once its operational reliability has been proven. The decision has little impact on train services as timetabled.

October

6 October SBB Cargo and ERS Railways BV, a joint venture of the global seafreight companies Maersk Sealand and P&O Nedlloyd, sign a cooperation agreement aimed at improving the quality of rail services on the routes connecting Rotterdam with northern Italy.

17 October October and November see an unusually high number of disruptions to services, each with a different cause. On 17 October, a faulty computer brings morning commuter services in the greater Zurich area to a complete standstill. The problem is compounded by the simultaneous failure of customer information systems.

24 October Two passenger trains are involved in a side-on collision at Oerlikon station, Zurich. One passenger is killed and over a hundred are injured. This is the worst accident on the SBB network in around five years.

30 October The federal government announces that it is examining the possibility of providing financial support for the SBB Pension Fund. However, the extent of this support is yet to be decided. Government support is also contingent on a changeover from a defined benefit to a defined contribution scheme.

November

6 November SBB decides to build a new pedestrian overpass at the west end of Bern station. The overpass is the last major construction project for the start of Rail 2000.

11 November Morges station becomes the first station in French-speaking Switzerland to be operated primarily by apprentices.

13 November Over 500 girls accompany their father or mother to work at SBB on Switzerland's nationwide "Take our daughters to work" day. The aim is to attract more young women to professions that have been hitherto regarded as "men only" domains.

19 November To coincide with the completion of the re-modelling of Zurich main station's underground arcade, preparations start for the amalgamation of ShopVille and RailCity. The two brands will together symbolise Zurich station's shopping facilities. In addition, all shops now stay open until 9.00 p.m.

21 November The railway police decides to significantly increase the size of its force. By raising the number of officers from 150 to 250 it is possible to double the number of patrols at stations and on trains.

24 November Pierre-Alain Urech announces his resignation as head of SBB Infrastructure and deputy Chief Executive Officer. He leaves the company after 23 years in various positions including Rail 2000 Delegate and Director of Lausanne Area Management.

28 November Zug's imposing new station building is ceremonially opened. As daylight starts to fade, the light installation by American artist James Turrell transforms the station building into an ethereal, luminescent piece of art.

December

4 December SBB agrees a wage increase of 1.5% with employee representatives. In light of the increase in welfare benefit and health insurance costs, the across-the-board rise is paid out as a lump sum of CHF 500 per person.

14 December The changeover to the new timetable brings important changes to freight services. The new collection and delivery system is launched for wagon-onload services in Switzerland, a clockface timetable is introduced on the North-South axis and the north Italian subsidiary Swiss Rail Cargo Italy commences pilot operations. In southern Germany and the Canton of Schaffhausen, SBB Cargo starts serving freight customers at six DB stations between Gottmadingen and Lauchringen.

14 December Responsibility for regional services in Valais is transferred to a new operator, RegionAlps. The company is a joint venture between SBB and Transports de Martigny et Régions.

15 December Swiss Rail Cargo Italy's first train runs from Chiasso to the northern Italian town of Lecco.

18 December The public consultation development stage of the Zurich cross-city line project is being released. The project involves building a new line from Altstetten to Oerlikon as well as the Löwenstrasse underground station.

19 December The Swiss parliament approves a package of "relief measures" which will involve cutting the SBB budget by CHF 300 million over the next three years. This will lead to the postponement of major investments.

19 December SBB Cargo order its second batch of 18 dual-current locomotives for cross-border traffic between Switzerland and Italy. Delivery is due to begin already in mid-2004.

31 December SBB trains are still as punctual as ever. 95.24% of trains arrived at their destination less than five minutes late – 81% even arrived dead on time. The figures for peak-time punctuality, which was measured for the first time, are only slightly lower. In the freight sector, 90.7% of trains reach their destination within 30 minutes of the scheduled time, and for the traditionally more punctual domestic traffic the figure is even higher (94.1%).