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THE RECONSTRUCTION OF BASEL HAUPTBAHNHOF

by Richard Pinner (from *Die Drehschieb Bahnhof Basel*)

The present SBB station at Basel was built in 1907 and has altered little since then. Lines have been electrified, modern safety equipment has increased its capacity, some platforms have been lengthened but that is about all. Now it has reached its limits; capacity cannot be increased and, if it is to play its part in the future, a new infrastructure is needed.

In addition, nearly all the freight traffic on the SBB enters the country at Basel, and this traffic will be even more important when the Gotthard Base tunnel has been built.

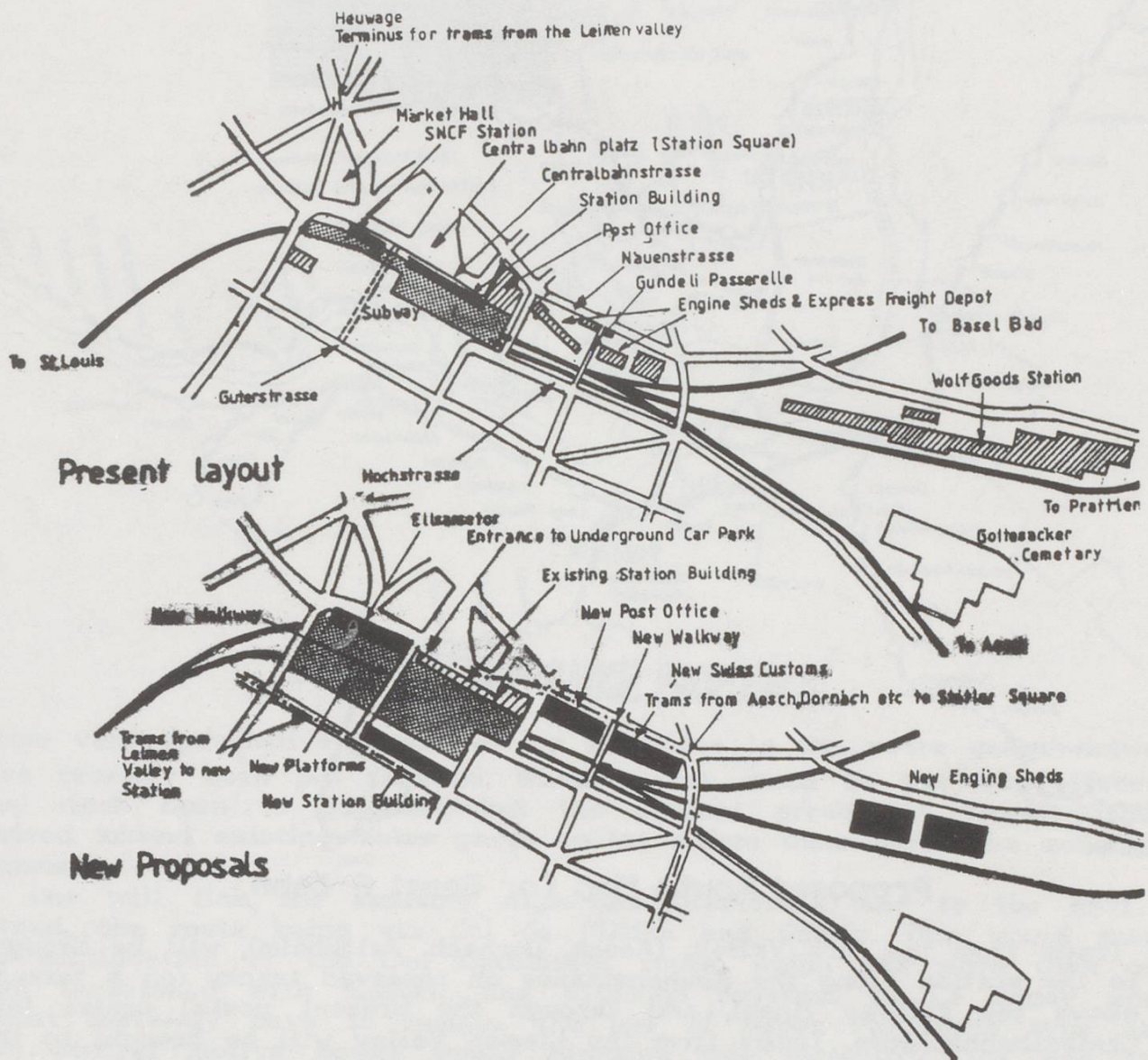
Basel will also become an even more important junction and exchange point for passenger traffic than it is already. The TGV will connect Basel with Paris in 2 1/2 hours, the Deutsche Bundesbahn ICE will travel to Hamburg in 5 1/2 hours and under the Bahn 2000 plan, and with the Gotthard Base tunnel, the journey to Milan will be under 3 hours.

All this has led to the promulgation of the following aims:

- 1 The station has to be integrated far more into the City and its environs. Better co-ordination with local and regional public transport is necessary.
- 2 This public transport must be able to bring travellers to the station from all parts of the region and, once there, enable them to get to their trains quickly: *From the tram directly into the TGV.*
- 3 There must be better facilities for commuters and travellers, whether they come by car, taxi, bicycle, tram, bus or on foot; and these must be separate from each other.
- 4 A regional S-Bahn network is necessary, including a branch to the international airport *Basel-Mulhouse-Freiburg*.
- 5 Facilities for postal and express freight traffic have to be improved.
- 6 To make all this possible the station has to be enlarged.

From these aims and needs a number of detailed plans have now been passed. The two simplified plans of the station and its surroundings will explain these.

- 1 Two to four new platforms are needed. These will be added to the south side of the station, between the present lines and the Guterstrasse; the land there already belongs to the SBB. These new platforms will be used by the trains from France and by new regional trains, forerunners of a later S-Bahn system (for a start, the line to the airport). A new station building will be erected along the Guterstrasse and this will be of equal importance to the existing building. With two entrances, traffic will not all be concentrated on the one way in. The two buildings will be connected by an overhead walkway.
- 2 The existing sheds outside the present SNCF platforms (opposite the Market Hall and between the road and the railway line), containing the express freight facilities of the SNCF, will be demolished. In their place will be a new, long, slim building in two parts, with a glass covered yard in the centre, to be called the *Elsaessertor* (Alsace Gate). This will house facilities for the transshipment and final distribution of express freight for both the SBB and the SNCF, the French customs and offices and other services not connected with the railway.
- 3 The old engine sheds, at present along the Nauenenstrasse, will be demolished: new and up-to-date ones will be built near the Wolf goods station. This will take until 1994-5.
- 4 When these sheds have gone (at present the SBB express freight depot is there as well), two new buildings will be erected in their place. One of these will contain an underground Post Station, where mail can be loaded directly into or out of trains without inconveniencing passengers. There



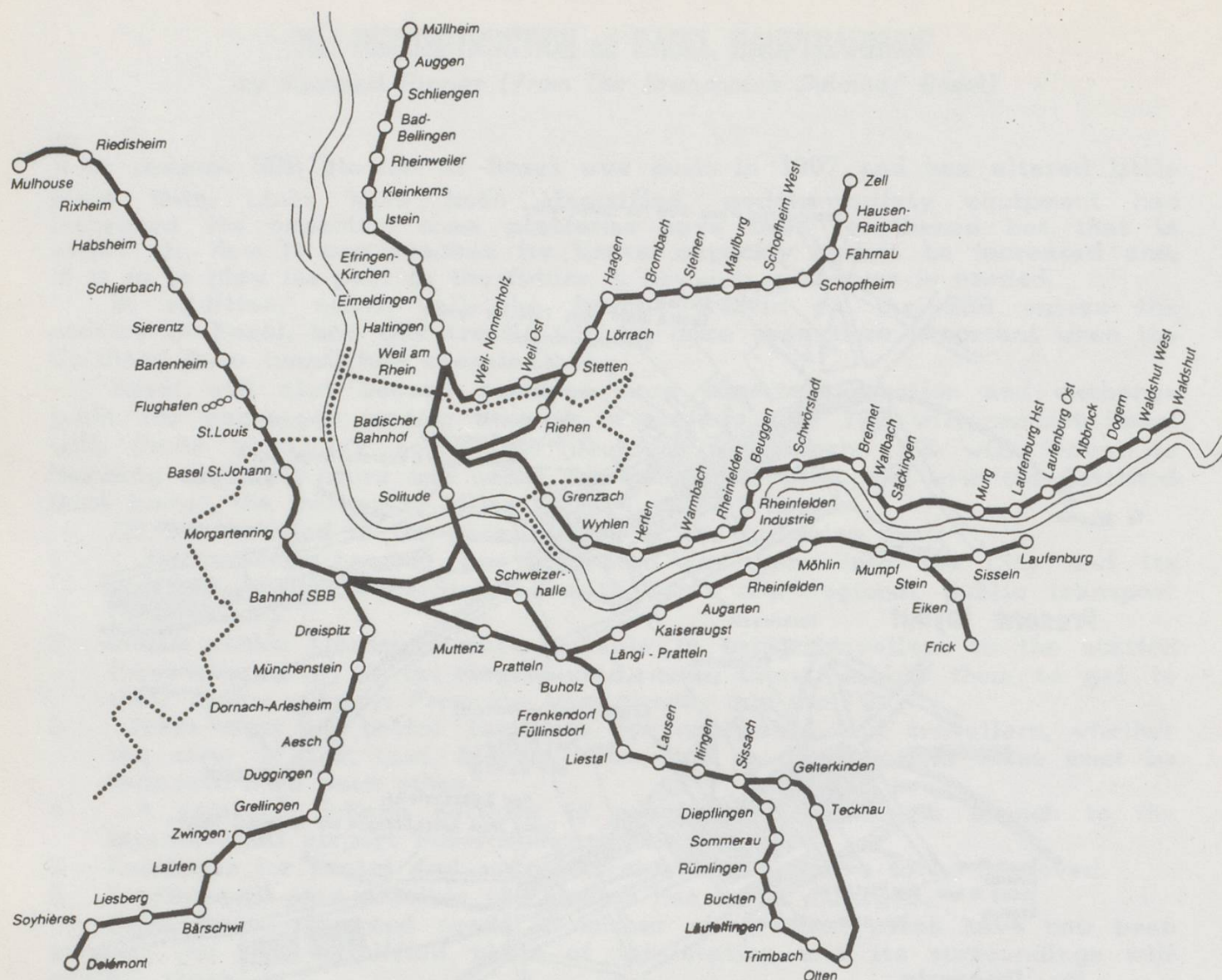
Proposed Basel Hauptbahnhof Reconstruction

will also be room for the Swiss Customs and, again, for other services.

5 All platforms will be raised to a height of 550mm above rail level.

6 A number of level pedestrian connections above ground will be built to connect tram and bus stops with the platforms and a new, improved walkway will lead across the railway where the narrow Gundeli Passerelle is at present situated, connecting Guterstrasse and Hochstrasse.

7 Under the eastern end of the Centralbahnstrasse, an entrance to an underground car park will be constructed, on the level of the present subway. This will be for Park and Ride, car parking for railway and postal staff and will serve as a boarding and setting down point for taxis and cars. Direct access will be made from there into the station.



Proposed Route Map for Basel S-Bahn

- 8 Trams from the Birs Valley, (Aesch, Dornach, Arlesheim), will be brought to the station along the Naunenstrasse on reserved tracks (on a terrace above the railway lines), and through the present postal centre into Centralbahnstrasse. Trams from the Liemen Valley will be brought to the station along its south side to stop outside the new station buildings. At present, one route stops near the southern end of the subway.
- 9 This means that instead of only three, many more tram routes will serve the station, especially from the densely populated outer suburbs. These trams will be routed via the station to the City centre.
- 10 An S-Bahn is now being planned, which will connect Basel with places not at present well served by bus or tram, especially for the commuters who cross one of the frontiers. Some difficulties will have to be overcome as three countries and three national railways are involved. The accompanying map shows the possible network. The enlargement of the SBB station is a precondition for this plan.
- 11 The Station Square will largely be pedestrianised, the subways will be abolished, above ground walkways will connect the station buildings with public transport on both sides.
- 12 As there is at present insufficient room for bicycles, new parking places will be provided on both sides of the station, enough for 3,000 machines.

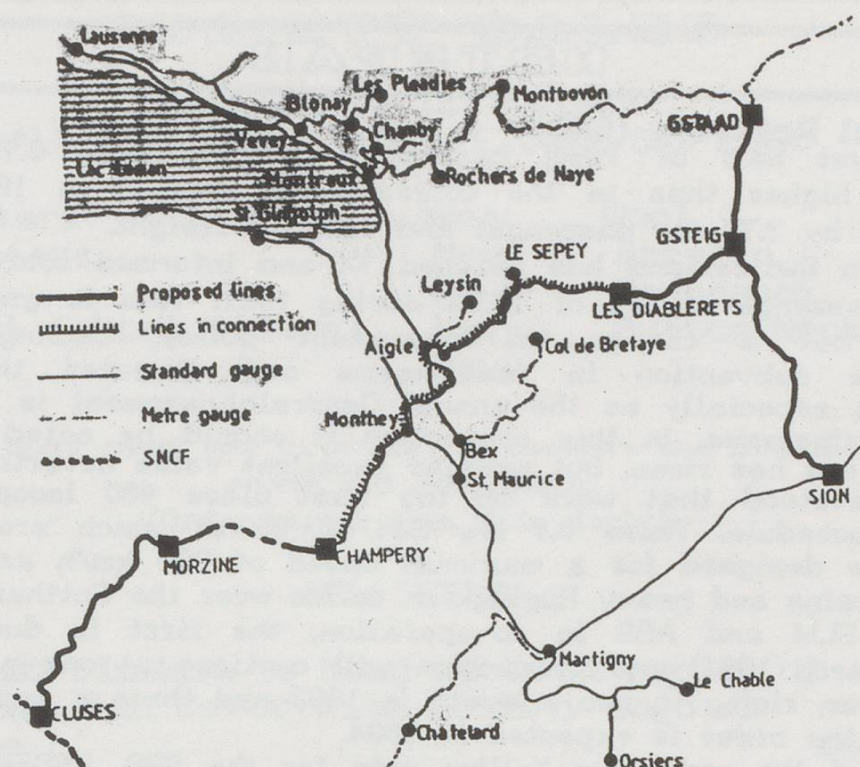
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An information pavilion has been opened on the Station Concourse containing a display of these plans.



MORE METRE GAUGE PROPOSALS

Some very speculative proposals for additions to the metre gauge network have recently been put forward. Whether they could be put into effect is very much open to question, but the present growth of tourist traffic centred around existing metre gauge routes makes them more than mere pipe dreams.

One will link the existing Aigle-Les Diablerets line to the MOB at Gstaad, the route being via Col de Pillion and Gsteig. This would ensure the continuation of the Les Diablerets route, which has more than once been threatened with closure, and although reversal at Le Sepey would almost certainly have to remain, the use of Super Panoramic type sets, with central motive power would minimise this difficulty. The line from Les Diablerets would need extensive rebuilding, and possibly replacement of the present tramway type overhead.

A second proposal would link Gstaad with Sion, using the previous route as far as Gsteig and then proceeding under the Col de Sanetsch and the Morges valley.

The final proposal is the most ambitious, since it involves a tunnel under the Savoy Alps between the present metre gauge terminus at Champéry and Morzine in France. From there the line would continue to join the SNCF line from St.Gervais at Cluses.

Our map shows the probable routes of these three lines, which, together with the mixing of gauge between Interlaken Ost and Zweisimmen would provide some exhilarating journeys from Lucerne southwest. Given the traffic increases needed to justify the cost of these proposals, some doubling of existing lines might well be necessary and, at the very best, construction could not start until the turn of the century. In the meantime, imaginative modellers could have a field day.

These various tunnel proposals to connect the Bernese Oberland with Wallis/Valais have been compared to holes in Emmental cheese! Could it be that the Swiss believe that mountains and cheese have much in common? ☒