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THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN' The Proposed Swiss Timetable 2005

The Editor has selected a fairly random set of pictures to accompany this article. The only consistent theme being that they all are passenger trains!



Phil Weaver took this in 2003 on the Gotthard.

The Swiss timetable change on the 12th December 2004 will bring about a dramatic change to the frequency, speed, timings and stopping patterns of services on many routes. The prime reason for the changes is the opening of the Rothrist – Mattstetten high-speed line between Olten and Bern, which

will cut the non-stop time for a Zürich HB – Bern journey from 69 to 58 minutes. While an 11 minute saving may appear fairly modest it will, together with an increase in frequency on this and other lines, allow improvements in journey times and connectional possibilities across a wide section of the network.

Apart from this major development there will also be changes to the stopping pattern and western destination of the St Gallen – Lausanne/Geneva Airport via Biel ICN services, which will cut the overall journey time, and a new ICN service will be introduced between Biel and Konstanz via Zürich HB. New S-Bahn systems are being introduced in the Luzern/Zug area and also local stations in Ticino between Biasca and Chiasso. The net result is that SBB will be running 14% more train/kilometres than at present and about 90% of all services will have amended arrival and departure times.

What follows is an attempt to give an overview of the main changes for the benefit of SRS members who have become familiar with the current timetable. It is not a comprehensive account of every change in service and there will no doubt be some changes that will have escaped my notice. I have concentrated mainly on the IC/IR services on the main arteries. So, please do not bombard the editor with omissions that you may spot. The information is given in good faith and obtained from the draft timetable, which was posted for consultation by the SBB on the internet in May 2004 (www.fahrplanentwurf.ch). Please do check any planned journeys you intend to take from 12th December 2004 onwards nearer the time. For clarity I have only described journeys in one direction but, unless indicated otherwise, a similar pattern operates in the opposite direction.

Starting with the new high-speed line the changes will of course affect main line services between Bern and Zurich HB and Bern and Basel SBB. xx denotes each hour, xy the next hour and xz the next but one hour, so a series of times reading xx, xx, xy, xz could refer for example to a departure at 10.00 with an intermediate stopping time of 10.58/11.03 and an arrival time of 12.03.

Tables 650/450 (Zürich HB – Bern)

Bern will be served by the following regular hourly departures from Zürich HB.

xx.00 even IC Romanshorn – Bern (xx.58/xy.03) – Interlaken Ost (xz.03)
xx.00 odd IC Romanshorn – Bern (xx.58/xy.09) – Brig (xz.47)



An SBB 460 bursts out of the Gotthard tunnel at Göschenen heading the IC Ticino from Milan-Basel. Sept. 2003.

Photo: Colin Jarman

- xx.06 IR Zürich HB – Bern (xy.28) calling Baden, Brugg, Aarau & Olten*
- xx.32 IC St Gallen – Bern (xy.30/xy.34) - Geneva Airport via Fribourg*
- xx.58 IR Zürich HB – Bern (xz.22) Olten and principal stations via Burgdorf*

In addition there are the two off pattern TGV services to Paris which run first stop Bern and an hourly IR service at xx.05 from Olten to Bern calling at principal stations via Burgdorf which, with the xx.58 from Zürich, gives a 30 minute interval service over the old route.

Tables 500/450/510 (Basel SBB – Bern/Luzern)

Bern will also be served by the following regular hourly departures from Basel SBB.

- xx.00 either IC Basel – Bern (xx.58/xy.09) – Brig (xz.47)*
- or IC* Basel – Bern (xx.58/xx.03) – Interlaken Ost (xz.03)*
- xx.27 even IC Basel – Bern (xx.56/xy.09) – Brig (xz.47)*
- xx.27 odd IC Basel – Bern (xx.56/xy.03) – Interlaken Ost (xz.03)*

The xx.00 departures operate to Brig at 08.00, 10.00, 12.00, 16.00 & 18.00 and to Interlaken at 07.00, 09*00, 11.00, 13.00, 14*00, 15.00, 17.00, 19.00, 20*00 & 21.00. Trains marked * are ICE. The xx.27 departures from Basel will give Interlaken Ost an additional IC service every two hours but they will not connect with the Brünig line. Brig will also benefit with several additional trains. There will also be a new hourly IR service from Basel to Zofingen and all IR/IC trains between Basel and Luzern will be hourly all calling at Zofingen and Sursee which will include the Gotthard line IC services.

Table 460 (Luzern – Bern)

A new hourly service will operate from Luzern to Bern via the new high-speed line at xx.55 taking 65 minutes to Bern calling at Sursee and Zofingen. The trains continue from Bern serving principal stations to Lausanne and then Geneva/Geneva Airport.

The service from Luzern to Bern via Langnau will also improve to an hourly semi fast service at xx.57 but making a couple of additional stops and taking 87 rather than the current 80 minutes. However, tunnel work will see the Luzern end of the line closed with a bus replacement service operating between there and Malters from 02 July until 09 October 2005. Late evening services are affected throughout the period of the timetable.

Table 470 (Brünig Line)

Of significant benefit will be the 17 minute earlier arrival time of the hourly IC/ICE trains at Interlaken Ost. This will allow Brünig line departures to be brought forward by 22 minutes to xx.08. They arrive in Luzern at xx.04 and depart there at xx.55 giving a long awaited convenient connection to and from the Gotthard line.



Sissach, August 2002. SBB Re4/4II 11276 heads train 2671 for Luzern.

Photo: Malcolm Hardy-Randall

Tables 100/150 (Geneva -Lausanne - Brig)

Hourly departures from Lausanne to Brig will be 20 minutes later from Lausanne at xx.20 with the Sion service at xx.46. There will be an additional IC/IR service each hour between Geneva and Lausanne bringing the total to 5.

Tables 600/631 (The Gotthard & Ticino)

The service pattern remains very similar with retiming by the odd minute or so of the IR services at intermediate stations. The 06.55 stopping train to Luzern from Erstfeld is replaced by a service to Zug at 07.01 which will no doubt see an end to the SOB loco hauled push and pull set which is currently used on this early morning working.

A new local service from Erstfeld to Luzern departs at 07.50 which helps plug the current 07.34-08.32 gap and the IR semi fast trains will no longer serve Altdorf. All the semi-fast IR trains will go to/from Locarno rather than Chiasso following the introduction of a half hourly interval S-Bahn stopping service between Bellinzona and Chiasso which starts back from Biasca hourly. There will be connections to and from Locarno at Giubiasco with the Lugano/Chiasso local service. Table 600 now only shows the IC/CIS services south of Bellinzona, Airolo – Chiasso being shown on table 631.

Unfortunately, I found a major deterioration in connectional opportunities at Göschenen which has been caused by re-timing the northbound IR services to leave 3 minutes earlier than at present even though they arrive a minute later at Arth-Goldau. MGB arrivals from Andermatt at xx.04 leave insufficient time to make the xx.06 departure resulting in a wait of one hour for the next service. I have e-mailed SBB on this matter and await their response.

Tables 650/410/210 (Zürich HB - Lausanne/Geneva Airport)

The current hourly St Gallen – Geneva Airport via Biel & Lausanne ICN service sees some changes.

Alternate trains only will serve Geneva Airport but running direct from Yverdon to Morges and not serving Lausanne. The other alternate services will terminate at Lausanne. In both instances connections are made at Biel with the ICN service from Basel, which will also serve similar alternate destinations. So when the St Gallen train goes to Lausanne the Basel train will go direct to Geneva Airport and vice versa.

Departure from Zürich HB will be 3 minutes earlier at xx.04 and the current stops at Lenzburg, Oensingen and Grenchen Süd will no longer be made allowing a 15 minute reduction in journey time. These latter two stations will be served by a new hourly ICN service between Konstanz and Biel departing Zurich HB at xx.30.



Photo by David Adams at Thalwil in 2002.

Table 670 (Luzern – Romanshorn via SOB)

The pattern remains similar to that at present but for reasons unknown an additional 7-8 minutes has been added between Luzern and Küssnacht am Rigi in both directions, which will mean earlier Luzern departures at xx.37 and later arrivals at xx.21.

Table 700 (Basel-Zürich via Frick/Aarau)

The direct Basel – Zürich Flughafen service will no longer serve Pratteln but will call additionally at Frick and Dietikon. The number of ICE services to DB via Basel will increase to 5.

Table 760 (Zürich HB – Schaffhausen)

The basic hourly IR service will be self contained with no through workings either side of those points except when the occasional IR service is replaced by a CIS service. The service is supplemented by the occasional ICE service through to the DB.

Table 840 (Zürich HB – Romanshorn/Konstanz)

The introduction of the Biel – Konstanz hourly ICN service will give Frauenfeld and Weinfelden a half hourly interval fast service from Zürich.

Table 900 (Zürich – Chur)

The semi fast hourly IR services will continue to depart Zürich HB at xx.12 arriving Chur at xy.43. In addition there will be an hourly IC service departing at xx.37 calling first stop Sargans and arriving at xy.50. Both services originate from Basel via the Heitersberg tunnel. Direct services, not hourly, to Buchs SG and the OBB depart Zürich HB 7 minutes later than at present at xx.40.

Table 920/940 RhB (Chur – Disentis/St Moritz)

Disentis trains will continue to depart Chur at xx.57 but will be followed, rather than preceded, by the St Moritz trains which will depart at xx.59.

Table 950 RhB (Bernina Line)

The main change for the summer period (21 May – 16 Oct.) sees Bernina/Heidi Expresses leaving Tirano at 14.20, 14.35 & 14.58 daily between those dates preventing the operation of current 15.48 from

Alp Grüm to St Moritz, which is often formed by vintage cars 30/34. This will leave a gap from 13.50 to 15.38 without a stopping service from Tirano. In the opposite direction these three tourist trains will depart Pontresina at 09.55, 10.21 & 10.35 leaving a gap of over two hours without a stopping service.

Tables 223/225 (Neuchâtel – La Chaux-de-Fonds – Biel)

Trains on these tables will have a 3 minute connection at La Chaux-de-Fonds, which is a long awaited improvement from the current situation where arrivals and departures on those two lines miss each other by a minute.

Tables 642/514 (Zofingen – (Aarau) - Lenzburg via Suhr)

The standard gauge line between Aarau and Suhr will no longer have a passenger service and direct journeys between these points will only be possible using the WSB. Work will then start on diverting part of the WSB route over the standard gauge trackbed. There will be a regular interval service between Zofingen and Lenzburg via Suhr.

My initial reaction to these proposed changes is that the new timetable is both ambitious and exciting and undoubtedly will be introduced smoothly with the usual Swiss efficiency and attention to detail. The SBB reports that the new timetable has attracted tremendous interest among the Swiss population as a whole leaving one to ponder if a new timetable will ever have that effect on the U.K. population. It will certainly bring about more journey opportunities and make many parts of the network more accessible from a day trip point of view. However, by this time all 119 class 460's should be working for the passenger sector together with 44 ICN sets which will no doubt bring a dramatic decline in the use of Re4/4's on passenger services. The passing passenger train scene will almost certainly offer less variety and it will be interesting to see just how many none push and pull services remain. So please check carefully when making plans for 2005.

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