

Swiss railway freight : new players on the scene 1

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SWISS RAILWAY FREIGHT

New Players on the Scene 1

The president of the Swiss Public Transport Journalists, Mr. Kurt Metz, has just written a little booklet for the VAP (Swiss Association of Shippers) and LITRA (The Swiss Information Service for Public Transport). It is a compact compilation of information about new as well as old players on the freight scene of the Swiss railways. Most of the information had been available before, but scattered about on dozens of company websites and general information banks. Mr. Metz is to be commended for bringing it all together in a user-friendly format. As there are now so many new players, the 80-page booklet contains an enormous amount of information, far too much for a single article. So I will do a series of articles, each one dealing with a few subjects. A big thank-you to Kurt Metz for giving me permission to bring you these excerpts. If any of you are confident enough in German, the booklet itself is available from the VAP organization for SFr48 plus postage, but as stated, only in German. Orders to <info@cargorail.ch>

Like any good reader, I started at the back of the book! It is a useful list of websites of associations and companies involved in many different ways with freight on the railways. The sites are mainly in German, but there is some information in French and English as well. Most of them have two sections: a general section, for everybody to see, and an internal section only accessible with a password. Happy surfing!!

AAE	www.aae.ch
Alptransit Gotthard	www.alptransit.ch
BAV (federal office of transport)	www.bav.admin.ch
BLS Cargo	www.bls-cargo.ch
BLS Alptransit	www.blsalptransit.ch
Cargodrome	www.cargodrome.ch
CESAR	www.cesar-online.com
Crossrail	www.crossrail.ch
Ermewa	www.ermewa.ch
Fiege	www.fiege.com
Freight Freeways	www.railpages.com
Hangartner AG	www.hangartner.com
Hannibal European Gaterail	www.hannibalweb.com
Hupac Intermodal	www.hupac.ch
Intercontainer-Interfrigo ICF	www.icfonline.com
KöV	www.koev.ch
Kummler+Matter	www.group-ait.com/kuma
LITRA	www.litra.ch
MEV Schweiz	www.m-e-v.biz
Mitrag	www.mitrag.ch
Molinari Consulting	www.mcons.biz
One-Stop-Shop	www.onestopshop.ch
RailLogistics	www.raillogistics.com

RailNetEurope	www.railneteurope.com
Rail4Chem	www.rail4chem.com
Ralpin	www.ralpin.ch
RM Logistik+Güterverkehr	www.regionalverkehr.ch
SBB Cargo	www.ssbcargo.com
Swiss Traffic-online	www.swisstraffic-online.ch
Trenitalia Cargo	www.cargo.trenitalia.it
TX Logistik	www.txlogistik.de
UIP	www.uiprail.org
VAP	www.cargorail.ch
UVEK Verkehrsportal	www.verkehr-schweiz.ch
VöV (ass. for public transport)	www.voev.ch
Walo Bertschinger	www.walo.ch
Wascosa	www.wascosa.ch

Now for some of the new players. Rather than in any logical order, they will appear as they caught my eye. The first company I picked is a provider of manpower: drivers.

MEV Schweiz AG – Independent Railway Services. This company is an independent subsidiary of the HSM Group in München. Its specialty is being a truly independent provider of train drivers for operators in Switzerland. By limiting themselves to hiring out drivers and not operating any locomotives themselves, its independent status is at least credible. Its parent company is in possession of an EU Train Operators (EVU) Licence in Germany, which, according to agreements between Switzerland and the EU, allows it to operate in Switzerland as well. But next to this general certificate, every company also needs a specific safety licence for each country it wants to operate in. This can only be obtained by training the drivers in all the operating and safety aspects of each route. Most of the drivers now working for MEV Schweiz were experienced drivers for the ex Deutsche Reichsbahn. After the German reunion, rail transport took a dive in Eastern Germany and many drivers lost their jobs. In order to get the necessary safety certificates for Switzerland, they had to be trained by Swiss drivers. Although the rail union SEV was involved right from the beginning, understandably at first they were afraid the company would try to undercut rates with “cheap” drivers, who would “steal” jobs from regular drivers. But these fears were soon dispersed: MEV pays the same rates as those agreed with other Swiss rail operators and these drivers are only hired to cope with sudden extra traffic. Since 2002, MEV has helped rail operators such as SBB and BLS to cope with extra traffic such as that generated by the EXPO 02, the extensive building work for BAHN 2000 and the sudden rise in traffic over the Gotthard and Lötschberg lines. It takes a lot of time and effort to recruit and train a driver in Switzerland. Therefore, the rail companies are unable to cope with very sudden rises in traffic with their own pool of drivers. Also, the new timetable from December 2004 created a lot more passenger trains, thus taking drivers away from freight duties. At the moment, MEV employs 40 qualified drivers and expects to have 60 available by mid 2005. They operate trains for SBB infrastructure in the St. Gallen, Zürich, Arth-Goldau and Olten areas. Also, they are driving trains for BLS Cargo and Railion on the Gotthard and finally, they are helping out with passenger traffic in the Basel area. In the German Wiesental area (north of Basel), the SBB has just won a regional passenger transport contract from DB. Here 20 MEV drivers together with a manager, also employed by MEV, will make sure the transition is as smooth as possible from day one.