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SBB - JOB CUTS

With SBB's 2005 first-half loss doubling to SFr36.6 million, Cargo has announced cuts of 590 jobs and a scaling back in operation by reducing the number of its centres from 650 to 323. The Transport Ministry said it believed the cutbacks were justifiable and it would not provide a subsidy to maintain the cargo operation at its present level. However, it insisted that redundancies should be handled in a socially responsible way. Unions oppose the cuts saying the Cargo bosses should not be allowed to make unilateral changes to transport policy. A further 60 jobs will be lost from the Infrastructure Division in Biel.

SBB - PUNCTUALITY

Thierry Lalive d'Epinay, Chairman of the Board of SBB, has criticised the delays besetting the train network, and says there will be consequences. He told the newspaper NZZ am Sonntag that top management would have to accept cuts in their bonuses and warned of further job losses. Chief Executive Benedikt Weibel told the SonntagsZeitung "We have to ensure that more than 95 per cent of the trains run on time on a daily basis. It is not good enough if we achieve this aim only at weekends." To put things in perspective, during the period from January to November 2005, 95.64% of all trains reached their destination on time or less than five minutes behind schedule (most British TOCs use a 10 minute rule). This followed the December 2004 timetable change which increased services by 12% and includes events such as a computer failure in Zurich at the start of the year, the national power failure in June and major flooding in August.

TOURISM - SBB & JB

SBB's tour operator RailAway, has been awarded the top tourism prize for 2005, the Milestone award (plus SFr10, 000), for its contribution to the industry. RailAway was commended for offering attractive travel packages, which combine rail tickets with entrance to a wide variety of attractions in Switzerland. This helps to fill empty seats on trains, provide income for SBB and creates employment across the country whilst promoting environmentally friendly means of transport.

Joint second was the Jungfrau Bahn (JB) for its efforts to encourage more families to ski with its "Kids ski for free on Saturdays" promotion. There has been a decline of 5% in Swiss skiers over the last 5 years that, if allowed to continue, would have serious effects on the tourist industry.

A special prize went to a company offering trekking tours using pack goats - a form of transport not widely reported upon in *Swiss Express* - but we are open to contributions! Perhaps it could come under the heading Schweizerische BillyBahn (SBB)?

Swiss Express is pleased to acknowledge the assistance of swissinfo in preparing these news items.

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