

Zeitschrift:	Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber:	Swiss Railways Society
Band:	- (2006)
Heft:	[1]
Artikel:	New developments at avec. : from saviour of small stations to the saviour of Migros petrol stations and Valora kiosks, is this the new role for "avec"?
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DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854792

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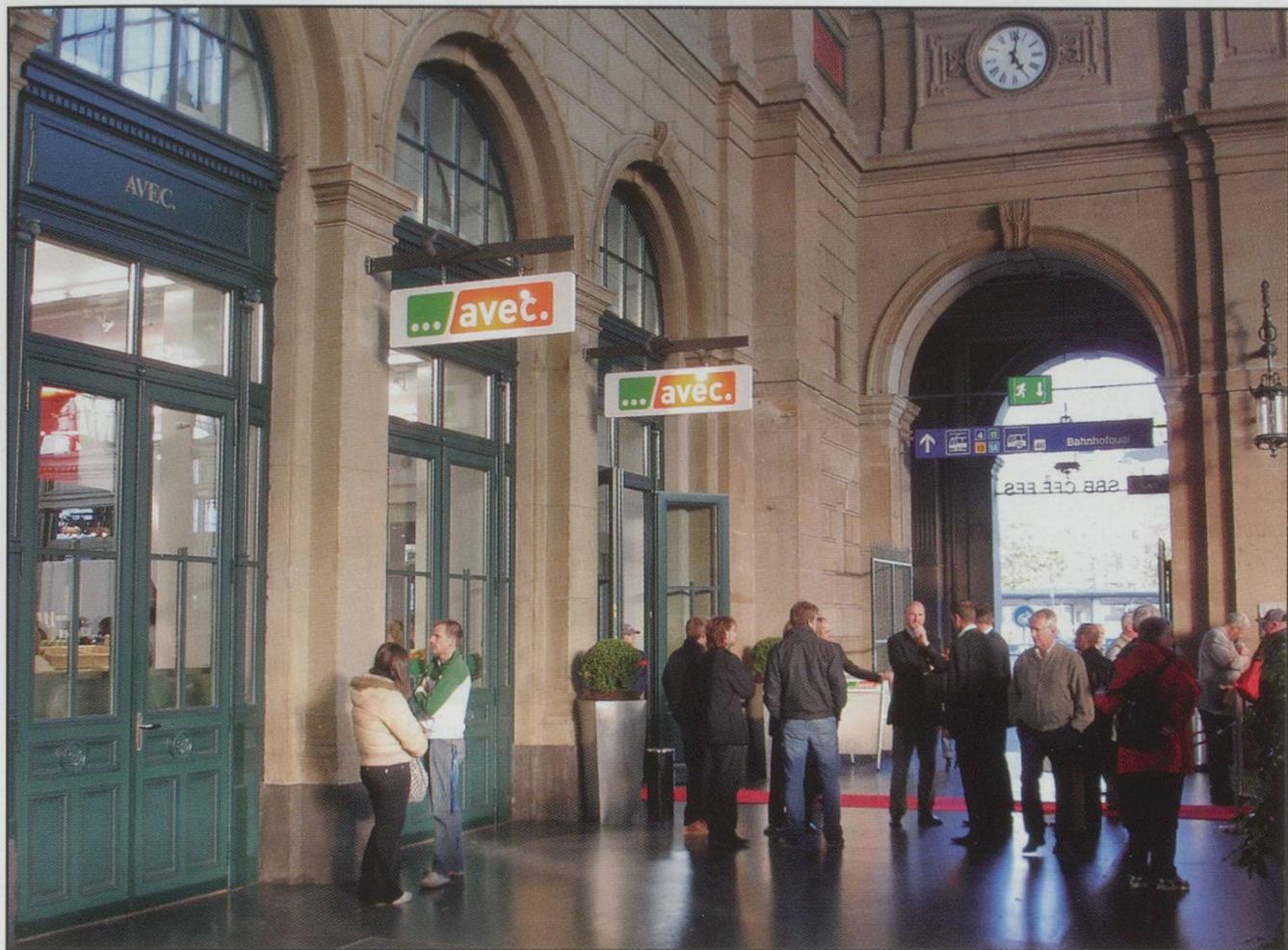
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NEW DEVELOPMENTS AT *avec.*

From saviour of small stations to the saviour of Migros petrol stations and Valora kiosks, is this the new role for "avec"?



The store is located at the very end of the big hall, on the left, looking from the tracks. As the station is a listed building, no changes could be made to the facades. All photos in this article G.M. Hoekstra and were taken 18.10.2005

On 18th October (my birthday!) a new "avec" convenience store was opened - in itself not such a novelty. We have featured these stores before, all of them situated in smaller stations no longer staffed by the railways. But not this one: it is situated in Zürich Hauptbahnhof, the largest station in Switzerland! Its opening therefore signalled a major change in philosophy.

The "avec" stores planned for the smaller stations did not open as quickly as the Franchising-Operator Cevanova (until now owned by SBB, Migros and Valora) would have liked. Then Migros' biggest competitor Coop was increasingly successful with their small "Pronto" stores and finally Valora (operator of the "Ki-

osk" stalls and more pertinent, of the "Aperto" shops, also in stations) wanted to expand as well. In the spring of 2005 it was thus decided that Migros and Valora would each take over 50 % of the SBB shares. This opened the way to integrate all the "Aperto" shops and many of the "Migrol" petrol station shops under the "avec" name. It is planned to have this re-branding completed by the end of 2007.

Apart from about 40 classic "avec" shops in small stations, there will also then be 130 Migrol and Valora shops under the "avec" banner. All well and good, but why open an "avec" in Zürich Hauptbahnhof now as there are already two Migros stores in the station? Well, "avec" convenience stores are allowed to stay



open from 6 in the morning till midnight. All other stores in the large stations (now called "RailCity") must close by 9pm, and 8pm on weekends, at least at the time of writing. There will be a referendum at the end of November to reduce weekend opening of the other stores even further.

Note from Ed via Malcolm Bulpitt: The referendum took place on the 27th November to reduce weekend opening of the other stores even further but this failed by a narrow margin to get the agreement of the voters, with 50.6% of those taking part wishing to keep the stores open. However, on the 8th December the Swiss Parliament voted 106 – 56 to prohibit the Sunday opening of most regular stores, so this means that shopping at stations on a Sunday will probably become even more popular.

The "avec" store is located at the very end of the great hall of Zürich Hauptbahnhof station, on the left hand side. Good to know for late travellers as "avec" carry groceries at normal Migros prices and are open until midnight!

ABOVE:

There is very little floor space but the room is very tall, so the office is located above the sales area, in a box with bizarre orange windows!

BETWEEN:

On the outside, no signs were allowed at all. It seems to be OK to put the bikes here though. I guess they had to allow them to stand somewhere...

