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INTERNATIONAL

SBB / DB

From 11th December, the Zürich S16 route has been extended from Winterthur via Schaffhausen to Thayngen on the German border. The service is in the hands of the RABe 510 units effectively displaced from the S14 route by the new DTZ fleet. Although operating over DB metals beyond Schaffhausen, the units have required no specific modifications as the line is electrified to SBB rather than DB standards and fitted with Signum cab signalling rather than the German Indusi system.

SBB / SNCF

With the opening of the LGV Est on 10th June, four TGVs will operate daily between Paris Est and Basel, with two continuing on to Zürich. From that day, the Paris – Chur overnight service will cease. Timings are 3 hours between Paris and Basel (4 hours Zürich); a sample timetable search suggests that Luzern is now within 8 hours of London.

Delays to driver training meant that SNCF BB 37000 locomotives did not start working trains between Basel and Buchs until early February 2007.

The line from Boncourt to Delle (France) reopened on 10th December, served by 6 train pairs daily with an extra 6 train pairs on Mondays to Fridays.

Editor's note: See the article in this edition.

SWITZERLAND

SBB

SBB have placed an order with Bombardier for 140 Kolibri centre coaches in three formats (84 AB, 15 B with toilet, 41 B without toilet) with an option for 48 more. Delivery is due between July 2008 and July 2012, with final assembly at Villeneuve. As part of the refurbishment, the existing motor coaches and driving trailers will be fitted with air conditioning. Excluded from the refurbishment programme are prototype units 560 000-003 and the multi voltage units 562 000 – 005.

The Zürich S-Bahn DPZ units are also due for a mid life refurbishment, with reupholstered seating and replacement toilets. The refurbishment program is due to last until 2011. Two refurbished sets are due to be transferred to the SZU during 2008; the AB vehicles in the remaining 113 units will be replaced by new air conditioned, low floor coaches and the old

coaches downgraded to second class for use in peak hour extra services.

The Simplon car shuttle carried over 92000 vehicles in 2006, by comparison with a 2005 total of 67000. With the fares subsidised by Kanton Wallis, more vehicles are being carried in the summer than the winter season.

BLS

The DB ICE-S test train has been undertaking approval trials in the Lötschberg base tunnel, and in doing so achieved a speed of 281.4 kph on December 16th, a rail speed record for Switzerland.

Following intensive testing of the ETCS system on 11th February (using no less than 30 individual locomotives), the Lötschberg base tunnel was made available for operational training from March 15th until the official opening date of 15th June. From 16th June until the timetable change on 10th December suitable trains will be routed through the tunnel, weekly paths planned by operator: Crossrail 5, SBB Cargo 81, BLS Cargo 142, and SBB Passenger 35. The passenger workings are 5 out of the 6 EC services 131-136, which do not stop between Spiez and Brig; CIS services 45 / 46 continue to run over the old line. All the RAlpin trains will be routed via the base tunnel, transferring these trains to the base tunnel offers most benefit as their operation over the summit line effectively reduces that line to single track in places.

The two driving trailers purchased from Thurbo, now ABt 901 and 902 and repainted in bls livery, are being used in strengthening sets for the Bern – Luzern IR service.

RABe525 015 was returned from Bombardier Villeneuve to Bern on 16th February; this is the first NINA unit lengthened to four sections

SBB / SOB

The formal transfer of the Lichtensteig – Wattwil – Ebnet-Kappell section from SBB to SOB ownership eventually took place on 19th December 2006, although in practice SOB took over operation of Wattwil and Lichtensteig stations with the timetable change on 11th December.

OC

The Pendelzug set acquired from the SZU was formally launched on 20th January. BDe4/4 15 and Bt 51 were named 'L'Orbe' and 'La Sihl' respectively.

ZB

Rollschimmel goods traffic out of Luzern ceased at the end of 2006. An SBB diesel works

standard gauge goods traffic over the mixed gauge section between Luzern and Horw; out of Interlaken, only traffic for Kraftwerk Oberhäsli is still worked.

Two of the new driving trailers ABt8 941 – 943 have been regularly operating with ABe 130 units since early March, providing a riding technician from Stadler is available.

GGB

The new low floor treibwagen Bhe4/6 3081-3084 entered service from mid December, allowing the line to retire the 3011-3022 series (1947-1961) from front line service.

AB

On 19th January, Train 332 (10.19 Wasserauen - Gossau) was partially blown off the track outside Wasserauen; ABt 133 was blown onto its side on the adjacent road, trailer B 233 was derailed but did not fall over.

Editor's note: See the article in this edition.

MOB / TPF

The takeover of freight traffic on the TPF system by SBB Cargo threatened the abandonment of freight traffic on the metre gauge section. In the event, traffic for the chocolate factory at Broc and timber traffic is still being carried on Rollschimmel behind passenger trains, with timber traffic moved as required. MOB has taken over the operation of gravel traffic for Moratti Söhne between Grandvillard (TPF) and Saanen (MOB), using the existing wagon fleet, avoiding 1400 lorry journeys over the valley roads.

MGB

The new Matterhorn Terminal at Täsch opened in December, with a new station building and multi story car park for road visitors to Zermatt.

RhB

The derailment and subsequent crushing of Ge4/4II 632 Zizers (March "Swiss Express") actually occurred on the evening of Friday 5th January, with the line reopening on the morning of 10th January as described.

The Engadin Ski Marathon on 11th March saw the normal intense traffic, with around 4000 competitors being carried in extra trains to St Moritz on the morning of the event. During the day, a 15 minute interval service was provided between St Moritz and the Marathon halt at S-chanf; return traffic saw the RhB despatch 5 trains direct to Landquart via the Vereina tunnel.

SBB / RhB

The Austrian firm Stallinger has received permission to build a sawmill opposite the Ems Chemie factory at Ems Werk; it will be provided with a mixed gauge rail connection from the RhB line. The agreement is that the RhB will work a daily train into the mill, from one of five origin regions (Bündner Oberland, Prättigau, Engadin, Albula, Schanfigg), arriving around 16.00 and unloaded overnight before the empty wagons are sent out to the next loading point around 06.00 the following morning. This will employ a new fleet of 25 bogie wagons, on order for delivery in Autumn 2007. SBB have contracted to deliver two trainloads of timber to the plant daily. An SBB AM 843, with an adapter wagon to handle metre gauge wagons will carry out shunting. Editor's note: See the item in Sidetracks.

TRAMS

TL

All 15 units for the new M2 route were delivered by the end of 2006. The overhead in the depot area was declared live from 15th January, allowing testing of the units under power.

TPG

The concession to build a tram line from Cornavin via Onex to Bernex was granted on 10th January.

VBZ

The 'Karpfen' set transferred to the TMZ group for preservation is Be4/4 1430 and B 785. The remaining sets have been despatched to the Vinnitsa system in Ukraine.

HERITAGE

SBB Historic

Ae6/6 11401 has been transferred to SBB Historic and is currently stored at Biasca. Ae6/6 11406 Obwalden is being "plinthed" at Alpnachstad (OW) and was moved there by road from Bellinzona on 14th / 15th December

SEHR

This group was granted a concession to work the Eztwilen – Ramsen section on 10th January. Formal possession was taken on 27th February, with the operation of a press trip from Etwilen to Hemishofen to watch the removal of the buffer stop placed to protect the Rhein bridge at Hemishofen after the line closed in December 2004.