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INTERNATIONAL

SBB / FS

The new Flirt units from Stadler for the TILO services are mostly still on trial, although 524 003 was observed stabled at Luino on 4th July, presumably on the Wednesday market train diagram.

SBB / SNCF

Transformer failures on the dual voltage RBDe562 units have meant that the Basel S1 service (Mulhouse – Basel – Frick / Laufenburg) has been split at Basel, with SNCF INOX stock used north of Basel and working out of the old SNCF platforms (Tracks 30 to 35) at Bâle.

Delays to driver training meant that SNCF BB 37000 locomotives did not start working trains between Basel and Buchs until early February 2007. The formal agreement was signed on 10th June, for 36 transit trains (Basel – Buchs) and 5 import trains to RB Limmatal each week.

Basel Station centenary and the inauguration of Paris – Basel – Zürich TGV services were celebrated on 8th/9th June with a railway-orientated festival. TGV 4406 was named Basel and formally transferred to SBB ownership on 9th June.

SWITZERLAND

SBB

On 13th March, Crewe-built electrics 87 012 and 87 019 were towed from Basel to Buchs en route to Bulgaria, bringing Network South East livery to Switzerland. Arrival at Buchs was behind Ae6/6 11516, eight years their senior.

For the Hochrhein 'SlowUp' day on 17th June, special passenger trains were operated over the Laufenburg – Koblenz section of the Rhine Valley line, which has otherwise been goods only since 1995.

A signalling failure closed the main line between Sissach and Olten for 2 hours on 6th June. Affected trains were reversed at these stations, with a shuttle service provided for passengers between the two via the old Hauenstein line via Laufelfingen.

The SBB suffered significant disruption, mostly due to fallen trees, on June 21st. The Fribourg – Bern line was blocked until mid-evening, while the old line from Bern to Olten was also blocked at Burgdorf until the following day.

Coaching stock is appearing with '200', 'LBT' and 'NBS' markings; these symbols indicate that the vehicle is passed to run at 200 kph and has the necessary fire and safety modifications

to run through the Lötschberg base tunnel and/or over the Bern Olten NBS.

The Zug S-Bahn returned a further increase in traffic in 2006, with an 11% rise in traffic on Line S1 (Baar – Cham).

On 8th June, due to a failure of the booked Re460, a FLIRT formation from the Luzern RABe 520 series was called on to work the 15 10 Luzern – Zürich Flughafen service. Despite the train's maximum speed of 110 kph (as opposed to 160 kph), arrival at Zürich Hbf was on time!

Refurbished Ae6/6's carrying SBB Cargo livery with reinstated names can now be seen in regular service. Engines so far modified include 610 500 Landquart (first in normal service), 610 482 (observed 23rd June), 610 519 (29th June) and 610 420 Appenzell AR (10th July).

The line between Luzern and Küssnacht am Rigi was closed from 9th July to allow structure repairs and the construction of the Verkehrshaus station. VAE services were diverted via Rotkreuz and S-Bahn services reversed at Küssnacht. The replacement bus service – which also called at Luzern Schwanenplatz – was provided by VBL.

bls

Passenger services through the Lötschberg base tunnel will not start until 1st August, when IC 1077 Basel – Brig, will be diverted via the base tunnel with an additional stop at Visp. This train is formed by an EWIV Pendelzug set; it appears that the Cisalpino hauled stock will not be modified for base tunnel work so EC 131 – 136 will not now run via the base tunnel.

Freight services through the tunnel were launched on 15th June with Re 465 001 breaking a banner at the north portal. Normal services started as scheduled on 16th June. Apparently, if a train is more than three minutes late it will be diverted via Kandersteg.

By the end of September, Bombardier Villeneuve will have inserted a second intermediate vehicle in NINA units 015-027. The first lengthened unit, 525 015, entered service on 21st February on the Bern S1 service (Fribourg / Laupen – Thun).

The platforms on tracks 7 and 8 at Interlaken Ost are being rebuilt and raised to 55cm height; the platform for track 7 is being extended to 420m, which will allow it to take ICE units rather than Track 5, with its existing raised metal step section.

Tests have been taking place with an Re465 with two Mk III Pendelzug sets, with a view to using this formation for standby trains over the Lötschberg summit line when required.

Standard SBB Re4/4ii's have been observed on

the Bern – Luzern Mk III Pendelzug services, with 11236 and 11237 being used in early July.

Re4/4 163 was used on at least one round trip on the Interlaken Ost – Zweisimmen RE Pendelzug service (Trains 3125 / 3120) on 6th July. As the train was running 10 minutes late 'due to technical difficulties' on the return journey through Spiez with the engine leading and coupled to the BDt, it is probable that the engine and diving trailer would not talk to each other and the loco had to run round before departure. Re4/4 192 was coupled to the set for the next round trip.

While ex RM unit 232 has been repainted in the new bls livery and deployed on the Spiez – Interlaken Ost shuttle, the former RM and BLS fleets remain largely unintegrated this summer. It was noticeable that the RM passenger fleet continues to carry UIC numbers with a '38' railway code, by comparison with the ex-BLS fleet which uses the traditional '63' railway code.

Ae8/8 275 is stored at Brig shed with numbers removed.

RBS

Seven low floor, three section ABe4/12 units have been ordered from Stadler.

SOB

Although the original intention was to bring the new FLIRT units (526.6 series) into service this summer, they were still on trial at the start of July. Services on the Rapperswil / Wädenswil – Einsiedeln section remain in the hands of the old 1960's and 1970's Pendelzug sets, still in the old green and cream SOB livery.

TRN

The group's four-car FLIRT unit, RABe 527 331, arrived at Fleurier on 5th April.

AAR / WSB

10 low floor driving trailers have been ordered from Stadler; these will operate with refurbished units from the Be4/4 15 to 26 series of 1979 and will (re)introduce first class travel to the line.

MGB

Work is progressing on the diversion of the line between Brig and Bitsch, with the new Rhône bridge well advanced in early July. The exit from Brig station will be via the old link to the SBB goods yard, where new track and OLE masts have already been installed.

MOB / TPF

Following the loss of freight traffic, the two TPF locomotives GDe4/4 101 and 102 and gravel wagons Fad 751-2/4-60 have been transferred to the MOB. The locomotives, which are being

renumbered GDe4/4 6005 and 6006, are apparently in good condition and have covered about a tenth of the distance of the similar MOB examples. They were originally paid for with loans from the Confederation and the canton of Fribourg, both of whom said they wanted to transfer locomotives and loans to MOB.

RhB

On 15th April, the Landquart – Chur section was doubled for 2.3 km south from Untervaz. With realignments, this section is now rated for 100kph operation. The intermediate station at Trimmis was closed on 10th December 2006, so Untervaz station is now known as Untervaz-Trimmis.

The Arosa line between Chur and Chur Sand was completely closed between 16th April and 5th May; the reopened line now features double track, with right hand running, between Chur Bahnhof and the Obertor road junction, allowing trains to travel in the direction of traffic along the Engadinstrasse. However, only one train will be allowed in the section at a time. Tramway style signals are provided at the road junctions. At Chur station, a facing crossover has been provided for trains to arrive in either tracks 1 or 2; trains which need to run round have to be routed to track 2, the engine then is permitted to run back 'wrong line' clear of the entrance crossover before returning to the train. Road traffic is alerted to this shunt by flashing white lights.

The Val Ota tunnel east of Susch is being refurbished this summer. The line was shut between Susch and Sagliains in late April, with buses between Susch and Lavin and goods traffic (except oil traffic, which is banned) diverted via the Vereina tunnel.

Low height gangway connections have been fitted to the heritage balcony fleet, replacing the original overlapping gates.

A fleet renewal program has been developed which will involve replacing the existing passenger fleet with modern multiple units. The first 20 three-car sets (15 dual voltage, 5 AC only) have been ordered from Stadler and will take over Bernina, Arosa and Davos line services from 2010. Further orders are planned for Chur suburban services (4 car), the Albula line (5 car) and the Disentis and Scoul lines (also 5 cars).

SPB

An historic train set has been formed using He2/2 13 of 1913 (original SPB electric loco) and two summer coaches. The train crew will wear appropriate clothing. A second train set is under restoration.

ZB

Stans station has been rebuilt with new (outside) platforms with track 1 abolished and a bus interchange provided. At the launch on 9th June, ABe 130 003 was given the name 'Brisen'.

Former LSE BDeh4/4 6 returned to service in March 2007 renumbered BDeh 140 006. It had been out of service since 2005 after colliding with a works train.

TRAMS

BM

The Bern system is reduced to a through service between Guisanplatz and Saali / Ostring via the link at Zytglogge while the Bahnhofplatz is rebuilt; this will last until December. In early July, the Hauptbahnhof tram station had completely disappeared.

VBG (Verkehrsbetrieb Glattal)

Services on the extended VBZ Line 11 (Rehalp – Auzelg) are provided by a mixture of twin Tram 2000 sets and single unit Cobra trams. Triangular junctions with the next stage of the Glattalbahn system, the extension of VBZ Line 10 to Zürich Flughafen, have been installed at the Leutschenbach and Glattpark stops.

HISTORIC

Club 1889

The latest restored coach, Berninabahn BC 110, was released to traffic on 31st March. Originally built in 1909 and withdrawn in 1974 as B 2087, the coach was originally restored to passenger service by the SEFT group on the Misox line in 1997 before being transferred to Samedan for full restoration to original condition in 2003.

SBB Historic

Ae6/6 11402 Uri is now based at Erstfeld for Gotthard centenary work

TMZ

Burgwies tram depot, the oldest surviving in Zürich, opened as a museum on 24th May.

VHS

The museum has made a feature this year of Swiss tunnelling, with the Gotthard 125 and NEAT tunnels featuring strongly. With the entrance block demolished, access to the museum is from a temporary entrance by the railway section, so the first exhibit everyone sees is Ae 610 486 'Burgdorf' with two vans as the Swiss Cargo exhibit.

New acquisitions are Ae6/6 11413 'Schaffhausen' and BLS Ae4/4 258, the latter being currently coupled to a car-carrier wagon carrying 1960's cars.

SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS - STOCK CHANGES

January 2007

New:

Am 843 028

Withdrawn:

TemIII 353 TmII 791, 846 RBe 540 073

February 2007

New:

RABe 514 013, 015

Withdrawn:

TmII 654/99, 710/16/52/68/73, 833/40/53

Ee3/3 16405/44 XTm 91511/22

March 2007

New:

Tm 234 206, 207 RABe 514 014, 016

RABe 524 002, 003 XTmass 92 19 001, 002

Withdrawn:

Tell 87 TmII 628/29/53/74, 730/41/90/94

Ee3/3 16364 RBe 540 026

XTm 91508/62/63/79 XTms 95 85 584

April 2007

New:

RABe 514 017

Reinstated:

RBe 540 042

Withdrawn:

Tm 235 003/8/11

SWITZERLAND - CHATEAU D'OEX

Beautiful apartment (sleeps 2) in newly-converted period hotel with superb facilities (indoor pool, fitness room, sauna, laundry room, computer room etc) in Chateau D'Oex, a small winter/summer resort in the Bernese Oberland.

The apartment is a few minutes' walk from the station, a stop on the famous Golden Pass Line between Montreux and Zweisimmen. This makes it an ideal base for exploring a wide variety of main line, narrow gauge and mountain lines in the Lake Geneva, western Rhone Valley and Bernese Oberland areas.

**More details from Eddie Stedman
on 01737 552967 (eve.)
or eddiestedman@hotmail.com.**