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INTERNATIONAL

CIS / ITALY

The continued problems with the Cisalpino fleet have seen the withdrawal of Milano – Basel through workings via the Lötschberg base tunnel from 22nd December. Until 7th January, conventional stock worked through on CIS 51 / 56 but from 8th January, all workings were replaced by separate SBB (Re460 + 9 coach EW IV Pendelzug) and FS trains with passengers changing at Domodossola. When severe delays occur, passengers have to use local or relief services between Domodossola and Brig and normal IC services north from Brig. The dedicated Simplon Tunnel local set has been reformed into a five coach Re4/4II Pendelzug formation to facilitate its use as a Dispozug.

The low point on the Lötschberg axis occurred on 22nd December, when an ETR 470 unit lost contact with Spiez signalling control centre in the base tunnel. Passengers were detained at the Ferden emergency station and recovered by an IC train, the tunnel being blocked for around two hours before the set could be removed.

Punctuality on the whole Cisalpino network remains at a low level, with much public and government dissatisfaction. Consideration has been given to cancelling the company's concession in Switzerland.

Genève

In a late change to the timetable, the Genève – La Plaine service frequency has been doubled to half hourly during weekday peak periods and at lunchtimes. To help cover the five diagrams, four RIO push-pull sets using BB25500 loco power have been hired from SNCF. SBB are taking advice from TSOL on using the Bem550 units in multiple.

Germany

DB Fernverkehr has been hiring coaches from SBB in their struggle to cover for ICE units which have been out of service due to axle defects in late 2008 / early 2009.

Scandinavia

Stadler / SBB demonstration unit RABe 521 011 went to Sweden and Norway in February (on the way out using the Mukran – Trelleborg train ferry). After going on display in Stockholm, the 'Flørt' unit went to Norway for winter testing in the Bergen area. The unit returned to Switzerland in early March.

SBB

Goods traffic on the North / South axis fell by 20% in November 2008, predominately due to a fall in automotive traffic. In consequence, 53 Ae6/6 locomotives were put into store in late 2008 / early 2009, and reports suggest that at

least 16 of these have been formally withdrawn.

Swiss Express livery Re4/4II 11141, which has been used as a transformer locomotive at Biel / Bienna depot since December 2007, is to be overhauled and returned to service.

Celebrations for the 150th anniversary of the Zürich – Bern line took place on 15th November, with a firework display in Bern. During the day, two new units were named 'Züri-West', RABe 514 050 and BLS 'Lötschberger' RABe 535 001.

The Domino units (modernised Kolibri driving vehicles with new low floor intermediate coaches) are being renumbered in the following ranges:

RegioAlps (3 car) – 560 401-13

Glarner Sprinter (6 car) – 560 201/2

Standard (3 / 4 car) – 560 203 – 307

Travys (3 car) - 560 384 / 385 [formerly Class 566]

All the motor coaches will carry their full 12 digit UIC number. RegioAlps units were on test in the Rhône valley and the Jura in February.

Heavy snow on the night of 17th February saw the Gotthard line closed until midday on 18th between Erstfeld and Airolo due to avalanche risk.

BLS

The maximum permitted speed in the Lötschberg base tunnel has been raised to its design value of 250kph. As of New Year 2009, 7 'Lötschberger' units of type RABe 535 were available for service. From early April, the full fleet of 13 were available for service, allowing the release of the borrowed NINA units and permitting the return of the DB double deck rake.

Introduction of the 10 new Re486 is proving problematical, reportedly due to issues with the Bombardier-supplied ETCS equipment.

A Branch Line Society tour on 2nd / 3rd April was enlivened by the failure of the Am843 locomotive on its visit to the old Hondrich tunnel. The train had to be rescued by Ae6/6 11514 on the Hondrich quarry trip working; the recovered train was then propelled through the new Hondrich tunnel into Spiez station by the Ae6/6.

The BLS network, including the Lötschberg Base tunnel, is to be split into operating and infrastructure companies. The infrastructure company, BLS Netz, will be split between the Swiss Confederation (50.1%), BLS (33.4%) and Canton Bern (16.5%); this organisation will last until at least 2020.

CJ

The last prototype Kolibri, RBDe 560 002, has been purchased from the SBB. It went to Oberburg works on 18th December for repainting into CJ livery

SOB / SBB

On 7th March, trains 2310 / 2311 (06 35 Luzern –

Zürich Hbf and 07 35 return) were covered by a Voralpen Express set complete with SOB Re4/4 due to the failure of the Re460 on the scheduled rake.

SOB

Re446 015 has returned from Stadler Winterthur after a 15 month absence for repairs to accident damage sustained at Ebikon on 16th December 2007.

THURBO

RABe526 753 was the first FLIRT unit to be turned out carrying the new multicolour logo, replacing the original 'blurred' branding. The THURBO logo and the SBB insignia have equal prominence at each end of the FLIRT units. A yellow band has been applied above the first class section.

ASm

'Ankerstube' BRe4/4 516 (BTI Be4/4 6 of 1947) is now effectively out of service and looking for a purchaser as there are no paths available to use the unit on weekdays since the introduction of a 15 minute interval service in December 2008.

MGB

Heavy snowfall on the night of 17th February blocked the line between Niederwald and Hospental and between Andermatt and Sedrun, with even the Furka shuttle being suspended due to power outages.

RhB

A rockslide in the vicinity of the Brusio spiral on the afternoon of December 14th completely blocked the Bernina line in that area, making around 200m of the trackbed unusable. Passenger services were replaced by buses south of Poschiavo, while a temporary oil terminal was established at Miralago to replace the cut-off depot at Campocologno from 20th January, avoiding the need to take road tankers over the Bernina Pass into the Engadine in the peak winter sports season. Passenger stock trapped south of the block (ABe4/4 42 / 46 and 7 coaches) was moved by road transporters from Campologno to Miralago between 6th and 8th January. Following work to stabilise the hillside, which included dynamiting unstable rock, the line to Tirano reopened on 4th April.

The Albula line was closed south of Bergün due to avalanche risk after heavy snow on 17th February.

The flyover bridge across the SBB at Zizers, which dated back to 1896, was replaced by a new bridge during spring 2009.

The closure of the Engadin line between Ardez and Scuol/Tarasp started on 15th March and is scheduled to last until 22nd November.

Ge6/6 412 was withdrawn on 18th November and broken up on 21st November. However,

long-term defective ABe4/4 501 is due for overhaul and return to serviceable condition in 2009.

WSB

The first modernised Pendelzug set, comprising refurbished motorcoach Be4/4 23 and new low-floor driving trailer ABt 51, went into service in the third week of January.

URBAN TRANSPORT

BERNMOBIL

A lengthening program for the Combino fleet started in December 2008 with the dispatch of Be6/8 765 to the Siemens works in Wien.

BVB

New peak hour tram route 21 debuted on 9th March between Bädische Bhf and a new turning circle at St Johann station via the Dreirosenbrücke.

The Combino overhaul program was completed in the middle of December 2009

BLT / BVB / VBZ

Acceptance testing on the new Tango trams on BLT Line 10 has included testing that there are no interference problems with BVB Combino units.

The fourth Tram, 154, was delivered by Stadler to the VBZ system for evaluation trials, scheduled to take place in early April.

TPG

Work on the Cornavin – Onex – Bernex line started in January 2009. This route will cross the Rhône on the Pont de l'Île, as the existing route is at capacity. Inauguration is scheduled for December 2011.

TN

Heavy snowfall on 6th January saw works car Xe2/2 601 make a rare appearance on snowplough duties.

HISTORIC

VHS

'Kanton' Ae6/6 11413 Schaffhausen has been included in the collection.

In preparation for the 50th birthday celebrations for the VHS, certain stock, including Ed2/5 28 Genf and the replica SNB coach A 1, have gone away for overhaul. Power for the stock moves were provided by SBB Historic, with Ae8/14 11801 being employed from Luzern to Biel, being repalced there by Be5/7 12504.

Historiche MThB

MThB ABDe4/4 12 has been cosmetically restored during the winter, reappearing in original dark green livery at Romanshorn on 3rd March.

SHEDMASTER can be viewed on the **SRS Website**.