

Romande reports : news from southwest Switzerland

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ROMANDE REPORTS

- News from Southwest Switzerland

Lausanne plans m3 but loses extra m1 stock

Following on from the overwhelming success of its m2 driverless metro the city of Lausanne is now working on a project to develop the m3. This is planned to be a tram route linking the centre of the city at Flon with Renens and Bussigny in the west, followed by a link up to Blécherette and a planned new CHF2.1 billion eco-district in the north. This area has the working name of Métamorphose, and is expected to house some 6,000 residents as well as providing new sporting and leisure facilities. The section of m3 from Flon to Renens is scheduled to be in operation by 2015, with the rest opening in 2018. To relieve pressure on the m2 an escalator link is also planned from Flon to the SBB station.

It was proposed to sell the CFF dual-voltage Class 550 units used on the Cornavin to La Plaine route in Canton

Genève to Lausanne, as these units are similar to the current stock used on the m1 line and would have helped to increase capacity. The m1 is a conventional light rail line linking Flon with Renens on a line roughly parallel with the lake shore. The CFF units are now to be retained to work between Genève and Bellegarde (France) alongside the dual-voltage Class 524 TiLo FLIRT units that have been modified and transferred from the Ticino to Genève to improve the La Plaine local service. Keeping the Class 550 units on the 1500V dc lines will allow the hired-in French stock used for cross-border working to be returned to SNCF. Recent trips on the m1 and m2 lines at rush hours indicate that overcrowding is becoming a major problem and more stock is urgently required on both. +

Bernina Triebwagen arrives at Blonay-Chamby

On Friday October 29th 2010 ex. RhB Bernina unit ABe 4/4 No 35 arrived at the Chaulin Dépôt of the Blonay-Chamby Museum Railway. The Triebwagen, which was bought by the B-C earlier in the year and then stored for 6 months under cover at Châtel St Denis thanks to the kindness of the TPF, was transferred by a trouble-free trip to her new home shed via Bulle, Montbovon and then along the MOB.

Following a freshen-up during the winter, and the necessary modifications to bring the coupling gear to MOB/TPF standards, she should be inaugurated into service during the 2011 Whitsun festival. +

MTGN gets new unit

On P24/5 in SE 101 our correspondent Le Vaudois reported on the construction of a new 2-car unit for the Montreux-Territet-Glion-Rochers-de-Naye. This has now been completed and was being tested at the end of last October prior to entering service at the start of the skiing season. The Bhe 4/8 No 305 was assembled at the Chernex Works of the MOB and is based upon similar bodyshells to those of units 301-304, although modified with wider doors. It was

TOP: Blonay Chamby. RhB railcar on the hill.
BOTTOM: Blonay Chamby. Railcars at the dépôt.
PHOTOS: Jean-Eric Seewer



decided to use the skills available at Chernex for this project as the outside tenders proved to be too expensive. The unit utilizes wheel sets and traction motors built at Chernex and has been out-shopped in the white/gold corporate livery of the MVR Group. +

Information supplied by: Jean-Francois Andrist; Jakob Jäger; Michael Farr.

PENDOLINI PROBLEMS s'Murmeli

There is a standing joke in our Swiss railway circles which Alstom probably thinks is in bad taste. It goes something like: Passenger, red-faced, breathless at station entrance, hoping to catch train: 'Is the Pendolino late?' SBB official, sadly: 'Yes, very' Passenger 'Oh, how much, then?' SBB official: 'About 3 years'.

The position at the December 2010 timetable change was again alarming. Of the nine 470s only 3 or 4 were serviceable resulting in the timetable concept introduced a year earlier not being operable. They should operate the Zürich – Milano services, but these require at least four, and for sustainable operations with delay or substitution (and not all failures are out on the road; some are workshop cases) 2 or 3 more. To all other troubles comes a new problem, excessive wheel tread wear, which might be attributable to the Gotthard (is life there so much more difficult than on the Lötschberg?), requiring workshop visits - which in Milano are of unpredictable duration!

As an emergency measure four schedules are now replaced by an ICN from Zürich to Chiasso, with a 610 of Trenitalia from Chiasso to Milano. The changeover, with baggage and confusion, requires up to 8 minutes on top of other lost time. Since Dec.12th two ICNs are supplied; one runs in the scheduled path, for national traffic, the other provides the (delayed) Pendolino connection. What that costs is anybody's guess, but it is helping to retain the big market in Swiss-Italian travel along with maintaining the discipline of the domestic timetable.

All the 610s (14 train sets) were still not all delivered by December 2010 although unit 013 was in service after Christmas. Most are operating the Basel – Lötschberg services, by and large getting along. One, however, was advertised to run Basel – Gotthard – Milano – Venezia. Now, these trains were ordered to meet a specification of full tilt operation on the Gotthard, speed category N. Certification for this has never been achieved and the new Basel – Venezia cannot keep its scheduled time. However, a 45 minute wait in Milano

proves fortuitous, as at least some 20 minutes of delay can be absorbed. Passengers with Milano connections are less cheerful. However, the northbound run is not due at Luzern until 23.41 (Basel at 00.54) when the regular 20 minutes minimum lateness is not an attractive proposition for travellers.

There are many other complaints about the conditions on board such as toilets and waste facilities not adequate (worsened by short turnarounds after late running) or doors causing delays. I saw a 610 standing at Spiez before Christmas, with a green start signal but refusing to go, and the driver on the telephone (with his help desk in Bangalore?) and waving his arms in exasperation. Late already, it was 8 minutes before the train moved. When viewing their shift allocations drivers must dread drawing the short straw marked Pendolini! +

Editor's note. Having recently ridden a Class 610 on a Lötschberg working (it was on time) I found it tight for internal space. Worse, it had a series of TV screens set into the roof showing inane promotional videos when not giving some potentially useful information.

TOP: 610 004 at Spiez temporary failure.

BOTTOM: 610 004 at Spiez delayed departure. PHOTOS: s'Murmeli

