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'BUS-TRAINS' IN ZUG Mario Gavazzi



Title Photo: A new Hess 'Bus-Train' vehicle demonstrates its tight turning circle at the station.

Inset Photo: (From the left) ZVB drivers Meinrad Brand and Guido Nussbaumer, ZVB Director Cyrill Weber and Rolf Gertsh from the ZVB management team.



For the last 15 years the Zugerland Verkehrsbetriebe (ZVB) has been operating Europe's largest fleet of 'Bus-Trains', to service the busiest of its network of bus routes around the City and Canton of Zug. 'Bus-Trains' involve the use of a powerful conventional bus that can be linked by a drawbar to easily attachable/detachable trailers with a similar body specification. They are also in use in Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and Estonia as well as in Switzerland (Lausanne, Luzern and St Gallen). The ZVB fleet, built by Nutzfahrzeug-Arbon-Wetzikon (NAW) and Hess, had all covered over 1million km normally operating on ZVB's Line 1 (Zug-Oberägeri) and Line 2 (Zug-Menzingen), where the ability to add trailers to cope with peak hour loadings proved to be an economic solution to increasing capacity on the services. Understanding the efficiencies of 'Bus-Train' operations the ZVB chose to replace their original fleet of these vehicles with eleven new vehicles sourced from Swiss manufacturer Hess based in Bellach near Solothurn. Hess, who also manufacturer a comprehensive range of conventional and articulated buses and trolley-buses, has been building 'Bus-Trains' since 1943 and is now the sole manufacture of such vehicles. The prototype of the new ZBV fleet arrived in Zug in April 2011 with the last one entering service 12 months later. To commemorate the loyal service that the earlier fleet of 'Bus-Trains' had given the citizens of Zug and its surroundings, on the 1st May the operator arranged a 'farewell trip' when Bus 101 and Trailer 401 ran from the main station to Oberägeri and back. The 'Bus-Train' was decorated with a floral tribute, and it was full of bus enthusiasts saying a goodbye. It returned to a media photo

call. As with most Swiss transport equipment the vehicles being replaced had been maintained in an immaculate condition, hence have been snapped-up by other operators. NAW, one part of the original construction team, have unfortunately gone out of business, but Hess is thriving and currently employs some 450 people. In 2008 it was awarded Solothurn's Entrepreneur Award for consistent entrepreneurial excellence specifically for sustainable development. The new Hess 'Bus-Train' vehicles for the ZVB were actually developed in close co-operation with the operator. They are 22.9m long, can carry up to 180 passengers (57 seated) and are powered by a Cummins 8.9l diesel engine that meets the very strict Euro 5 EEV emissions standards. +

Top: A new Hess 'Bus-Train' vehicle and the bike rack on the rear of the trailer.

Left: A new Hess 'Bus-Train' vehicle on the left.

Right: The last of the NAW/Hess 'Bus-Train' vehicles.

