

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2012)
Heft: 112

Rubrik: Swiss news

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 16.03.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

braked. Look carefully and you will see behind the engine that both sets of brake pipes are connected up. The driver has both a vacuum exhauster and brake control, and an airbrake pump and controller. The fun comes in releasing brakes and conducting a brake test, for both must work, and on the road, for slowing, stopping and releasing. The two systems are usually linked automatically in practice, so that the whole train is braked; but the differences in characteristics, in reaction time and actual brake force, need to be understood and above all anticipated. Since freight cars can also be heavy (think of the trains of oil tanks, containers or cars of logs seen on the RhB), and as vacuum brakes release more slowly, a lack of care can lead to push-me-pull-you reactions which, if not dangerous, are very unwelcome, and a mark of a good driver is a timely smooth stop, at the right place, without that

terminal jerk at standstill - something many motorists might well learn!

Narrow gauge lines tend to be a long succession of speed limits, alternating steep gradients and sharp curves. It all works very well, but the driver (who can also use electric regenerative braking in most modern equipment) has on lines like the Arosa - Chur an almost continuous fall at 1 in 16, or the descent into Montreux at 1 in 14, to negotiate, may be using some skills we don't usually think about. In theory the RhB's new 'Allegra' units have so much computer control equipment that they can almost drive themselves, once a train is moving and the route parameters set-up. However, sit in a cab of one and watch an experienced driver and you realise that there is still a need for hard-learned human skills to ensure the safe operation of a mountain railway. 

SWISS NEWS

SBB orders more ETR610s

Swiss Express has frequently carried the sad story of the 'Pendelinos' on the Gotthard route to Italy. The fleet of ETR470 tilting trains, purchased for their joint Cisalpino operation formed in 1993 by SBB and TrenItalia, comprehensively failed. Cisalpino started well, but soon the unreliable ETR470s rendered any serious service impossible, even when supported by locomotive-hauled trains. The delayed introduction of the ETR610s (the next generation of 'Pendelinos') on the Lötschberg line gave some relief, but disaster followed the continued use of the ETR470s on the Gotthard with life-threatening fires, breakdowns and non-availability leading to the liquidation of Cisalpino in 2009. Trenitalia withdrew their ETR470s whilst SBB have admitted publicly that they cannot assure quality of service with their remaining units. This led to the announcement in 2011 that their ETR470s, just at their half-life, would be withdrawn as heavy maintenance fell due, and at the latest by end-2014. This leaves SBB's fleet of seven ETR610s running Milano to Genève, and Basel services on the Lötschberg route. For the opening of the Gotthard base tunnel in 2016 SBB will need new trains - some 29 high-speed (but non-tilting) units for international traffic. They are out to tender, but this process is still open and will take time, so there will be a hiatus with no rolling stock able to fill the gap between 2014 and the entry into service of the new stock. To bridge this gap on the Gotthard route SBB have ordered eight new ETR610 'Pendelino' units from Alstom, for delivery in 2015 at a cost of CHF250m - there seems to have been no alternative course available. Ordering identical ETR610s to those now in service will avoid the lengthy proving trials needed for licensing in both Switzerland and Italy. This still leaves a gap of several months without cover; presumably the ICN500 class will soldier on between Basel/ Zürich and Lugano/Chiasso maintaining the domestic service (they cannot operate in Italy) as they do now. A further snag is that the ETR610s have still never been authorized to run in tilt mode, in-multiple, on the track geometry of the Gotthard route, as they do on the Lötschberg, resulting in a lack of capacity (they seat 430 passengers) and overcrowding. The teething troubles of the ETR610s that caused the original 3 year delay in delivery are now regarded as solved. This is not an ideal solution but it is difficult to see how else SBB could have extricated themselves

from the aftermath of the ETR470 debacle.

Rail reopening

From the December timetable change trains will return to the metre-gauge line that once ran between Niederbipp and Oensingen and was closed and lifted in 1943. Major development in the area has prompted the ASm to re-lay 2km of track parallel to the SBB main line. We hope to have an article on the ASm, and the background to this project, in the March *Swiss Express*. The official ceremonies were on the 13th October.



The first train waiting to leave Oensingen for Niederbipp, the 'official' opening day.

Photo: Bryan Stone

Internal Intermodal

Following the successful introduction earlier this year of a scheduled intermodal shuttle between Zürich Dietikon and Lausanne Renens, SBB Cargo has announced plans to develop a national network of intermodal shuttles that will cover the whole of Switzerland utilising terminals at strategic locations. SBB Cargo already operates eight intermodal terminals, and has recently invested in two new facilities at Rothenburg and Cadenezzo. It has commissioned new handling equipment at other locations and it also plans to upgrade terminals to accommodate 750m-long trains. The COOP has also started its own rail-based internal intermodal operation. See the article on P10.

ETCS signalling moves forward

Last July representatives of Swiss Federal Railways, the Swiss Federal Office of Transport (BAV) and their partners Siemens and Thales ceremonially installed two ETCS balises

(Electronic Signalling Transponders) at Airolo on the Gotthard line marking the start of a five and a half year programme to install these essential components of the ETCS system at 11,000 locations covering the entire Swiss mainline network. SBB and the BAV (federal Transport Office) are investing around CHF300m in introducing ETCS Level 2 across the whole network by 2025. This system will allow headways of two minutes for trains travelling at 200km/h. The BAV (working with SBB as the project leader) has been preparing for this, the introduction of ETCS on existing lines, for the last 12 years. The first Swiss application of the technology was on the new high-speed line between Mattstetten and Rothrist, and then in the Lötschberg Base Tunnel.

BOB and MOB?

We reported in *Swiss Express* 111 the (legally required) renewed use of the old title Montreux-Oberland Bernois for the railway of that name. It's never called the Montreux-Berner-Oberland-Bahn. There is a reason. In May 1902 the Berner-Oberland-Bahnen submitted a complaint to the Federal Council about the name of the MOB. The French title Chemin de fer Montreux – Oberland Bernois was not a problem, but it was claimed that the German version could give cause for confusion. In Dec 1902 the Federal Council rejected the complaint, however an amicable agreement was reached that the MOB would only use the French name. So for 110 years the MOB kept to itself, and the BOB has continued to serve its own Berner Oberland. Should there ever be through running from Montreux to Interlaken Ost, as there one day might, no confusion can arise.

BOB realignment

In order to bypass a section of its Zweilütschinen-Grindelwald line that is subject to being blocked by avalanches, plus tree and rock falls, the Berner-Oberland-Bahn is to start work next spring on a two year, CHF36m realignment project. This will also replace the short Buechiwald tunnel (which has a restricted loading gauge and would need major refurbishment work) with a new 700m long tunnel on a much easier alignment.

DB to upgrade Swiss line

As a part of the Schaffhausen S-Bahn scheme DB Projects have commissioned a consortium of consultants Pöyry and PTB Magdeburg to manage and supervise the refurbishment of the 12km of DB-owned line between Erzingen (on the German/Swiss border) and Beringen Bad Bahnhof 6km to the west of Schaffhausen. Some 95% of the line is in Switzerland and as part of the scheme it will be electrified, a new signalling system installed, and it will be double-tracked throughout in order to enable a half-hourly service to be introduced in late 2014. The project, with a total value of €90m, commenced this September. The local service in Switzerland is currently hourly and is run by DB, which also operates a fast Basel Bad-Schaffhausen-Singen service over the route, all currently diesel powered. It is assumed that SBB electric units will take over the local trains once electrification is complete.

Coaches commissioned

In August SBB unveiled the first of 60 modernised coaches, which are being upgraded as part of a drive to

accommodate traffic growth. The type Bpm51 2nd class coaches, which date from 1972/78, are being refurbished at SBB's Bellinzona and Olten works in a CHF61m programme. The project includes reconditioning of the bogies; installation of new seats; a new emergency braking system, and installation of power-operated doors, as well as corrosion repairs and repainting. The work will allow the vehicles to remain in service until at least 2018. This refurbishment is one of a number of short-term measures that are being introduced in an effort to cope with continuing passengers growth that reached a record 977,000 passengers/day in 2011, a 2.7% increase over 2010 levels. SBB will also be converting up to 50 1st class EW IV coaches into 2nd class 78-seat vehicles.

SBB Infrastructure hires ÖBB locomotives

From the middle of 2012 Austria's ÖBB has been hiring some of its Class 2143 diesel locomotives to SBB Infrastructure. This part of the SBB organisation has a shortage of motive power at present, although next year they may gain SBB Cargo's 'redundant' Am841s, joining the ones that they have already. It is intended that five 2143s will come to Switzerland (Nos. 2143-007/014/025/026/077), although keeping their Austrian registration, to work maintenance trains, etc. They will be based first in Olten and then later in Lausanne/Bussigny.

BLS and RhB short of rolling stock

The best laid plans... The Gotthard blockage, booming passenger numbers and an accumulation of arrears of repairs have left BLS short of Class RABe 535 'Lötschberger' units. The running of locals with 'NINA' units, or with old blue-and-white BLS push-pull sets has its limits, as has the use of ex SBB 420 class now nearing the end of their working life. Three of these, theoretically stopped for repairs, had to be turned out to help shift the Gotthard trains with two running a diverted DB car-sleeper one weekend. Over the holiday period some commuter trains were shortened to find spare stock. The RhB problem is not quite the same, though incidents took their toll. The rolling introduction of new trains is going ahead, but even here the remaining 'oldies' are still in regular use beyond all reasonable expectations. For example in August the 65 year old Ge4/4 No.603 was rostered to work a 'Glacier Express' diagram.

Train des Vignes

We noted in the June *Swiss Express* the once private line Vevey-Puidoux-Chevbres (VCh) had been sold by the private and municipal shareholders to SBB to whom it had long been leased. The line is now Vaud service S31 although the name will remain. A tangible result is that the brightly liveried NPZ RBDe 560-131, which had worked here since 1996, disappeared in June 2012 to go for refurbishment. It was always curiously vulnerable to the attentions of the sprayers. Perhaps their attention will move on, as the line is now worked by a standard DOMINO unit.

New Red Arrows in Switzerland?

No, not a new version of SBB's famous 1935 RAe2/4 'Roterpfeil' single railcar. A Bombardier/Absaldo joint venture is to produce some fifty 400kph 'Frecciarossa 1000' (Red Arrow) 8-car EMUs for TrenItalia's high speed line between Rome and Milano. These units will be the first outside Switzerland to use the active-suspension bogies developed by

Bombardier for the double-deck trains now on order for SBB. They will also be multi-system units that will be able to run in various countries, including Switzerland, if licensed. As the first sets are due to enter service in 2013 it is tempting to view this development in-parallel to SBB's intentions, described elsewhere, to bridge its own Gotthard gap with new ETR610 'Pendolino' units. TrenItalia operating Rome-Milano-Zürich?

SBB passenger fleet strategy

SBB has announced that in the long term (up to 2035) it is their intention to have no more than seven vehicle types in service rather than the current twenty-plus. International traffic would be handled by the new generation of single-deck units currently on order. Long distance domestic traffic will be handled by the 'FV-Dosto' and 'Regio-Dosto' double-deck units currently under construction. A new generation of single-deck trains for use on frequent urban services is being considered. These would have numerous doors and more standing room than seating. Air conditioning will be standard over the whole fleet, as will access to mobile telephones and internet devices.

Personnel changes at the Rhätische Bahn

Peider Härtli the long-serving press spokesman for the RhB, who has always been kindly disposed towards the SRS, is retiring in early 2013. We wish him a long and rewarding retirement and welcome his successor, Yvonne Dünser, who for 10 years has been a moderator at Swiss Radio DRS 1. This talented lady fluently speaks Romansch along with German, Italian and English.

New station

Transports Publics Fribourgeois (TPF) has announced plans to build a new through station at Châtel-St-Denis to replace the current one, where all metre-gauge Palézieux-Bulle trains have to reverse. Works should commence in 2014 at a cost of CHF20m.



WSB De4/4 No.43 at Suhr with transporter bogies in April 2012.
Photo: Jakob Jäger

End of an era

The metre-gauge Wynental-und-Suhrentalbahn-Bahn (WSB) has announced that at the end of this year's sugar beet season it will cease the carriage of standard-gauge wagons on transporter bogies. Beet loadings have halved in the past five years and there is now little other freight traffic. This announcement comes after the provision of a new transfer

siding with the SBB constructed when the Suhr station complex was recently rebuilt in association with the WSB relocating its tracks on the abandoned SBB line from Aarau. It is assumed that Nos. 43 and 44, the De4/4 locos built in 1974 by Schlieren for once-busy freight services, will be retained for maintenance work.

Change at the CJ

The 14km section of the Chemins de fer du Jura from Bollemont to Glovelier should have reopened this autumn following a period of closure that allowed two major infrastructural improvements to take place. Tunnels on the route needed renewal work and Glovelier station has been rebuilt to end the street running in front of the Café de La Gare. The CJ tracks have been realigned to enable the metre-gauge trains to serve their own platform allowing direct interchange, with floor level access, to/from mainline trains on the Basel-Delémont-Porrentruy route. The SBB trains currently run forward from Porrentruy across the border to Delle in France and this route will be extended to Belfort in the near future giving connections into the SNCF's TGV network. In the longer term it is proposed to lay some 12km of dual-track along the SBB route to allow the CJ to run direct to Delémont the capital of Canton Jura. In practice a 2.9km extension of the CJ's tracks to Bassecourt, the next town, would give its users access to a large shopping complex located adjacent to the SBB line.

Schloss Laufen am Rheinflall to close?

The closure of this tourist halt adjacent to the famous Rhein Falls is threatened by the planned extension of the Zürich S-Bahn network. The longer trains envisaged for this service could not stop at the current platforms and these also do not meet universal access requirements. Rebuilding the station is not considered to be a cost-effective option so trains may cease calling from 2015.

Trams without wires

Genève Public Transport (TPG) recently took delivery of an experimental Stadler 'Tango' tram that has been equipped with Supercapacitors for on-board energy storage. The vehicle stores energy from the regenerative braking system in a roof-mounted module for reuse as traction power during acceleration. During the first tests the vehicle covered a distance of 1500m operating at low speed on a depot circuit with the pantograph lowered. The Supercapacitor unit weighs around a tonne and can store the equivalent of the entire kinetic energy of the vehicle travelling at 55km/h. Supercapacitors have a major advantage over batteries because they can absorb and release the very high levels of current generated during braking. If the extensive trials that TPG, Stadler and ABB (who supplied the traction converters) are monitoring prove successful the system could be fitted to all 32 'Tangos' in the TPG fleet. In the long term the use of Supercapacitor equipped trams may enable the removal of overhead wiring in environmentally sensitive areas.

MGB upgrades signalling

Siemens has been awarded a contract, scheduled to finish in autumn 2014, to renew the MGB's signalling and train control systems. It will install nine Simis IS electronic interlockings, eight LCM 200 level crossings, and the Ilitis integrated operational control system to cover the Münster-Mörel section, east of Brig, and the Oberalp Pass between

Andermatt and Disentis. When completed the majority of the MGB will then be covered by these state-of-the-art systems that started to be introduced in 2006.

The 'Elephant' returns...

SBB Historic's C5/6 2-10-0 No. 2978 'Elephant' 2-10-0 has been fitted with ETM-S equipment and electronics to make it compatible with the rolling installation now taking place across the SBB's system. The work was undertaken at the SOB's Samstagern works where Eb3/5 2-6-2T No.5819 is now being worked on. This means that this famous loco can return to work special services.

...but an old friend disappears

Ge4/4 No.126, a veteran of 1917 on the Aare-Seeland (ASm) system, used for the freight traffic on transporter trucks, has been part of the scenery around Langenthal for years. On June 22 she was taken away. However, she is in safe hands: the Railway Museum Kerzers/Kallnach has found her a place.



Ge4/4 No.126 at Langenthal in March 2010. Photo: Jakob Jäger

SNCF to operate on the Gotthard route?

Working through its subsidiary Vila, SNCF-Geodis has formally submitted to the Swiss Federal Transport Office (BAV) its 'Transhelvetica' project for the transalpine transport of semi-trailers via the Gotthard route. The submission involves the provision of a transalpine service for non-craneable semi-trailers with a corner height of 4m – about 90% of the market - using the newly developed Modalohr UIC type wagon. This allows such trailers to be transported on Swiss routes that are normally cleared for a maximum corner height of only 3.84m. If the project is given the go-ahead it envisages moving an additional 100,000 semi-trailers from road to rail by 2015, on a service linking terminals in the Ruhr, and in the Rhein valley north of Basel, with Chiasso.

SBB Cargo reviews its fleet

Following-on from SBB Cargo's reduction in the number of points it presently serves (reported in *Swiss Express* 111) the company has reviewed its motive power needs and is disposing of locomotives, some of which are very old. Withdrawals announced are: 9 - Ee3/3; 7 - Em 3/3; 21 - Bm4/4; 2 - Em 831; 14 - TmIV; 16 - Am 841; and 3 - Am840. The 30 new Stadler-built Hybrids, Eem 923, will replace these, and there is an option for more. Heavy shunting and transfers will be with the Am843. There will be 45 Tm232 tractors (modernized Tm^{III}), performing all kinds of odd jobs. For example: one is towed behind the Frutigen pick-up freight to shunt unwired sidings, something that probably

will not last. The sight of little shunting tractors everywhere will soon be a thing of the past. The 27 Re6/6s and 31 Re 4/4IIs on the roster are mostly diagrammed in pairs as Re 10/10 on north-south transit workings. The Gotthard base tunnel, opening 2016/17, will remove the need for such double-heading – and the engines? SBB Cargo are currently looking for (probably to lease) 20 to 30 locos for through running between Germany and Italy. A present study is examining measures to ensure that the Re6/6 and Re4/4 II and III can last another 15 – 20 years in national internal traffic. Some forty Ae6/6s were on the books in mid 2012, although many are not in service and no more heavy repairs are being undertaken. It is planned to run the serviceable ones through the autumn peak of 2013 (sugar beet, etc.) and then the remainder will be withdrawn.

Breaking the rules

It is unusual that a museum railway is told to break the rules, but the re-signalling of Hinwil, at first sight, requires just that as the DVZO trains from Hinwil to Bâretswil have to pass a red signal, normally an obligatory halt. The explanation is that S14 Zürich regional trains which terminate here must stop in order to protect a level crossing. The DVZO trains that run across the road are now officially running as siding moves and 'proceeding at caution' having gained a release from the central dispatcher at Oerlikon to go beyond the station. It works, but probably would not be allowed in the UK.

More centenaries

Apart from the 100 years of the Jungfraubahn other Swiss operations have had their centenaries in 2012 some of which (like the MOB at Lenk) have been reported in *Swiss Express*. One that did not make the headlines is the funicular between Ligerz, on the Bielersee, and Tessenberg. The LTB was opened on June 9th 1912 as a classic two-car operation, passing on a centre loop and used electric power from the start. It is 1,198 m long and climbs 383m through vineyards, nowadays operating as a single car that shuttles up and down. It traverses an S-curve en-route, which makes the ride interesting, and, given the weather, opens up a splendid view to the Alps. Its curiosity is that it also crosses the language boundary between German and French as it climbs, so be prepared. September 2nd saw the centenary of the Forchbahn (see *Swiss Express* 109) that was celebrated with historic trains, a big street party and an exhibition of rolling stock in Forch. The FB is a fiercely independent and well-managed little line, which carries heavy commuter traffic through its terminus on Zürich's Stadelhofenplatz.

Steam returns to Lago Maggiore

Due to Italy's economic difficulties the special charter trips planned for 2012 on Lago Maggiore by the preserved paddle steamer 'DS Piemonte' had to be cancelled. It now appears that the organisation that organises these charter trips intends to have this veteran steamship, built by Escher-Wyss of Zürich in 1904, back in service in 2013. The Swiss association 'Verein Historische Seethalbahn' had organised an April 2012 trip on the ship but this fell victim to the service withdrawal. With the vessel's planned return to service they hope to run the trip on Saturday 13th April 2013 travelling from Luzern, via the Gotthard, to the Ticino in their preserved RBe4/4 railcar. Details are on their website www.historische-seethalbahn.ch 

Swiss News is compiled by Bryan Stone and includes items from Ron Smith, s'Murmeli, Mario Gavazzi, Jakob Jäger, Michael Donovan, Barry Collin, Boyd Misstear, and others.