

Zeitschrift: Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal
Herausgeber: Swiss Railways Society
Band: - (2014)
Heft: 119

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>

Swiss News

The SBB's new Gotthard trains

On May 9 2014 (two years after the call for tenders) the SBB put an end to heated and acrimonious debate by ordering the 29 trains foreseen for operation through the Gotthard Base Tunnel from Stadler Rail. An option to acquire a large number of additional ETR 610s from Alstom (eight were already on order – see below) was ruled out in January by the Federal Transport Office (BAV) as they do not meet proposed access criteria. SBB then quickly came to terms with Stadler Rail and a CHF1 billion contract has now been signed. SBB CEO Meyer was at pains to confirm the correctness of the tendering and evaluation process. Delivery is for 2019, by which time the Monte Ceneri tunnel between Bellinzona and Lugano should also be in operation. The new trains are required to run at 250kph, a challenge to Stadler for whom this will be their first High Speed Train. The eleven-car trains will be built in Stadler's Bussnang plant; approximately 80% of the contract price will go to Swiss industries, some 20% being for subcontractors in the EU. The award to Stadler is not without controversy as in early June Alstom and Talgo, the two defeated bidders for the order, entered a legal complaint against the contract. If nothing else this may mean delay, though the court has not yet recognized the complaint. At the time of writing the reasons for the challenge have not been made public.

Whatever the outcome the losers will again be SBB, with their need to improvise further if delivery delays occur. The SBB appears to have accepted that it will have to run its Class 470 Pendolini, unreliable, universally mistrusted, and due for withdrawal this year, until they need heavy repairs (one was withdrawn in February), and that the Gotthard service rolling stock will rely on improvisation until the new Stadler trains arrive. The double-deck domestic InterCity train sets from Bombardier are delayed by 2-years, and new Class 511 suburban sets are already running in higher-grade duties. The midlife works overhaul of Class 460s and 500s, now in progress, is a further drain on resources. Ordering from Stadler cannot be considered a risk, though they will have to satisfy the international approval processes, an unpredictable science despite serious recent EU measures to harmonise procedures. Stadler is already experienced in this sector, having delivered throughout Europe. Rather is the SBB pursuing, involuntarily, a balancing act over the next five years.

Gotthard Stop-Gap units start to arrive

In June Alstom released the first of a total of eight seven-car ETR 610 units being built at its factory in Savigliano, Italy, for tests on the Gotthard corridor. Some time ago SBB resorted to purchasing these units as a stop-gap measure to keep Swiss/Italian services going until the base tunnel is open and its new international stock is available. As these are identical to the current ETR 610 fleet commissioning delays should be minimised. A further two units are due by the end of this year helping to phase-out the increasingly unreliable Class ETR 470 units inherited from Cisalpino. The new

units, together with SBB's existing ETR610s, will now become Class 503.

Every 15 minutes?

A controversy broke this spring over the objectives of the major timetable recast due for 2021, and beyond. This process is long and involves Cantons and communes, as well as rail operators, and of course infrastructure providers. It must also incorporate political and finance inputs, and allow for new works, still often only at the project stage. At the heart of the debate is the increasing capacity problem on both trunk routes and certain S-Bahn corridors, both for SBB and some private systems. The BAV has published a report which proposes for 2030 'raised attractiveness by increased density of services'. Specifically this means a 15-minute interval service between Bern-Zürich-Winterthur; Zürich-Basel; Zürich-Luzern; Zürich-Brugg; Bern-Thun; Bern-Basel; and Genève-Lausanne-Montreux, and a half-hour frequency on other lines. It is not new that these routes are subject to increasingly severe crowding at peak times, but with anticipated growth rates, and the time needed for action, thinking starts now. However, some authorities, including Dr Benedikt Weibel, the still respected former head of SBB, think 'more of the same' is not the answer; it would only accentuate the gap between peak and off-peak load factors, very apparent to those who travel for leisure and find half-empty trains even on peak routes. Weibel's view is that the whole service, through pricing and promotion, must be made more uniformly attractive, backed by new working practices, staggered hours, along with planning guidelines on residential building, etc. There is also scope to re-think the time-honoured whole-system pass (the GA), once the preserve of a privileged few, but now selling 442,000 yearly as it has become by far the cheapest way, and a powerful incentive, to commute over long distance during peak times. The reality also is that the inevitable physical limitations of automobile commuting, regional housing costs, and pressures of economic growth, will accentuate the peak. Overall, peak-hour highway congestion is increasing by over 10% per year. Also now visible is the now widely-recognized 'motorway fallacy', the conceptual paradox that these roads were built as intercity and transit trunk routes but are daily increasingly blocked by local traffic. Another part of the controversy is at local level, and also political: it is that the same acute congestion is leading to increased demands for better, higher-capacity regional services. Double-deck and longer trains help, but frequency sells. But Switzerland is a small country, several of the regional zone systems already meet, and the main lines cannot be allowed to crowd out regional networks. Then there is also the need to accommodate heavy rail freight, often subsidized to avoid transalpine trucking... This all means that investment, far above that proposed in the FABI plan that was approved by the Swiss people in February, will be required. One consolation is modern signalling systems that allow highly reduced headways and more capacity, are now available but these too need investment.

Station upgrades

Earlier this year the SBB announced that it is planning to

spend between CHF6.7billion and CHF10.7 billion on upgrades to some 500 stations on the network. Improvements are aimed at improved passenger spaces, better security systems and improving conditions for disabled customers. As this money is without existing funding arrangements with the Federal Government it is understood that fare rises may be needed to help in covering the costs. The four-year project to rebuild Genève Cornavin station should have been completed this summer.

Rhätische Bahn News

This year is the RhB's 125th anniversary and a year-long party is planned. The first part of the RhB was the Landquart – Davos railway, opened in 1889. It went on to become the 'national railway' of Graubünden, a state railway at a Cantonal level, and although catering successfully for a substantial tourist traffic it has always been close to the pulse and needs of the Canton, its communities and their people. It is also a railway of intrinsic beauty (since 2008 parts of it are a UNESCO World Heritage Site) and of considerable social, technical and geographic interest. On May 10th the RhB had a party when it threw open its Landquart workshops, arranged a full programme for young and old, and attracted 12,500 visitors. SBB Historic brought their Rae TEE set 1053 with a special from Zürich, and the RhB's own extensive collection of equipment, rolling stock and motive power was assembled for the day. Steam working with the first, and 125 year old, locomotive, G3/4 2-6-0T No 1 'Raetia', now in the VHS collection, was a great success; and there is also an important new book now on sale, called, simply, 'Rhätische Bahn 125 Jahre'. There is also a DVD on 'Die Pioniere der Eisenbahn in Graubünden', the railway pioneers in Grubünden. This contains historic film and recordings of the Romansch TV network. These are available from bookshops in the area and from www.rhb.ch/railshop.

Just at this time the RhB learned that the permit has been granted to build its second Albula Tunnel, so that work has now commenced. 'First Spade' ceremonies took place simultaneously at Preda and Spinas on the 25th June. It will be recalled that the first tunnel, of 1906, is in urgent need of attention, as well as having inadequate clearance, and does not meet today's safety standards. Renewal at today's traffic levels would be complex, long and costly. Evaluation showed that it is cheaper and more cost effective to build a new parallel tunnel, but the constraints include respect of the UNESCO status and for the tunnel sites at Spinas and Preda. This is now clarified, Preda will be a main 'base camp' for the work, and Bevers will be a support location. Inevitably there will be busy times at these places, but the intention is that rail traffic can continue undisturbed. Road traffic should not be a problem at Preda, but Bevers, on the main Engadin road, is to receive some relief measures. Actual tunneling will start next year. Now, Spinas is a sleepy and attractive little corner, so it's worth getting up there to see it again before the machines take over.

Freight traffic on the RhB takes various forms. Oil tanks and timber over the Bernina form a substantial part, and in the Engadine, the Coop organization has built up a

substantial and winter-secure container traffic served through the Landquart container trans-shipment centre. However, the bulk traffics can fluctuate, falling by 15% last year, so the following good news is welcome. Round timber (tree trunks) is now being loaded in Surava on 20' flatrack containers, 17 tonnes per container, hauled to Landquart and from there goes with SBB to the Perlen paper factory at Gisikon-Root, Luzern. This brings several things together. The bankruptcy of the lumber plant at Domat-Ems left timber producers in the air; hauliers who can now load to rail can make substantial savings on the LSVA heavy haulage levy; and Perlen gets its raw materials quickly and economically.

Another RhB rebuilding project is at St Moritz, which is being completely re-modelled over a 2-year period. The old hand points will disappear along with some structures and a new terminal station will emerge. Not many readers may know that at the south end of the station there is an underbridge, soon to be demolished, originally built with a view to extending the line to Maloja.

Zürich's new underground opened

On Saturday June 14th 2014 there was, as usual, a public open day to show off the new station and the S-Bahn tunnel which now connects Zürich HB and Oerlikon. Over 200,000 visitors came to look, far in excess of expectations, and 11,000 rode the special trains. Interest was certainly a product not only of curiosity and excitement, but also after years of upheaval, setbacks and delays. Public services started on the Sunday, and by Monday evening all were satisfied that the first test, with real commuters, had been successfully passed. The immediate changes affect mainly S-Bahn routes, some of which now use the new tunnel, and others being adapted. In December at the annual timetable change there will be more far-reaching changes, as long distance services are also re-routed. Journey times will all benefit, but perhaps first of all the greater capacity and avoidance of conflicting moves will find its echo in improved punctuality, which has suffered recently in the Greater Zürich region as growth continues.

Costs - Maintenance versus investment?

Once again a dispute has broken out between SBB, aware that its maintenance is in arrears, and the Bundesamt für Verkehr (Federal Transport Department), which approves expenditure. There are approved budgets for maintenance; for programmes such as noise abatement; for improving disabled access; and, as we saw in February for new investment in a major scheduled upgrading of lines across the country (the FABI programme). The main problem is that the SBB is 'hoist with its own petard' through raising speeds, increasing timetable density and running longer and heavier trains. After some alarms, and earlier foot-dragging, improved ultrasonic rail testing is now showing unexpectedly acute deterioration of infrastructure (especially fatigue in rails) than was budgeted-for, and this has explained some serious recent failures. Clearly a new situation has arisen, however, just at this point, the needs of the Disability Access legislation are also increasing. Work on stations and access should be complete by 2023, but although around half the stations have been done, often very expensively, SBB insists that the

difficult cases are still outstanding. Many private and regional lines have substantial backlogs, and often (the charm of the recent past) more rudimentary facilities. It also shows that the legislators' views on what access really needs can vary, and the costs rise. Swiss policy tends to associate such decisions with an agreed finance proposal; this ensures that the money is there, but can be embarrassing when costs turn out higher. The BAV fears that it will be obliged to use FABI rail investment funds for what is really maintenance of the existing system, but it is also clear that the FABI projects all bring their own needs for properly budgeted maintenance. The problem will get worse before it gets better. If it's any consolation, the Federal Council is drawing up proposals which provide, similar to FABI, a secure on-going financing of the national highway network. This was a demand of the road lobby, always mistrustful that revenues from road users might get diverted to pay for public transport. In practice the deteriorating road situation is best relieved by investments in public transport to take the pressure of the road infrastructure. Like on the railways maintenance is also in arrears, and the Swiss motorway system was never planned for today's loads. Motoring organizations and right-wing politicians demanded a proper financing programme, which is clearly desirable, but the irony is that they refuse outright any hint of better resource use; want higher speeds (which reduces capacity and increases danger); and accept no increase in fuel taxation. Clearly agreement will take time. At least the rail improvements are now in motion.

Air conditioning and fine weather

We hope that members visiting Switzerland enjoy a warm and sunny summer but it is apparent that not all will be happy. Some 20 % of SBB rolling stock, and an unknown share on private lines, is not air-conditioned. For those like me, who in the past spent their journeys wherever possible by half-open windows (and took many pictures) this is nostalgic, but at over 30° as it was at Whitsuntide, it is not good. SBB has among others some 170-passenger vehicles dating from the 1970s which will not be air-conditioned, and which are mostly in reserve sets and peak hour use. There are also some 90 double-deck cars being retrospectively fitted. Apparently SBB a/c reliability lies around 97% with on average some 400 defects monthly and, inevitably, this is more a summer problem. BLS coaches were air-conditioned earlier than the SBB and they report little trouble. The RhB still has many older cars in use, but they are rapidly giving way to Allegra sets; the MOB has also substantially renewed its fleet. New SBB trains being delivered for commuter and for inter-City use will improve things, but for some time you might catch a reserve set of the old green cars, too warm for comfort. Still, you can open the window... On the trams the problem is different. Stopping every 90 seconds with open doors means that full air-conditioning requires enormous energy. The declared solution is to aim at 'relief' rather than 'comfort', and to sustain an interior temperature some 5° under that outside.

Failure to upgrade railway crossings

The Swiss Federal Transport Office (BAV) announced in

the spring that it was becoming apparent that several hundred road/rail crossings in Switzerland would not be able to be upgraded by the end of the year. A railway regulation in 2003 called for any such crossings that fell short of safety requirements to be either abandoned, or equipped with signals by the end of 2014. The BAV has called for railway companies to at least submit complete applications by the end of the year and to implement transitional measures at locations deemed as having insufficient visibility.

Basel Tram News

The Federal Cabinet (Bundesrat) has now given an 'A' rating to the CHF88m project to extend BVB Line 3 to St Louis in France. This means that work will start in 2015. The extension of Line 8 to Weil am Rhein in Germany is now almost complete, and scheduled services should commence with the new timetable on Dec 14th 2014. The first new 'Flexity' trams from Bombardier should be delivered in time to inaugurate this service. Finally, after a year of procrastination, resolved by the BVB Director being dismissed (for a different reason), agreement between BLT and BVB has been reached meaning the BLT will operate a new route created by the building, for CHF27m, of a 250 m connection, between BLT Line 10 and BVB Line 2, in the so-called 'Margarethenstich'. This will mean that BLT Line 17 will run from Ettingen to Dorenbach, up the new link and continue on BVB Line 2 tracks to Bahnhof SBB, then across the river to the DB's Badischer Bhf. Work should have started as you read this.

Bahnmuseum Albula, Bergün

In Swiss Express No.117 we reported on this enterprising museum following a private visit by the editorial team. Now, our good impressions are endorsed by the European Museum Forum, which has nominated it for the title 'Europe's Museum of the Year 2014'. We offer our congratulations so far and wait to see what will follow. For the sum of CHF650/year members of the public have the chance to become one of the 250 patrons of the Foundation which supports the Museum. See www.bahnmuseum-albula.ch.

Edmondson card tickets

Another new link to the Bahnmuseum Albula is that it is the retirement home of the last official Edmondson card ticket printing machine of the RhB. When its operator retired the machine promptly went to Bergün, where it will be kept in working order. Your admission ticket will be by an Edmondson card. Your Swiss News Editor spent part of his early BR career selling, dating, and accounting for, such card tickets, which were then, with their ticket racks, practically universal, and knows several SRS members who collect them. Nicolas Regamey, a printer in Lausanne, has restored a historic card ticket printer and can print new card tickets to order. (www.ateliertypo.ch). Nicolas is also a leading light of the Blonay-Chamby museum railway.

End of an era

The last 'accompanied post' service ended on Saturday March 29th with the last run of a manned Postal Car in regular service. These operations, with the familiar postal vans

with PTT symbol and a letterbox for last minute mailings, once covered the country and also operated on many private and local lines. The last one ran from Härkingen Postal Depot, near Olten, to Brig. At the end, Postal Cars Z IIa 945, 951 and 956 were in service, with 927 and 939 in reserve. Two of these are to be restored with authentic internal fittings, including sorting boxes; the other three will be disposed of.

Marshalling yards

Swiss mainline railways still have wagonload cargo traffic, since SBB Cargo still serves many substantial private-siding customers often in remote locations (See P42). However, rationalization, intermodal and economics are steadily eroding the task, and now the yards at Zürich Mülligen, and Däniken (near Olten) will close. With this move there remain only Muttenz, recently simplified and extensively modernized, Limmattal, Lausanne, Buchs SG and Chiasso. The border yards have some additional functions such as customs and security, but all also handle many block trains simply for inspection, or fresh engine or crew. However, Open Access operators often have their own through-running multi-current power and do not need the big yards so demand is falling steadily. Further change is in view. Since liberalization, SBB Infrastructure has provided yard services, shunting, hump operation etc., explaining why SBB Infrastructure has an inventory of heavy shunters and yard equipment. This was originally to provide services impartially to competing operators but this has proved unnecessary, so what is left will now be serviced by SBB Cargo.

News from Bern

Bernmobil. On Sept 28 there is a vote in Bern on a project to convert the bus route Ostermündigen – Bern – Köniz to a tram line. This plan, although still needing some preparation, would mean setting-up a second ‘tram axis’ through the city, a considerable step forward in the quality of public service, but controversial in some quarters.

Tramverein Bern. Many members may know the former Burgenziel tram depot where the historical Bern tram collection has been housed. This temporary arrangement was terminated in spring 2014, as the City Council who owned the site wished to redevelop it. The trams have been moved now to the Weissenbühl depot, which held an open day on May 18.

Funicular Marzili. Switzerland’s shortest public funicular, just 105 m long, but certainly one of the most delightful and busiest, is the Marzili-Bahn in Bern. Located beside the Federal Government building it runs from the Bundesterrasse down to the Marzili quarter with its riverside and large public swimming park. It has been modernized before, when electric traction replaced the old water-balance system and one of the old ‘hydraulic’ cars has been exhibited near the track, but now more is needed. It will close from 29th September 2014 to mid-February 2015 for total renovation, including rebuilding both stations. A Line 30 bus will make the extensive detour needed for an alternative service.

The SBB and its clocks. Lovers of the iconic Swiss station clock will be happy to know that a street in Bern, Hilfikerstrasse, has been named after the designer. To cement the link

with the SBB, who commissioned the original design, the company’s General Management will be giving up their monumental premises on the Grosse Schanze above Bern HB station and moving to new premises in this street from summer 2014.

BLS tackles Huttwil

The BLS has started a 2 ½ year rebuilding of the station and layout at Huttwil (BE). This is another of the former Emmental railway locations where until now operations were still traditional, with hand points, low platforms, passengers walking over running lines and deficient ‘handicapped’ access. The whole project will cost CHF50m, paid for by BLS, the Confederation and Cantons Bern and Luzern. At the heart of it is a new electronic, largely automatic, control system with a radically simplified layout, and new raised platforms with subway. Huttwil’s station-yard locomotive depot, which housed the collection of Berner museum locomotives, planned to run in future on the now private Huttwil-Sumiswald line, will have to go. There is still some freight, worked by SBB whilst BLS runs the passenger service Langenthal-Wolhusen with railcar sets.

75th Anniversary of ‘Churchill Arrow’

The name ‘Roter Pfeil’, or Red Arrow, was quickly given in the 1930s to the SBB’s popular light railcars. These were mainly meant for secondary services, as well as for excursions and specials. They mostly survived to the 1960s. Given their popularity, in May 1939 a double car, Re4/8 No.301 (today’s RAe 4/8 No.1021) was introduced. It was technically very advanced, and shown at the National Exhibition in 1939. WWII meant it was little used, but in 1946 it was put at Winston Churchill’s disposal for his famous Swiss visit, that in which he spoke of “*an Iron Curtain falling across Europe*”, and presaged a future European Union. Since then No.1021 has been known as the Churchill-Pfeil. It has survived redundancy, sale for scrap, and a subsequent owner’s bankruptcy. It is now back with the SBB, who now market it, beautifully restored, through RailAway for prestigious tours and specials. This year it is 75-years old, and being celebrated accordingly.

ASD

This summer’s centenary celebrations started on July 5th. The catenary is being renewed, and the long-overdue electronic block signalling, controlled from Aigle, is now being installed, although it will not be fully operational until late 2015. The ASD was the last railway to operate without block signalling, using the formerly widely used timetable and telephone dispatching. Two serious collisions showed the BAV that something better was needed, but with closure always an option, agreement to this took time. The line was closed for renewal work to take place from 20th March to 20th June. The historic (1913) BDe4/4 No.1 has been repainted in the grey of the first 70 years, to run during summer. Sepey station has been totally rebuilt. The traditional handsome chalet disappeared in the 1980s, giving way to an undistinguished hut. Now the new station has been laid out as a true terminus, with two platforms and modern wooden offices, 200m

nearer the village centre. New rolling stock is needed and consideration is being given to acquiring from the CEV the early (1997/8) Stadler GTW Be2/6 railcars Nos. 7001-4, replacements for which have been ordered. Also starting last July 5th was an exhibition in the Musée des Ormonts, just 2-minutes from the station, at the lovely little village of Vers l'Eglise. One key to the survival of the line has been an increase in development in Les Diablerets with new hotels and weekend homes for winter tourism. There are now discussions to extend the line by several hundred meters from its current terminus to the middle of the community to link up with the cable railways and bus services that also terminate at the large parking area there.

Fribourg's Funicular reopens...

This line, that links the Neuveville and St Claire quarters of the city, reopened in April 2014 after a 4-month closure for renovation. It is historically protected as the last surviving hydraulic funicular in Switzerland. Operationally, this means that the arriving car at the top station couples up to a water pipe, filling its tank, and thus becoming heavier, while the car at the bottom is emptying its tank and becoming lighter. Those who remember Gerald Hoffnung's account of brick-laying will know what comes next; the car at the top descends, while that below, attached to the common cable, ascends. Although, unlike in Hoffnung's tale, they do not come into contact with each other! It is a rudimentary, but effective system, and was once in widespread use. The Marzilibahn in Bern (see above) originally worked in this way, as still does the Funicular between Lynton and Lynmouth in Devon, England. Do not miss it when in Fribourg.

...whilst Lugano's closes

The funicular between Lugano Station and the city centre closed in July for rebuilding and will not reopen until 2016. The replacement bus service is scheduled to take 15-minutes over a 2.5km route, against the 2-minute trip on the 231m long funicular. For the fit it will be quicker to walk.

Waldenburgerbahn – again

This is a story, which surely can only be in Switzerland. The WB, opened in 1880, to the unique gauge of 750 mm, is a 13.1 km rural commuter line connecting Liestal, on the main Basel – Olten line, with the small town of Waldenburg. Steam powered until October 1953, when closure was contemplated, then electrification at 1500 V dc, saw three new power cars that still pulled the old coaches. These were eventually replaced by seven power cars built between 1985 and 1993, that are still in service but about to be replaced. One of the steam engines is in the Verkehrshaus in Luzern; and one, No.5 'Gideon Thommen', sat for 40 years on a plinth by Liestal station before being restored and set in action again. Modernisation to contemporary safety and legal standards, including trains and stations, and providing disability access, will cost CHF200m. On May 8th 2014 the Parliament in Canton Basel-Land voted CHF29m for a first stage with the Confederation paying a further CHF14m. From 2016 the remaining CHF160m will be shared following the positive rail infrastructure FABI

vote of February. At this point opinions diverged. The Canton gave a directive that, as had been the case in the past, the conversion to meter-gauge should be evaluated. This has its logic; buying rolling stock and accessories of all kinds for 750mm gauge, for which there is no other market, is a risky and expensive task. No, said the conservative wing, normally scornful of expenditure on public service, as this would rule out future running of 'Gideon Thommen' with its tourist potential, so 750 mm it will have to be! Much as your correspondent loves to see No.5 under way, this seems to be tail-wagging-the-dog! In fact, the decision had already been taken to build all embankments and structures for a future meter-gauge railway. In 2021 Liestal station, will be closed for several months while re-modelling with additional SBB running lines takes place, and improvements occur to the WB too. This may be the ideal time to change the WB gauge. Time will tell.

The moral for SRS readers would seem to be, go and ride it while you can.

Bulle – Broc-Fabrique

The metre gauge line of Transports Publiques Fribourgeois (TPF) from Bulle to Broc-Fabrique has a cost cover of only 18% making it a promising candidate for closure. Remarkable therefore is a new proposal, for which the Federal Transport Office has already approved finance, that it should be converted to standard gauge, and from 900V dc to 15,000V ac. The investment case is unusual. Some CHF35m, clearly unjustified, would have been required to refurbish and retain the existing line. However for a further CHF15m the gauge change can be effected, and the passenger service will be provided without further rolling stock as the Fribourg-Bulle RE trains have a sufficient layover in Bulle. In the Bulle station rebuilding, the cost of a narrow gauge platform can be saved, Broc will get an improved service, but the real carrot is Nestlé! At their Cailler chocolate factory in Broc they wish to use rail again for bulk sugar deliveries, but for whom the Rollbock procedure to deliver standard gauge wagons down this 5.4km branch was no longer realistic. It looks likely to happen, so readers should get to the narrow-gauge Broc line while they can.

Shipping news

Plans for renovations to the historic paddle steamer 'Concordia' to re-enter service in 2014 have fallen into disarray as the company entrusted with the work went bankrupt in the spring. It is still hoped that the ship may sail again in 2015. Also south of the Alps on Lago Garda the *ps Italia* will be restricted to special services and charters and will not be used on regular services. On Lago di Como the old motorship Delfino will be in service at weekends in the summer. The restored *ps Patria* undertook her first public trip on 21st June and will be operating on some services during this summer. 

Swiss News is compiled by Bryan Stone and includes input from, Michael Donovan, s'Murmeli, Boyd Misstear, Mario Gravazzi, Ernst Leutwiler, and others.