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Autor: Smith, Ron
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Luzern ends trolleybus+trailer working



Mario Gavazzi

In many cities of Mainland Europe bus and trolleybus operators once followed the long-established example of tramways and attached trailers to their vehicles, especially in a bid to improve the peak-hour capacity of their operations. However in the decades after WW2 most of these trailers were gradually withdrawn with the introduction of articulated units. Some operators, especially those with substantial trolleybus fleets, continued to employ trailers, including Luzern's VBL (Verkehrsbetriebe der Stadt Luzern) and as late as 1998 ordered new units. These were first introduced on Line 1 from Monday to Friday, then later on Line 8 and occasionally on Line 6. In summer 2017, due to the fleet of 1988/9-built NAW-

Hess/Ramseier-Jenzer two-axle trolleybuses that hauled them being sold to Valparaiso, Chile, these trailer operations finished in Luzern. It is probable that the NAW units will find a new lease of life in South America and will be around for many more years, but their 10-years-their-junior trailers will not make the long trip to a new life. These 19-year-old Lanz-Marti/Hess vehicles will be scrapped or be sold to other users. Sadly, although one of the trolleybuses has been acquired for preservation, none of the trailers has been. Trolleybus+trailer working can still be seen in Switzerland at Lausanne, whilst Zug still hosts bus+trailer working on its Lines 1 and 2. 



Only in Switzerland?

Ron Smith

While watching the working at Brig during the summer a regular train came in from Genève Airport to terminate there. In front of the normal fixed-formation set were two coaches, the leading one a driving trailer of course, all windows labelled up with the name of the group that they had been added to the train to accommodate. This is something that only the Swiss seem to do on a regular basis these days. Having disgorged a crowd of youngsters, who charged off the station, the resident station pilot loco was waiting and dropped down to uncouple the extra coaches.

It was one of SBB's new Stadler "Playmobile" Class 922 locos, complete with two shunters riding in the sunshine, that ran in to take the extra vehicles away. This is now a really old-fashioned railway activity, but it provides capacity and attracts business although it is costly in manpower and can make for operating problems at busy locations. Also, with increasing numbers of fixed formation trains coming along, this may well soon be a thing of the past – or will the Swiss simply add extra rolling stock to the rear of an EMU? 