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COVER

The “Adler” ABeh 150 001 as opening train in the new underground station Luzern Allmend/Messe of the rerouted metre gauge Zentralbahn line towards Hergiswil (photo: an, 3 November 2012).

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phone subscription: +41 / 41 / 429 70 70
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fax subscription: +41 / 41 / 429 70 77
fax editorial dept.: +41 / 41 / 429 70 99

Internet: www.minirex.ch
e-mail editorial dept.: redaktion@minirex.ch
e-mail subscription: verkauf@minirex.ch

Editorial staff: Walter von Andrian
Volker Müller
Mathias Reilstab
Peter Pringsheim

Distribution: Ueli Reinhard
Milena De Nisi

Composition: Franz Suter
Walter Odermatt
Heidi Arnold

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News

Contradictions over SBB's reordered ETR 610 tilting trains

In July 2012 SBB signed a contract with Alstom for delivery of a further eight ETR 610 tilting trains. According to SBB the trains are to be built absolutely identical to those already in service so as to eliminate the risks of recertification and to ensure that they enter service without delay. However, on the occasion of a recent visit by Swiss journalists to its Savigliano plant, Alstom announced “improvements in connection with new standards” without going into detail. Inquiry at SBB revealed that modifications to many modules are indeed planned. The European Technical Specifications of Interoperability for Persons with Reduced Mobility (TSI PRM), for instance, require wider seat spacing in the areas with row seating. This opportunity is being used to increase the rather limited luggage storage space and at the same time to avoid seats without a window view. In other cases modifications are necessary because the corresponding components or the manufacturer (of toilet cabins, for instance) no longer exist.

According to the ambitious timetable, the first coach body would be welded together in Savigliano in mid-May 2013 prior to the start of assembly on 1 July. Static tests with the first finished coach are scheduled for early November 2013, and the first complete train is due to leave the production plant in late May 2014. According to Alstom data, commercial service is expected to begin on 31 December 2014. This contradicts the announcement by SBB that the unpopular ETR 470s will be taken out of service as early as the timetable change in December 2014 and that the ETR 610s will be deployed on the Zürich – Milano route as well. Inquiries at SBB have revealed that 14 December 2014 (timetable change) is in fact stipulated in the contract as the start-up date for commercial services, although for only two of the eight trains. The remaining ETR 610s are due to follow at monthly intervals, which means that the last unit will enter service in June 2015.

It is thus foreseeable even at this stage that SBB will have to fall back on interim solutions for a few months at least. Possible scenarios are currently under consideration. A seamless transition from old to new rolling stock as so far envisaged by SBB is hardly likely. However, for the ETR 470s to remain in service past December 2014 is most improbable too, considering that SBB CEO Andreas Meyer never misses an opportunity to announce the withdrawal of these trains from service as early as possible.

At Alstom's Savigliano plant, which gives a very orderly and modern impression, the final touches are currently being put to the 25 eleven-coach AGVs for Italian operator NTV, and production work has started on the EUR 665 million order for 20 seven-coach trains for PKP Intercity (Poland). (lüt/mr/an)

NTV: Montezemolo cuts back

Luca di Montezemolo, the founder of the private Italian railway operator NTV, is handing over operational management to Antonello Perricone. During the past six years the 65-year-old Sicilian has controlled the RCS Media Group which publishes such major daily newspapers as “Corriere della Sera” and “Gazzetta dello Sport”. Di Montezemolo will remain on the NTV board. It is expected that he will invest his newly-won “freedom” into his political activities.

As of the new winter timetable, NTV now offers seven daily connections between Milano and Torino, thereby now competing with FS Trenitalia on the entire Italian high-speed network. NTV's trains leave Torino Porta Susa at 6:47, 7:47, 9:47, 11:47, 13:47, 16:47 and 19:47. From Milano Porta Garibaldi the departure times are 7:21, 9:21, 11:21, 14:21, 17:21, 19:21 and 20:21. Most of the trains either start or end at Roma. (mr)

RZD acquires Gefco

At an estimated cost of EUR 900 million, Russian Railways (RZD) will be acquiring a 75 percent stake in the French logistics company Gefco. The transaction is expected to be completed during 2012. Gefco, a subsidiary of ailing automobile manufacturer PSA Peugeot Citroen, which hopes to replenish its empty coffers with the sale, has mainly specialised in the transport of cars and car components. Once controlled by RZD, Gefco's range of activities is expected to grow significantly. Reportedly, the company will keep its headquarters in France and retain the former SNCF executive Luc Nadal as managing director. (mr)

RFF and SNCF to re-merge?

In 1997, French railway infrastructure was outsourced from the state railway SNCF to the formally independent, newly established Réseau Ferré de France (RFF). Yet, de facto, there has always remained a mutual dependency, as RFF has merely been an administrative agency with only 1500 employees. Many tasks, especially all infrastructure maintenance work, are delegated to the “Infra” division of SNCF with 35 000 employees. Now it is intended to re-integrate RFF into SNCF, as the French Minister of Transport announced at the end of October 2012. (mr)

Rheintalbahn: tests in the new Katzenberg Tunnel

On 7 September 2012 DB Netz AG started electric trial runs in the Katzenberg Tunnel. The 9.4-kilometre tunnel with two tubes is the centrepiece of the 17-kilometre new section between Haltingen and Schliengen on the Basel – Freiburg im Breisgau main line. SBB Deutschland's Flirt RABe 521 009 was the first electric train to run through the tunnel. The EMU was used for GPS-based monitoring of the infrastructure and for