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COVER

A shortened train of the new SBB type RABe 501 (Giruno) during the transfer run from Bussnang to Basel (- Berlin) in Weinfelden (photo: H. U. Oehninger, 14 September 2016).

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News

Danish IC2s out of service

After withdrawal from their last-served Odense – Fredericia route, the AnsaldoBreda IC2 DMUs have no longer been used for scheduled runs by Danish State Railways (DSB) since August 2016. Whereas the average distance run between technical faults is only 4861 kilometres for the four-car IC4s, it is far less at 2992 kilometres for the two-car IC2s. On the other hand, the three-car IC3s – built in Denmark during the 1990s – manage 48 217 kilometres.

Of the 23 purchased IC2s, only seven trains were still deployable, with three of them kept in reserve. The procurement of these trains has also proven to be a mistake in conceptional terms: their capacity is too small for intercity traffic, while operational costs are too high for regional transport.

At great expense it is possible to keep roughly half of the 82 IC4s in operating condition. Five IC4s which were in a particularly bad condition have already been withdrawn. (Iund)

GW Train Regio wins mainline train contract in Czech Republic

Railway operator GW Train Regio which until now has only been active in regional transport is to operate the Plzeň – Chomutov – Most mainline trains for a period of ten years starting on 11 December 2016. The Czech Transport Ministry has awarded the contract directly, after the original invitation to tender covering a 15-year period had been annulled at the behest of the Cartel Office. ČD had previously lodged a complaint because it

For deployment on the Plzeň – Most line, unit 628/928 214, shown here at GW Train Regio's Bečov nad Teplou depot, has received a new livery applied with self-adhesive film (photo: M. Šramek, 16 August 2016).

considered individual tender specifications to be discriminatory. ČD had demanded a subsidy of CZK 88 (EUR 3.25) per train kilometre, but GW Train Regio much less, namely CZK 75 (EUR 2.77).

The new provider will offer services on the 141-kilometre-long connection using four Class 845 two-car DMUs (formerly DB 628) which are currently being modernised with new interior fittings complete with wheelchair-accessible toilet at ČMŽO in Přerov. However, they will not be equipped with the Czech train control system, which will restrict their maximum speed to 100 km/h. Test runs are due to start on the Karlovy Vary – Mariánské Lázně line in October.

The Czech Transport Minister Dan Ťok wants to open up other mainline routes to competition. Advance notice has been given of invitations to bid for the Praha (Prague) – Ústí nad Labem, Praha – Děčín, Liberec – Ústí nad Labem (all electrified) and Pardubice – Liberec (non-electrified) lines; however, preparation of this tender has been a long drawn-out process. (vos)

Curious competition on the Simplon route

Instead of SBB, BLS will be running regional services on the Brig – Domodossola route from 11 December 2016. As of June 2017, the previously meagre timetable is to be considerably enhanced.

On 4 July 2016, the Italian Region of Piedmont (Piemonte) put regional railway services between Iselle und Domodossola out to tender for the contractual period from December 2016 (!) to December 2022; the deadline for submissions was already four weeks later. The region's service specification called for a basic service of merely four train pairs per weekday, as before, in line with the needs of local, cross-border commuters: departures



from Domodossola in the Iselle (– Brig) direction in the early morning between 03:56 and 06:55, in the opposite direction two evening trains, one train after midnight and one in the early morning. The quotation price was limited to EUR 400 000, with the winning train operating company keeping all ticket revenue minus track access prices. As the tariff and property border is located at the south portal of the Simplon tunnel, the Swiss authorities will be required to co-finance these cross-border services on the section between Iselle and Brig, even though they were not involved in the Italian tender. The Federal Office of Transport (FOT/BAV) and Canton Valais will thus need to order the services from BLS as of December 2016.

As could be expected, due to the very short notice given by the Italian authorities, only SBB (through its Valais subsidiary Regionalps) and BLS were interested in the tender. Due to the restrictive conditions, SBB refrained from making an actual bid and therefore it came as no surprise that BLS was chosen on 11 August. For years now, the company has been interested in extending its regional services beyond Brig. Although the train frequency will initially remain unchanged as of 11 December 2016, from 11 June 2017 every second “Lötschberger” Bern – Brig train will run through to Domodossola, as a recently updated timetable proposal has revealed. The planned reversal time of only six minutes in Domodossola seems rather on the short side though. (lüt)



First Xem 181 in Switzerland

On 12 September 2016, Xem 181 011 arrived in Switzerland as the first of 13 such self-propelled maintenance vehicles that Harsco is delivering to SBB. The first run on Swiss rails was made together with loco Re 4/4 II 11144 and was already used for measurements, as part of the dynamic commissioning process. The other trial runs will be taking place on the Solothurn – Biel and Solothurn – Gänsbrunnen routes, the latter featuring similar track topology between Langendorf and Oberdorf as the Gotthard line ramps. Eventually, the Xem 181 series will be used in the Gotthard Base Tunnel as well as on the old mountain route. (5909)

Georgian Kiss EMUs in service

Georgian Railways has been deploying the first two of its four Stadler double-deck EMUs since 25 July 2016, operating services on the mainline connection between Tiflis and the Black Sea resorts of Batumi, Kobuleti and Ureki. The other two four-car trains are due to arrive in Georgia towards the end of the year. (mr)



Above: On its way from Brig to Domodossola, a “Lötschberger” composition formed of RABe 535 124 and 121 has just passed through the Simplon tunnel (photo: R. Bezençon, 24 July 2016).

Centre: During interference current measurements between Niederbipp and Wangen an der Aare, Xem 181 011 is pushing Re 4/4 II 11144, which has its pantograph down. At the end of the train is the new maintenance vehicle Xas 234, a modular carrier with elevating work platform (photo: W. Ruetsch, 12 September 2016).

Below: Georgian Railways’ Kiss 014 leaves Tiflis main station heading for Batumi on 29 July 2016 (photo: Stadler / J. Zbinden).