

SBB Cargo trials automatic brake testing

Since the end of August 2017 SBB Cargo has been trying the use of automated brake testing on a total of 20 wagons in revenue service. Three compositions, one composed of ten wagons and two sets of five wagons are being deployed in intermodal traffic transporting goods for Swiss retailer Migros. They will be operating between Oberbuchsitzen (on the Olten – Oensingen line) and Frenkendorf (in the vicinity of Basel) and between Oberbuchsitzen and Gossau (near St. Gallen) until the second quarter of 2018, during which time they will carry out more than 500 brake testing procedures and cover a cumulative distance of about one million kilometres.

The results of the automatic brake test are displayed on the tablet computer of the responsible SBB Cargo employee; in addition, the data is forwarded directly to the project team which analyses the test results continuously. Up until now automatic brake testing on freight wagons was prevented by the lack of a power supply; this problem is now solved by means of generators that produce energy while the train is in motion and feed it to an accumulator. SBB Cargo developed the necessary technology over the past few months in cooperation with Austrian company PJ Messtechnik and Rail Cargo Austria. Testing the brakes on a 500-metre long train can currently take up to 40 minutes, whereas automatic brake testing is expected to reduce this to just ten minutes. (sbb/mr)

Stadler likely to win a major Flirt order in Poland

The railway vehicle manufacturer Stadler has been operating a production facility at Siedlce in Poland for ten years; it now provides employment for 800 people. The initial impetus for this came from an order for several Flirt units from the regions of Masovia and Silesia. Following this, the domestic market was very quiet for several years, before orders from Łódź Agglomeration Railway and PKP Intercity followed. According to Polish media, regional operator Masovian Railways (Koleje Mazowieckie, KM) confirmed that Stadler has been selected as preferred bidder for a contract to supply 71 EMUs. Newag and a consortium consisting of Pesa Bydgoszcz

and ZNTK Mińsk Mazowiecki had also entered bids.

According to the reports, the company is to start delivering six five-car units at the end of 2018, with ten two-car units to follow during 2019 and then 55 five-car units by 2022, the value of the order being at least EUR 500 million. This new fleet would enable Koleje Mazowieckie to withdraw all its deployed non-modernised Class EN 57 trains from service. (mr)

Surprising merger plans for Alstom and Siemens

In future, ICE and TGV should come from the same house. The German Siemens Group wants to integrate its railway technology division into that one of their French rival Alstom in order to stand up to the Chinese giant of this branch, the China Railway Rolling Stock Corporation (CRRC). With a turnover of more than 15 billion euros, an order volume of 61 billion euros and more than 62,000 employees the future number 2 in the world market is half the size of the market leader. In 2016 CRRC disclosed an annual turnover of 28 billion euros, Bombardier Transportation 7 billion.

The name of the future company will be “Siemens Alstom”. Siemens will be the majority shareholder and have six of the eleven seats on the board. Alstom CEO Henri Poupart-Lafarge will be in charge of the operative management. Jochen Eickholt, until now CEO of Siemens Mobility, will be the immediate integration manager. Sabrina Soussan and Michael Peter have taken over the management of the Mobility division. The Siemens Alstom headquarters and the management of their rail vehicles division will be located in the Paris area.

The merger should allow annual savings of 470 million euros. It has been emphasised that loss of jobs is to be expected largely at the managerial level, as the business activities of the two companies were to a great extent complementary. In the tram sector, Alstom is very successful with the Citadis, whilst Siemens never really recovered from the Combino disaster. Siemens is strong in signal boxes, whilst both companies compete strongly in train protection systems. The driving force in high-speed traffic will be the Velaro from Siemens and in the double-deck

area the TGV 2N2 from Alstom. The single-deck AGV with distributed traction, launched almost ten years ago, whose only customer was NTV, will no longer be offered.

The announcement of the merger plans came as a surprise, as in the past months Siemens had been in intensive negotiations with Bombardier. The integration of the Siemens mobility activities in the Alstom business will be phased over several years. Beforehand, the EU competition authorities will examine the intended merger in greater detail. (pd/sda/mr)

New Danish line probably comes into operation without ETCS

After the numerous problems during the past few years yet another failure is emerging in Denmark. If the new line from Copenhagen to Ringsted comes into operation as anticipated in December 2018, neither a useful number of electric traction units nor the new train protection system ETCS L2 will be ready. According to media reports the train traffic will continue to operate under the conventional signal system and with a top speed of 180 km/h until further notice. In any case, no rolling stock is available which could run faster. Furthermore, mainly diesel vehicles will run on the new line. The purchase of 26 electric locomotives to form push-pull trains with the existing double-deck coaches for region services is planned. However, these will not be available until 2020. (mr)

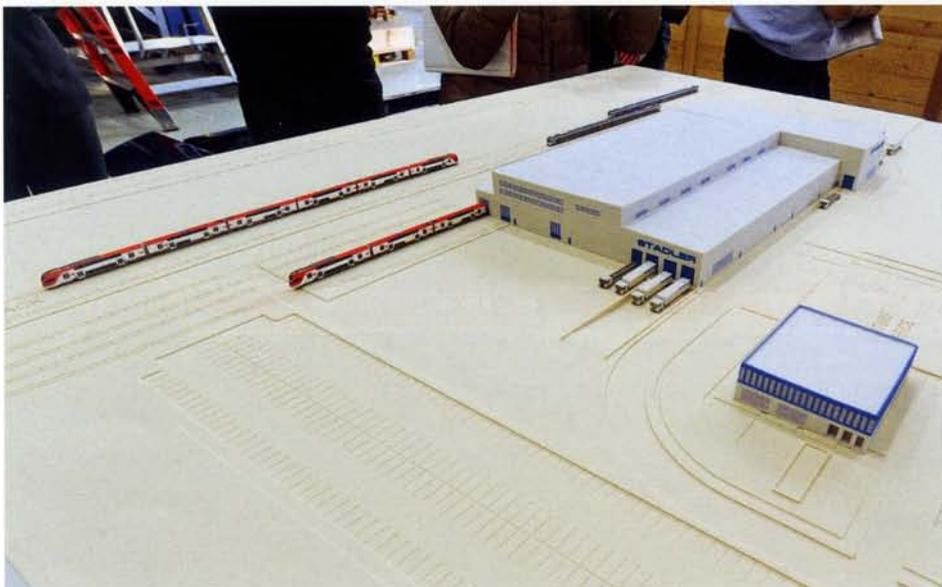
Russia to help Cuba

Russian and Cuban Railways signed an agreement in September for investments totalling the equivalent of EUR 1.8 billion in order to renew parts of the island state's approx. 4200-kilometre-long railway network. At the same time a contract was signed worth EUR 135 million, according to which Transmashholding is to supply 28 four-car, air-conditioned DMUs to Cuba. (bac)

Stadler factory in Salt Lake City

The Swiss railway vehicle manufacturer Stadler is investing USD 50 million in the construction of its own manufacturing facility in Salt Lake City, Utah, during the next few years. The foundation stone was laid on 13 October 2017. The production area will initially measure around 7000 m², and there will also be trackage outside. The 250 000 m² site provides plenty of space for later extensions. The August 2016 order from California to supply at least 16 double-deck six-car EMUs for deployment in Silicon Valley provided the impetus for this major investment.

In 2015 Stadler had already been awarded the contract from Texas to manufacture eight single-deck Flirt DMUs, this being the first time that the “Buy America Act” had to be taken into account. In order to meet the U.S. domestic content requirements, Stadler has leased a former workshop building belonging to the Union Pacific railway company for the assembly work; the first “TEX Rail” train was presented recently. The factory now being built is nearby, so the previous employees can easily move to the new site. (stad/mr)



Model of the future Stadler factory in Salt Lake City; construction work started recently (photo: J. Lüthard).