

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1971)
Heft: 1620

Artikel: Where does Switzerland stand with her motorways?
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688165>

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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER

The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

Vol. 57 No. 1620

FRIDAY, 23rd JULY, 1971

WHERE DOES SWITZERLAND STAND WITH HER MOTORWAYS?

In December 1964 the Federal Department for the Interior asked a consultative commission to elaborate a long term programme on Switzerland's future motorways. It came forward with its report in April 1966, defining a programme of construction for four types of "national highways".

There were the six-lane motorways, the four-lane motorways, the semi-motorways (with motorway junctions but without double carriage ways) and the refurbished national roads. In laying down its construction programme, the commission had to take account of factors such as the requirements of traffic, the actual situation of the road network, the demands of motorist security, the possibilities of financment of the cantons in defining priorities. The programme that emerged was to start with long sectors of the important East-West axis (that is the N1 and the N2) and North-South axis (N3 and N13). The scheme was submitted to the cantons, who gave their adhesion three months later, not without individual requests and modifications.

By-passing the cities

The network had a number of extremely costly "knots", such as the Y junction of the N1 and N3 at Zurich, the X junction of the N1, N6 and N12 at Berne, and of course the Gotthard Tunnel to complete the N2 and the link from Basle to Chiasso. This mighty project of 16 km of four-lane motorway hewn under the Alps and initially budgeted at 330 million francs was included at a later stage in the general motorway programme.

The crossings at Zurich, budgeted at 700 million francs, have contrived to make part of the city begin to look like a gigantic building site. It is estimated that the junction of the N1 with the N13 will be terminated in 1978. The Zurich ring-road has already been completed on the west side of the town and the driver coming from Berne will, in a few months time, be able to drive peacefully up to the Hardturm, at the end of the Bernestrasse. In seven

years he will be able to avoid Zurich completely.

But the planners of Zurich have calculated that 90 per cent of the motorists who drive into Zurich go for the centre and the Bahnhof area. They have accordingly made use of the geographical situation and planned a bridge on the Sihl and three underground car parks in the centre with a capacity of 12,000 to 14,000 cars each. A further project is to penetrate into Zurich by means of a six-lane underground tunnel with three exits and entries on the N3 and six on the N1, both of which will also be six-laned on the approaches to the town.

Right now, the main topic of conversation of the "Zurchers" is the cost to the town and canton and the inconvenience to the district of Wietikon of the works currently under way, namely the inner ring road and the traffic exchanger of Platzspitz.

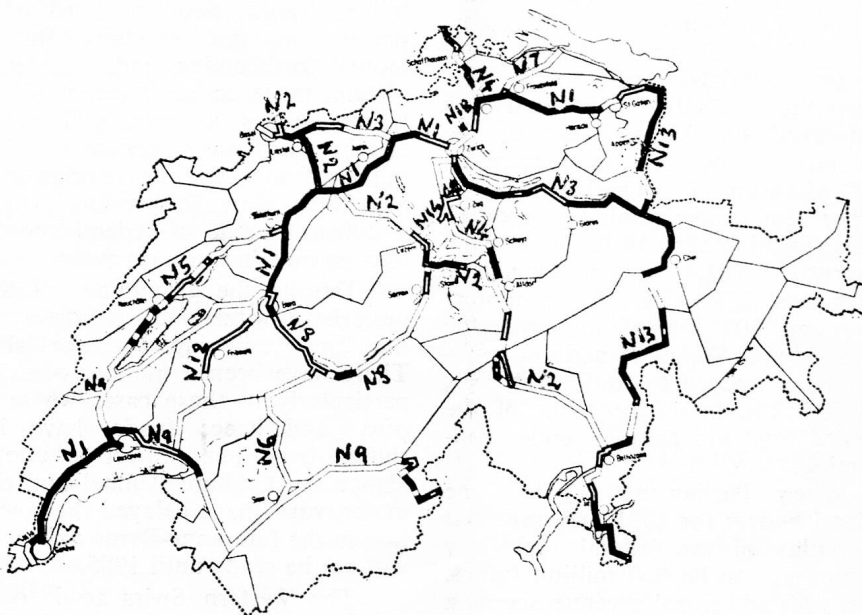
It is also planned to build a tunnel under the lake. It will be particularly important in the framework of local planning by linking the two shores of the lake. The people of Zurich should

enjoy this trans-lacustrian connection by 1977 if all goes well. Another element rearing its head in the cost estimate is Zurich's famed tube. With all these tunnels and parkings, it will give the town's sub-soil the topography of a coal mine.

There will also be a considerable burden to Berne in building the appropriate traffic exchangers and connections with the city and the N1, N6 and N16. At present, there are considerable works on the N1 exit at Wankdorf from the town in the Zurich direction. Like Zurich, Berne has had to improve its traffic flow in order to make far-reaching changes in its road network of both local and national importance. In a few month's time it will be possible to avoid Berne.

Vying with the geography

The Gotthard tunnel, which will take 20 years to build and which will be the longest road tunnel in the world, is the extreme example of the engineering difficulties of building a motorway in Switzerland. Take the example



Map showing planned national highway network, indicating stretches under construction and those open to circulation on 31st December, 1970.

The Swiss Observer

Published Twice Monthly at
63/67 TABERNACLE STREET
LONDON E.C.2
Tel.: 01-253 2321

Telegrams: Paperwyse Stock London

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12 issues Frs. 13 — or £1.30
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Editor's telephone: 01-602 1378

of the N2 between Basle and Chiasso. Of 325 km of roads there will be 91 km of bridges and tunnels. Thirty-three per cent of the road runs on the plateau, 9 per cent in the Jura, 30 per cent in the southern and northern Pre-Alps and 28 per cent in the Alps proper. All in all, there will be 65 km of tunnels and 26 km of bridges. National Highway 13 linking Saint-Margrethan to Bellinzona, passing through Chur, Sargans and the San Berdanino will be 190 km long with 12.2 km of tunnel and 6.8 km of bridges. The longest of them all, the N1 linking Geneva to Saint-Margrethen and 410 km long, will have 10.2 km of tunnels and 16 km of bridges.

The motorway programme as it stands today foresees 1550 km of motorways and semi-motorways and 290 km of mixed traffic roads, a total of 1840 km. There are, at present, detailed projects for 64 km of six-lane motorways, 900 km of four-lane motorways, 244 km of semi-motorways and 185 km of mixed traffic roads. This means that the category of roads has been fixed for 75 per cent of the planned network. On 31st December, 1970, 650.8 km of national highway or 35 per cent of the total was open to traffic. This included 16 km of six-lane motorways, 361.4 km of four-lane motorways, 171.4 km. of semi-motorways and 102 km of mixed traffic roads. Almost 96 km of national highways were opened to traffic last year, and 335 km, or 18 per cent of the planned total are actually under construction.

When Parliament debated the Federal budget for 1971 they saw that the outlay of the federal motorway account was to be 950 million francs. This, with additional revenue accruing from the sale of land, matched the requirements of the cantons charged with the works. This round sum of

approximately a billion francs was to lay 93 km of new highway, which translates into about £1,400 per yard of new highway.

The Hurlimann Commission

How is this kind of money found? The Confederation contributes 85 per cent of total costs. Sixty per cent of custom duties on imported fuel goes to road construction and maintenance and 40 per cent of this sum devolves to the motorways. The motorist pays a further 15 centime per litre at the petrol station, bringing his total contribution to the financment of motorways to 20.4 centimes per litre. In the ten years to 1970, 7.7 billion francs had been spent on the construction of motorways and this sum had been two-thirds covered by the above revenue.

The construction of motorways is a joint cantonal and federal venture. The responsibilities are shared as follows: The Confederation establishes the network, fixes the general projects, the norms, the construction programmes and delegates partial responsibility to the cantons. The latter are responsible for submitting detailed building projects, for buying land, for contracting, for the surveillance of traffic and the maintenance of national highways.

Actually, the *Hurlimann Commission* has complemented the national highway programme by a proposal to discharge the cantons from the maintenance of national highways. This would however require an amendment to the Federal Constitution. The Hurlimann Commission has also proposed a modified financment of the whole network. Taking account of a 4.5 per cent rate of inflation, it estimates the total cost of the work still to be achieved before the national highway network is completed in 1986 at 27 billion francs, about a third of the present national product. But the money forthcoming under the actual system, more or less fixed at about a billion francs a year, will not be enough. Hurlimann reckons that 3,450 million francs will be needed in the next three years. It therefore proposes a different mode of federal contribution and an increase on petrol tax.

Despite the grumblings of Swiss motorists, Switzerland's motorways are therefore beginning to take shape. There have been a number of delays, particularly in those cases where priority, and hence funds, have been shifted from one project to another. Hence the Gothard Tunnel and other major works have delayed the completion of the Lausanne-Berne axis, which will not be ready until 1985.

The western Swiss tend to feel neglected, motorway-wise, and this is not entirely unjustified when one considers the map of present realisation.

Nevertheless the Genevese will, in 1975, be able to drive directly from their city to Aigle in the Rhone valley, using a masterpiece of civil engineering flying above Chillon and Montreux, 12 km of which are already opened to traffic. In the view of most motorists, Switzerland is behind her neighbours who are better equipped in motorways and uncluttered roads. The tourist likes everything about motoring in Switzerland except its slow-going roads. We can see the day when this reputation will no longer be justified.

(Based on "La Suisse")

COMMENT

HOW TO SPEND ART MONEY

The town of Basle spends 160,000 francs every year on art. A special commission is charged with administering this official manna for the benefit of local artists and decides where statues or frescoes are necessary and who is going to be given the job.

The artists of Basle, who are not opposed to this regular allocation, even though it is of trifling importance, wish to change the spirit in which it is made. Under the leadership of an artist called Samuel Eugster they have sent to the Arts Credit Commission a kind of manifesto in which they claim that the 160,000 francs should serve a social purpose. That is, the art generated with this money should not be left in a kind of void but serve a useful purpose and be a ferment to the growth of society. They stated their desire to "discover the forces which can have an influence on the physionomy of the town, and hence on our own culture, and bring these forces to light; to produce ideas which would elicit the solutions of the problems just made visible".

Such a philosophical and vague letter was hardly formulated to make an impact on the practical minded administration of the arts. In fact the Arts Credit Commission was unable to understand what the artists really wanted and did not think that a reply was necessary.

The writer who commented on this incident in the *Basler Nachrichten* felt likewise that if artists desired a change of policy on their behalf, then they should at least make their wishes clear.

The fact is that it is always difficult to find clear and pragmatic reasons to why money should be spent on art. Nobody would complain in this country if a million pounds was spent on a hospital, but if the government had decided to buy the works of art recently auctioned at Christie's for a comparable sum in order to safeguard the national heritage, then there would have been a public uproar.

Some years ago a Member of Parliament lashed out at the expendi-