Huckepack corridor

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HUCKEPACK CORRIDOR

By The Editor

For some time now the Swiss Federal Government has been under intense pressure for the European Economic Community Commissioners, to open its roads to the new type of lorry weighing 40 tonnes and measuring 4 metres in height or to carry them on the "Huckepack/Piggyback" service for trailers without tractors or for tractors and trailers the "Rollendelandstrasse/Rolling Road" service both of which are operated by SFR/HUPAC. The answer to the first request was an emphatic "NO", and to the second was that tests would need to be carried out on the proposed routes. Whereas the weight presented no major insurmountable problem the height did, as this brought the loaded vehicle outside the current tunnel profile. To overcome this problem there are many things that can be done, for example: lower the trackwork inside the tunnel, reprofile the tunnel, lower the load carried or the raise the catenary. Over the years most of the options had been taken up, as the track in the Gothard tunnel had been lowered as far as limits would allow, the tunnel had been reprofiled and lower loading wagons had been employed all in answer to demands from outside Switzerland. Once again the EEC limits for height were increased, making it almost impossible to keep up with the rules of the game.

The Gothard tunnel with its height limit of 3.85m is no longer able to accept vehicles loaded on the Piggyback trains if they conform to the new proposed higher loading limits, so an alternative route has to be found. Two possibilities are for the trains to proceed from Basel, through Olten, Bern and the Lötschberg tunnel, or for the trains to travel via Solothurn, Kurzers and Lausanne to Brig thence via the Simplon tunnel into Italy. To enable this special traffic to pass through the Lötschberg tunnel, a lot of work will need to be done as far as the profile and the catenary supports are concerned all of which amounts to a huge expense for the Railway Authorities concerned. While this work is in hand - if it is given approval - the new lorries will have to be carried via Solothurn and Lausanne and the new tracks being laid in the Rhône valley, all of which will come to nought if the Simplon tunnel cannot cope.

Trials have been going on since late last year with a new catenary system, designed by Furrer and Frey of Bern which should not only place the catenary outside the new wagon profile but will allow an increase in speed. The new system, already fitted in the S-Bahn tunnel near Zürich Opfikon, consists of a new support system mounted to one side of the track centre line spaced at 8 metre intervals, and replacing the catenary wire with a continuous box shaped rail made from 6.8 kg/m aluminium holding the 12mm diameter copper contact wire. The idea of using a rail as the supply contact wire is not new as this system has been employed in the Bern and Luzern areas for some time, but these are all fitted for low speed running whereas the Lötschberg and Simplon tunnels would require traffic speeds of up to 160 km/h.

To enable tests to be carried out a section of the catenary in the Simplon tunnel II was removed between markers 4.5 km and 5.5 km and replaced with the new overhead supply rail. During the time this work was being done traffic was hauled from Domodossala to Brig and back by diesel locomotives of both the SBB and FS systems. From 14 November 1988 the permitted train speed in this tunnel was increased up to 160 km/h for trial purposes for locomotives of the type Re4/4IV which are capable of maintaining the higher speed and are fitted with new style pantographs. A test train consisting of the test coach of the SFR and two standard coaches has been hauled by the Re4/4IV through the tunnel to see how the rail stands up to the higher speed, so far the results look very promising indeed. The SFR now has until 1992 to complete the trials and carry out the work required on the two Simplon and the Lötschberg tunnels.

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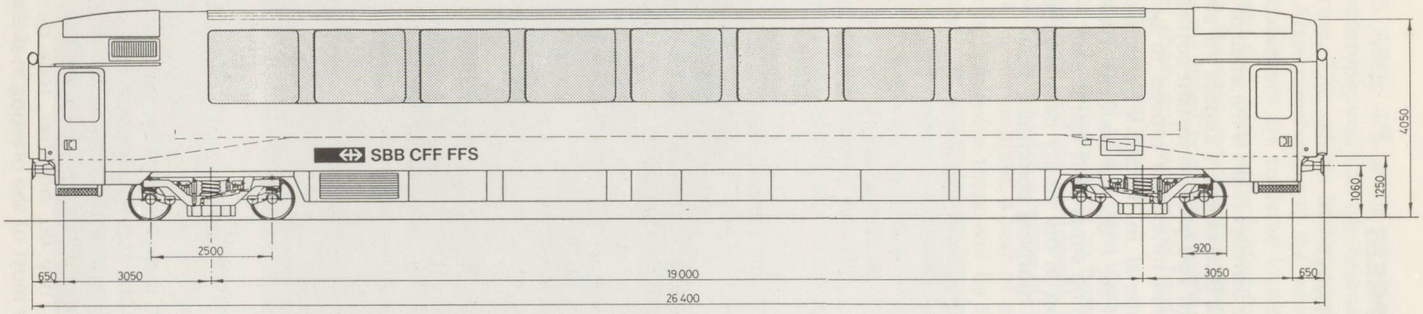

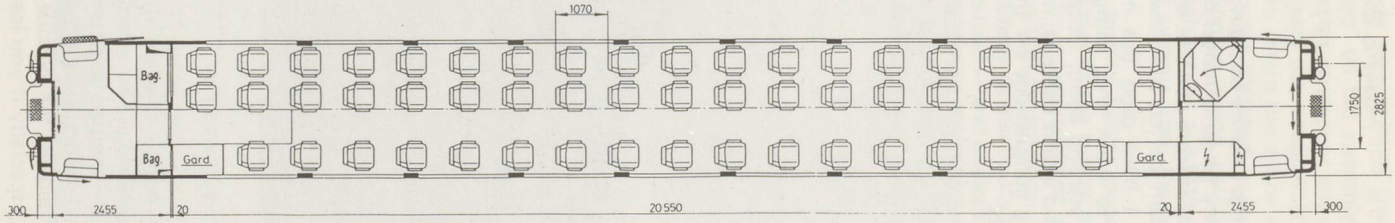

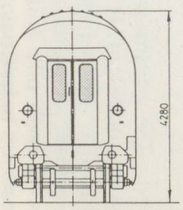

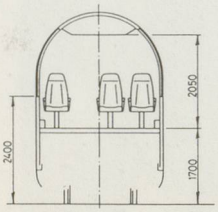

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