

SBB Historic

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss express : the Swiss Railways Society journal**

Band (Jahr): **6 (2000-2002)**

Heft 9

PDF erstellt am: **29.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-854964>

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Once again *Swiss Express* shows how topical it can be given a fair wind. This item is as far as I know exclusive at the time of publication and involved some swift manipulation just before it went to press. Note the date of the press conference. By the way this is a special. Normal press dates do still apply!

At a long awaited conference, on the 20th of February in Flamatt near Bern, details of the new owner of the historic legacy of the SBB were given to the press. To mark the occasion Re 460 102-7 was unveiled, bearing a large silver "Historic" logo, sponsored by the "widap" company. They provide customized resistors and electrical installations to the railway industry. The locomotive belongs to SBB Cargo and will be scheduled to run BLS push pull trains, mainly between Basel, Brig and Interlaken. In 1998, the SBB was a state owned and regulated service, run by civil servants. From 1999 onwards, it had to become a lean, market-led operator, although still state owned. This transition brought many changes, one of these being the cost-analysis of every single department and operation. It is clear that the care and upkeep of historically valuable rolling stock and other items do not exactly stand out as money generating profit centres. There was a great danger of these irreplaceable items at some time in the future being left to disintegrate to rust or dust, or even send to the shredder. It is to their great credit that the SBB realised this and has taken positive action to avoid it. Ownership of a representative selection of over 40 steam, electric and diesel locomotives and railcars (including the RAe TEE-set No. 1053) and over 70 items of passenger and freight rolling stock was transferred to a trust. If all lined up they would stretch for a staggering 2.2 km (1.5 miles). Ownership of several large collections of railway related items were also transferred. The trust, officially named "Stiftung Historisches Erbe der SBB", will be known as "SBB HISTORIC". It is headed by Hans-Kaspar Dick (retired director of the Gotthard section of the SBB) as President and Erwin Mauron as General Manager.

It is intended that in cooperation with the Verkehrshaus in Lucerne, the latter will serve as the showcase for the collection. The Verkehrshaus (which is an entirely separate body) has already,

since its opening in 1959, been the showcase for many different locomotives and rolling stock. Ownership has now been clearly defined; non-operational vehicles were transferred to ownership by the museum. The operational vehicles as well as all the 1:10 scale models are now owned by the trust and on loan to the museum. The SBB has changed its status with the museum from part owner to sponsor. Operational locomotives are also stored at the sheds of Basel, Bern, Biel, Erstfeld, Lausanne, Luzern, Olten, Rapperswil, Rorschach, Winterthur and Zurich. All these sheds have special teams dedicated to their upkeep. The other rolling stock will be kept at Olten as well as at two other locations still to be designated. Also at these locations special teams are charged with looking after them. Materials and part of the work is paid for by the Trust. The contract for large-scale work has been awarded to the works at Bönigen and Spiez of the BLS. Commercial use of the vehicles, which has been phrased as "sparingly", will be organised by the "Rail Away" travel company (SBB-owned). The trust, with its non-taxpayer status, cannot undertake any commercial activity. Also transferred to the trust were 25 000 books, a collection of many yearly volumes of more than 300 periodicals (including *Swiss Express!*), 250 000 pictures and slides, a few thousand posters and about a mile of shelf space full of old documents, not only SBB but also general railways and traffic. All this is stored at the new Infothek building at Bollwerk 12 in Bern, where a team of 12 people around Urs Haller are kept very busy sorting them, keeping it up to date and assisting research. It is clear, that some fees will have to be charged for the use of this magnificent facility by others. Financially, the trust relies for the majority of its funds on the SBB properly secured by a long-term contract. Sponsors and income from marketing by Rail Away will also provide some additional income.