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in solid rock, but only some 1.5m/day in soft ground where slower excavation methods are required. Blasting should be completed by the end of 2016 with the breakthrough coming in July 2017. As part of the scheme the removal of the existing rack railway bridge over the Oberstrasse will have to be undertaken after the old line goes out of service and the new one begins operation in April 2018, and this work is scheduled for October 2018. The entire tunnel project is planned for completion by the end of that month, with the new service coming into force from the December 2018 timetable change. In addition to the route realignment through the tunnel, a further scheme also involves major realignment and reconstruction of tracks to the west of St Gallen station on the site of the old freight facilities. Here there will be a major urban redevelopment project together with a new station and passing point. This will not be finally completed until 2022.

Viewing platforms are available at both the north and south portals, and guided tours of the sites will be available on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month between April and October 2017. These will be between 13:30 and 15:30 with those interested in taking part registering via modernisierung@appenzellerbahnen.ch or Tel. 071 354 50 94. For groups of up to eight, individual tours at CHF100 are also offered. More information on this project is at www.modernisierung-ab.ch/. 



It beats flying!

Ron Smith

As I have noted in my articles about the Rigibahnen it is a true public service railway and is not just there to take tourists up the mountain. Whilst waiting at Vitznau during a visit last spring, after the connecting lake ship docked, a crew member disembarked with a bird in a cage and quickly walked to the waiting train where it was deposited with the driver in the cab. The train set off up the mountain and after a while it stopped at one of the tiny little platforms that are provided en-route for the benefit of isolated houses, and especially the children from them who use the trains as their school bus. Waiting on the platform was a woman who collected the cage and its occupant and set off in the snow

to her home. There are not too many transport systems in the world that would offer that service. For a bird, on a cold snowy day, it obviously beats flying! 

