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Swiss PTT Rail Vehicles

by J. Daboo

The Swiss PTT owns and operates a number of railway carriages and vans. They are a fascinating aspect of the Swiss railway scene and can be seen throughout the country, in main-line and local trains (including being attached to NPZ sets). Until a few years ago some could be seen on international services. Major stations such as Bern and Lausanne with large PTT depots have reserved tracks where a wide variety of vehicles can be seen.

Scale drawings of some vehicles have appeared in various issues of 'Swiss Express'.

The PTT owns some 600 standard gauge vehicles, mainly running on the SBB. This article aims to give a brief overview of these vehicles, as seen by the writer in the last 15 years or so.

About 5% of the PTT fleet runs on the Brünig line and some narrow gauge private railways. These are not reviewed here. Nor are those vehicles owned by the SBB and private railways which include postal sections, such as DZ and DZt.

The first PTT vehicles appeared in 1860, and had 2 axles. The first 3-axle vehicles appeared in 1875, and the first 4-axle vehicles in 1913. Some 19th century vehicles had an open gallery (or veranda) running along one side of the body, with ornate railings. In the 1920's and 30's, many 3-axle vehicles were rebuilt with 2 or 4 axles, or disposed of. One old vehicle, No. 961 dating from 1932 and with the previous designation Z4i, survives as an SBB 'Historical wagon'.

The designation of the vehicles was amended in 1962-4, the 2-axle vehicles becoming Z2, the few remaining 3-axle ones Z3, and those with 4-axles Z.

The standard gauge PTT vehicles have individual 3-digit numbers. Over the years there have been many renumberings and rebuildings, so that some of the current series are listed in the Table. Many of these series now have gaps because of recent withdrawals. However new construction has continued into the 1990's.



Left: No. 638 seen here at Geneve in April 1991.

Above: No. 391 seen here at Lausanne in April 1991

From 1969 the 3-digit numbers were incorporated into UIC numbers. Various UIC codes have been used in the past, but now all vehicles carry the code 50 85 00-33 (except as noted in the Table).

The Table lists the main characteristics of these vehicles, including salient dimensions and weight.

Some have goods van type bodies, others resemble carriages. All the 2-axle vans and some of the older carriages have brake platforms at one end. A major recognition feature is the arrangement of doors on the body side, which differs between the various series. Particular distinguishing characteristics are the number, positions and sizes of the doors and the direction in which they slide open (e.g. all the same way or adjacent doors towards one another). The arrangement of windows may be different on the two body sides. Many of the carriages still do not have modern rubber end gangway connections. Apart from the latest higher-speed bogie vans, the bogies are similar

to those on SBB passenger carriages of Standard Type II or earlier designs.

The series 251-290 originally had sliding sidewall doors (like Hbis goods vans), but have been rebuilt and now have 3 separate sliding doors. Compare this with Brunig line vans: Nos. 63-64 have sliding sidewall doors whereas the latest vans 61-62, otherwise similar, have 2 separate sliding doors.

A further example: the series 861-90 have all three body-side doors sliding open in the same direction, and have modern gangway connections. In both these respects, they differ from the generally similar 811-60.

The livery is SBB green (except for some doors as noted in the Table). The 3-digit individual number generally appears in fairly large black characters on a yellow rectangular background, located near the top of the body side. The full UIC number and other details are marked in small yellow characters lower down the green body side.

In 1993 a new livery appeared, and may be



applied widely in due course. The body is white, with a narrow yellow band at the bottom of the body side. The 3-digit number is marked in black on the white body side, near the top.

Above: One of the 19th Century type of vans with the open balcony side with ornate railings. This is a restored version on the GFM

No.s	Body Type	Axles	Brake Plat.	Body Side Doors	Length o/a (m)	Axle or Bogie centres (m)	Tare (t)	
101-140	V	2	Yes	1	11.26	5.70	13.5	Silver door
141-250	V	2	Yes	2W	12.92	7.36	15	Originally like 101-140, later rebuilt
251-290	V	2	Yes	2SS 3W	14.60	8.00	16 18	White or grey sliding sidewall doors 1980's rebuilt like 351-391.
321-331	C	2	Yes	3	13.32	8.50	18	Domed roof ends
341-350	C	2	Yes	3	14.00	8.50	20	1980's roof extended over brake platform.
351-391	V	2	Yes	3W	14.60	8.00	18	
411-490	C	4	—	3W+H	17.40**	11.60	23	Type I
501-540	C	4	Yes	3W	18.40	11.80	24	
541-570*	C	4	—	3W+H	19.30	13.10	26	
571-590	V	4	—	3+H	20.24	13.90	34	160Kph, UIC code 00-73.
601-610	C	4	—	2+H	14.30	8.70	19.5	
611-650	C	4	—	2+H	17.40**	11.60	26	Type I
811-860	C	4	—	3+H	21.20**	14.27	31	Type II
861-890	C	4	—	3+H	20.70	N/A	31	Type II
901-920	C	4	—	3W+H	22.70	16.50	32	Type IIA
921-960	C	4	—	3W+H	22.70	16.50	32	Type IIA

Notes to Table:

* Originally for International service, UIC code 51 85 00-30. 1983 to Internal service, code 50 85 00-33.

V = Van type body. No body-side windows.

C = Carriage type body. 611 - 960 with differing body-side window layouts on the 2 sides.

** Body ends modified in 1970's-80's, previously 0.5m shorter

H = Carriage type hinged door at one end of body side, having windows.

All other side doors sliding; those in carriage type vehicles having windows.

W = One sliding door much wider than the others.