

Still hope for Ferrovia Mesolcinese?

Autor(en): **Ammann, Christian**

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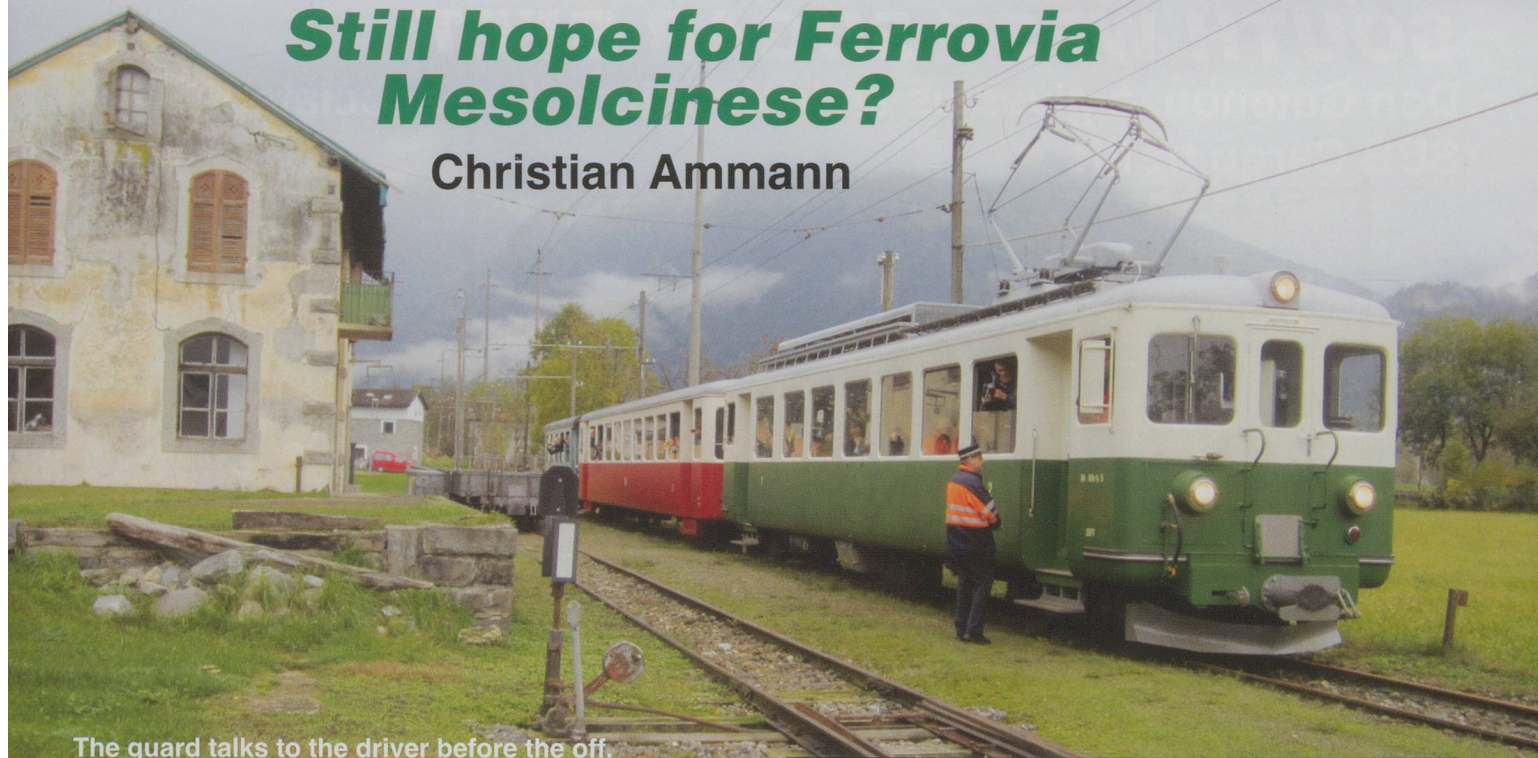
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Still hope for Ferrovia Mesolcinese?

Christian Ammann



The guard talks to the driver before the off.


All photos: Christian Ammann

In the September issue of *Swiss Express* we reported that October 2013 could see the end of touristic trains on the Castione –Cama line of the SEFT. In a 2nd September letter to the operators the Federal Office of Transport (BAV) explained that it would recommend to the Federal Council to cancel the concession, although this was valid until 2020. The reason was the negative position of Kanton Graubünden towards the continuation of tourist trains in Valle Mesolcina following a petition by five villages on the line. Cantone di Ticino also took a similar position to the Graubünden, as it wishes to finish the reconstruction of the station area at Castione without expenditure on a new station for the railway. Also the BAV took account of the decisions of the Federal Administrative Tribunal and the Federal Tribunal, which confirmed the expropriation of real estates for the reconstruction of the centre of Roveredo, and for new streets to be financed by the Federal Office for Streets (ASTRA).

In the circumstances SEFT decided to extend the season with two more Sunday operations on the 20th and 27th October. On both days many visitors from all over Switzerland, and from Italy, went to Valle Mesolcina to say good-bye



Crowds queue to ride the special services.

to this interesting and 'simpatico' little railway, which is one of the few tourist activities in the valley. On the 27th October all four trains were doubled and a total of 763 individual trips were made on the line – the most since 1995. Unfortunately, the weather was bad and rainy, but despite this many photographers were out along the line. Locally the activity on the 27th had a low profile. This was partly the intention of SEFT as they hoped that it would not be the 'Last Day', and other solutions to the problems could be found. Apparently their view was that by operating this friendly event they could show that the train still had a future in Valle Mesolcina, and a funeral atmosphere was deliberately avoided. Indeed the Federal Council has (of the 1st January) yet to cancel the concession, so although SEFT brought all the rolling stock to its Grono Depot it has stopped plans for scrapping the ex-Appenzellerbahn motorcars ABe4/4 Nos.1 & 2 (both out-of-service), the 4-axle coach (former ex SZB/RBS driving trailer No.29) and the bicycle transport car. It is still too early to tell what the future will hold – but hope dies last! 

The President obviously has impeccable taste!

