

# **An integral transport "Island" within Europe : Boyd Misstear takes a brief look at the wider European rail transportation plans and how Switzerland is a key component**

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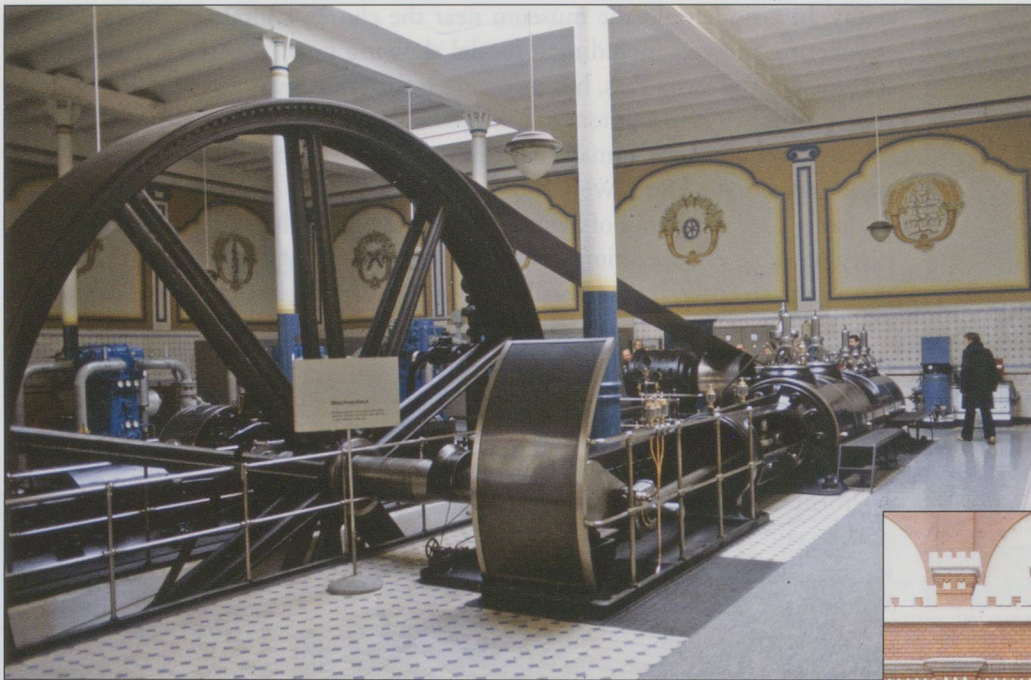
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ABOVE: A preserved stationary steam engine.

RIGHT: Locomotive shed with ex-SBB 0-6-OT 8481 SLM of 1907 acquired in 1965.

BELOW: A wagon being shunted by an adapted road tractor.



polished copper vats made a wonderful sight, the marble pillars and the stained-glass windows were a surprise. We were also shown a massive stationary steam engine albeit no longer in use. The original refrigeration plant was also on show and the visit concluded with the very much active bottling plant. 

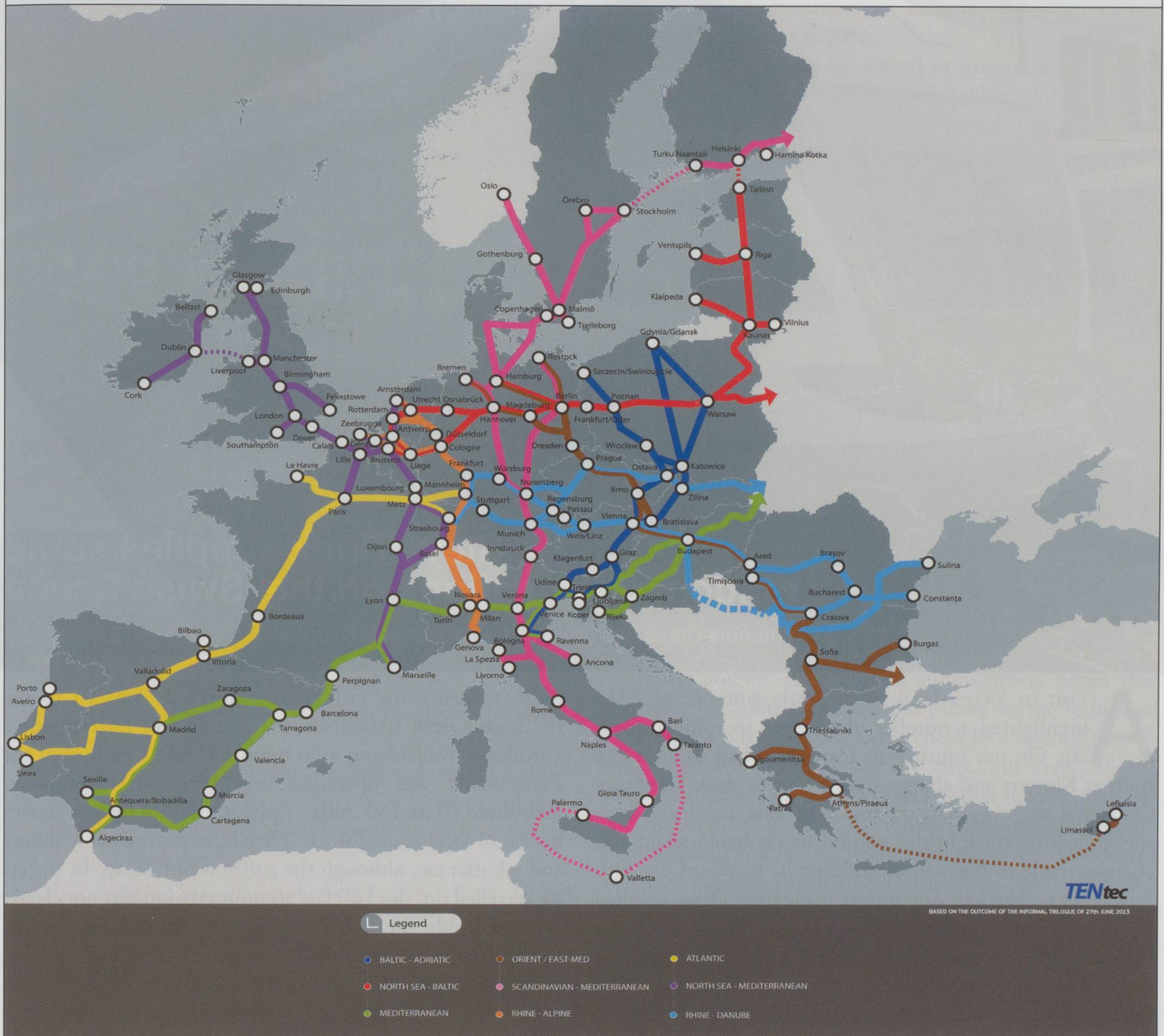
## An integral transport “Island” within Europe

Boyd Misstear takes a brief look at the wider European rail transportation plans and how Switzerland is a key component

Great emphasis and focus in the media, including *Swiss Express*, has in recent years naturally been directed towards the considerable engineering feats of the opening of the Lötschberg Base Tunnel and the opening in 2016 of the Gotthard Base Tunnel. This is an integral part of the “Neue Eisenbahn-Alpentransversale” (NEAT) route, and its extension further south with the Ceneri Base Tunnel in 2019. These transalpine corridor marvels are being built at great expense with long term planning objectives both to handle anticipated growth in North - South freight as well as to assist the environment by migrating additional cargo from road to rail to cut down on CO2 and other harmful

environmental pollutants - not to forget noise and disturbance in the alpine valleys! We have learned about the need to cater for 4m above rail level containers, to enable piggy-backing of lorries/trucks, coaches and so forth. But little mention has been made of how all this fits into a larger European plan, a plan in some ways reflecting the thoughts of our forebears 150 or so years ago, when bordering countries north and south of the Confederation sought out quality fast transalpine connections for both strategic and commercial reasons. In today's world, that planning is being driven by the European Union (EU).

On 11th December 2013 the European Commission



launched calls for proposals worth some €350m to finance European transport infrastructure (TEN-T), for projects in all EU Member States, and for all transport modes: air, rail, road, maritime and inland waterways. Within this request for budget is some €70m for European Rail Traffic Management Systems (ERTMS), enabling interoperability on the European rail network. So how does this impact with the Lötschberg and Gotthard? The TEN-T core network “innovation”, as the Commission refers to their “guidelines”, is the formation of 9 new corridors. One of these is called the “Rhine-Alpine Corridor”. This corridor constitutes one of the busiest freight routes in Europe, connecting the North Sea ports of Rotterdam and Antwerp to the Mediterranean basin in Genoa, via Switzerland and some of the major economic centres in the Rhein-Ruhr, the Rhein-Main-Neckar regions and the agglomeration of Milan in Northern Italy. This multimodal corridor includes the Rhine as an inland waterway. Key projects include the base tunnels partly

completed in Switzerland and their access routes in Germany and Italy. So there you have it! One of the key “ingredients” for TEN-T are the two new base tunnel systems in the EU’s overall plans for a north-south transport corridor. A number of SRS members were fortunate indeed to be welcomed and shown the Lötschberg infrastructure and control systems by members of the BLS on the Society’s 2011 Study Tour (See *Swiss Express* on line). The new TEN-T corridor map graphically illustrates all nine identified corridors, with Switzerland as an integral “island” of white surrounded by EU grey offering critical connections on the north - south routes within Western Europe shown in orange. The EU objective is to have all these corridors complete by 2030, which might be optimistic if history is anything to go by and budget constraints should interject. For more information and current updates, refer to [http://ec.europa.eu/transport/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/index_en.htm).