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MEDIA RELEASE

Berne, 30 March 2010

BLS invests CHF 493.7 million

Double-decker trains for the Berne commuter railway system: more space, more comfortable, more cost-effective

BLS is about to make the largest investment in rolling stock in its history: its Board of Directors has just approved funding of CHF 493.7 million to procure a total of 28 double-decker multiple-unit trains for the Berne commuter railway system from Stadler Rail by the end of 2014. The new trains will help BLS meet the growing demand and offer their passengers a more comfortable journey. At the same time it is implementing a long-term standardisation of its fleet to make operations more cost-effective. BLS is planning to invest a total of over CHF 1 billion in new rolling stock by 2025.

Following the rapid growth in demand over the last few years, the Berne commuter railway system is reaching the limits of its capacity, especially on the most frequently-used lines and at peak travel times. Over the last five years, demand has increased by 43.5% when measured by the number of passenger kilometres travelled. And the growth is set to continue in the future; a further increase in demand of around 60% in the Berne region is expected by 2025. This is why BLS is procuring new, powerful double-decker multiple-unit trains (DOSTO). These will offer passengers more space and greater comfort and will enable the procurers and BLS to achieve greater efficiency and more cost-effective railway operations. The public tender for the delivery of a total of 28 double-decker multiple-unit trains was run in June 2009.

At its last meeting, the Board of Directors of BLS decided to award the contract for the construction and delivery of the DOSTO vehicles to Stadler Rail of Bussnang with the usual 20-day appeal period. At the same time the Board of Directors approved the necessary funding of CHF 493.7 million. The investment has been approved by the Federal Office of Transport and cantons Berne and Fribourg, over whose territory the new trains will in future travel.

The 28 new double-decker trains, each of which will be 102 metres long, will be delivered from autumn 2012 and will be gradually deployed in the timetable for the S1 commuter railway line (Fribourg–Berne–Münsingen–Thun) during the course of 2013. With effect from 2014, the double-decker trains will be phased into service on the S3 (Biel–Berne–Belp) and S6 (Schwarzenburg–

Berne) lines. The DOSTO fleet will be complete by the end of 2014. Various minor modifications will be made to the existing rail infrastructure, such as in the Donnerbühl tunnel and on the Schwarzenburg line, in preparation for the deployment of the new vehicles.

Many advantages of the new double-decker trains
By making the largest investment in rolling stock in its history, BLS is aiming to improve both the quantity and the quality of its service to passengers of the Berne commuter railway system:

- *Increased capacity:* With seating for 336 and standing room for a further 110 passengers, along with a maximum capacity of 915 passengers per multiple-unit vehicle, the new trains offer more space with a view to the future growth in demand. The number of seats can quickly be doubled by combining two multiple-unit vehicles. It will be possible to increase the number of seats at peak travel time on the S1, S3 and S6 lines by around 30% by 2014.
- *Greater comfort and accessibility:* The new DOSTOs have panel heating, allowing the seats to be arranged more generously, and multifunctional compartments with space for pushchairs and bicycles. The carriages are climate controlled throughout and have a visual and acoustic passenger information system and video surveillance. The low-floor entries allow convenient embarkation and disembarkation at platform level. Each multiple-unit vehicle has three wheelchair spaces and an accessible toilet.
- *Optimised production and reliability:* Wide doors and generous door areas allow passengers to embark and disembark quickly, making it easier to keep to the timetable. There are also production benefits from the ability to change direction quickly and the fast separation and joining of multiple-unit vehicles.
- *Improved cost-effectiveness:* Increased availability of the vehicles and longer servicing intervals for the systems enable a reduction in life cycle costs to be achieved.

Billion-franc investment in a modern fleet of vehicles
BLS currently has a very disparate fleet operating in regional and commuter railway traffic with vehicles of varying ages, technology, passenger comfort and cost-effectiveness. As part of its long-term fleet strategy, BLS wants to gradually standardise and modernise its fleet by 2025 in order to align it to future trends in supply and demand. The focus is the phased procurement of new trains for the commuter railway system. The contract for double-decker trains that has now been awarded forms the basis for implementing the first phase. Providing that the planned expansions in the infrastructure and services can be achieved by then, BLS is planning to procure more trains for the commuter railway system, probably single-deckers, to coincide with the timetable changes in 2019 and 2025. BLS is therefore planning to invest around CHF 1.2 billion in new trains by 2025.

The new acquisitions will allow old rolling stock to be replaced, thereby enabling BLS to reduce the variety in its fleet. This then simplifies maintenance and increases flexibility in its rail operations. Instead of the seven sub-fleets it currently operates, BLS is aiming to reduce this to just four, two of which can be coupled together. In the first phase, the commissioning of the new DOSTOs will also trigger the withdrawal from service of eight RBDe 566 I type commuter trains and four locomotive-drawn EW I commuter trains. At the same time, it will also be possible to replace the 13 red RABe 526 type articulated multiple-unit trains (GTW), which will be migrated from BLS to SBB at the end of 2013 as part of the reorganisation of line management in the Lucerne West, Solothurn and Berner Jura areas (see media release of 29 October 2009).

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