

HaRakevet

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הרכבת

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A Quarterly Journal on the Railways of Israel and the Middle East
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115:01

A slightly seasonal look at a Siemens Viaggio driving trailer in a hailstorm at Lod, winter 2015. Photo IR

EDITORIAL.

Another Series ends and we hope our readers will stay loyal and renew their subscription! This Editorial has had to be re-written a few times, due to several stresses. One was a sudden legal claim for enormous damages for having used, in issue 100, a photograph which we thought had come from a press release but which a photographic agency claimed was the intellectual property of one of its members. We have decided to cut out details of the extensive and heated discussions but suffice it to say that (thanks to active involvement by one of our stalwarts in Israel!) things have quietened down after what was a very alarming period; we had of course stressed that this magazine is non-commercial, a labour of love, with several people providing labour, contacts, photos, news items and assistance and no-one being paid. Perhaps when it sank in that there is no international publishing giant behind us and no chance of gaining vast sums, the legal sharks who are apparently employed to intimidate backed off. The Editor is also a writer and singer and issues of intellectual property rights can indeed be a murky area where one wishes to respect people whose livelihood depends on honest dealings and yet at the same time not be constrained to total silence.

Enough on this for now, but it illustrates some of the 'behind the scenes' tensions involved in producing even a small quarterly publication with no Legal or Advertising Department. It gives an opportunity at this the end of another 'Series' and a calendar year, to thank once more those nameless heroes and heroines (they know who they are) who help keep this show on the road – We couldn't do it without you! This is meant to be a magazine that covers many subjects, not just a personal 'blog'.

Which brings us to another vexatious problem – what to include and what to cut out. There were comments that the 'Sabbath issue' in no. 114 took up a lot of space and this is true; here I, as a Rabbi find myself fascinated by the machinations of other rabbis and politicians on this matter, the entire definition of a 'Jewish state' or the role of religion in such matters as transportation, and so I crave forgiveness but have decided to devote space to continuing coverage on this debate - for the historical record.

The opening of the new line to Beit She'an – which the Editor was able to ride – and expansions on IR and the Innotrans in Berlin and the increased coverage by other publications on the burgeoning world of railways in the Gulf States, Saudia Arabia, the construction of new railways and urban networks (trams and metros) all over the region, mean that the rubrics 'News from the Line' and 'Other Middle East Railways' have also expanded alarmingly but satisfyingly. One can remember when there was nothing to report! So compromises have been made, some items held over.... Enjoy! The Editor.

115:03. At the Tzrifin (formerly Sarafand) Army Camp is a Holocaust Memorial formed of a PR goods van body, with a small exhibition inside - used also for educational purposes for new recruits. (Photo: The Editor)



NEWS FROM THE LINE.

(i) SUMMER SATURDAY LATE TRAIN.

"Israel Railways Ltd. have reported in their website that between Saturday night 13.08.2016 and 17.09.2016 an additional train will be operated on Saturday nights between Nahariya and Tel-Aviv HaHagana stations, departing Nahariya at 20:11 and terminating at Tel-Aviv HaHagana at 22:09, calling at: Acre, Kiryat-Motzkin, Kiryat-Haim, Hutzot HaMifratz, Lev HaMifratz, all Haifa stations, Atlit, Binyamina, Hadera West, Netanya, and all Tel-Aviv stations."

(ii). FURTHER ARGUMENTS OVER THE NEW VALLEY LINE.

(a). The line is open and working but there remain debates. This rather sour analysis came from Globes [online], Israel business news - www.globes-online.com - on September 6, 2016. (Copyright of Globes Publisher Itonut (1983) Ltd. 2016):

"NIS 4 billion to build, and monthly operating costs of NIS 1 million cannot be justified for 30,000 passengers a week.

The Valley Railway passed its test and public relations journey last week, orchestrated by Minister of Transport Yisrael Katz and Israel Railways CEO Boaz Tzafir and accompanied by a delegation of local mayors on the trip. Despite the fanfare, however, the projected use of the line does not justify its expense.

6,000 passengers a day

The new track starts at the existing railway station in Haifa, and passes through three stations in this order: the Kfar Yehoshua-Yokneam station, the Kfar Baruch-Migdal HaEmek station, and the Afula station, from where it goes to the new endpoint in Beit Shean. The track, on which only one train at a time will travel (meaning that the maximum frequency will be two trains an hour) and the four stations built along it cost NIS 4 billion from the state budget, according to the Ministry of Transport.

The operating costs of railway stations on such a scale are around NIS 1 million a month in regular costs, not including ticket price subsidies, another item in the general railway budget from which it is difficult to isolate the costs of the tickets at specific stations.

After we wondered aloud how a country embarks upon such an expensive project without taking such an important figure into account, the Minister of Transport was at least fair enough to take the hint and chose an optimistic line: "We won't ask how many people are in the region now; we'll ask how many people will come to live here, and how many businesses will be opened when there is a railway shortening the trip from the northern outlying areas to central Israel. People don't bring the railway; the

railway brings people," Katz said, quoting Israel's forefather Theodore Herzl. Katz also pointed out that there are also plans for a cargo line from Haifa Port to the Jordanian border just east of Beit Shean. If implemented the line would serve as an export-import pipeline between Jordan and Europe, having major significance for Israel's economy and regional peace. Katz calls the Valley Railway Israel's "Peace Railway."

Tzafir agreed to discuss the numbers for the railway's customers, saying that he estimated that an average of 1,500 people a day would travel on the railway at each of the stations, making a total of 6,000 people a day, or 30,000 a week and 130,000 a month (not counting holidays and Saturdays) for all four stations combined.

For the sake of comparison, about the same number of passengers uses one of the two railway stations in Beer Sheva in a month. An average of over 50,000 passengers a day uses each of the crowded Tel Aviv railway stations. Note that in all of these cases the number of passengers is for a single station, in comparison with the number expected to accumulate at the four stations on the new line.

Israel has other railway stations with only 1,500 passengers a day. These are intermediate stations connecting main points, for example the towns of Ofakim, Sderot, and Netivot on the southern track between Ashdod and Beer Sheva. 30,000-40,000 passengers a month pass through these stations (just over 1,500 a day on Sunday through Friday). There are also those who dispute the viability of the southern railway stations in the outlying areas, but at least these eventually reach Beer Sheva (or Tel Aviv in the other direction), two large metropolises with many residents and workers using the stations, and operating the small stations on the line is justified by the number of passengers entering and leaving at the large stations.

The Jezreel Valley railway stations, on the other hand, were built on a specially constructed line that ends in Beit Shean. Even if Beit Shean becomes a bustling border town at some time, it is hard to imagine as a metropolis in the foreseeable future. With all due respect to this supposed concern for the outlying areas, a forecast of 6,000 passengers a day makes it difficult to justify the enormous national investment: NIS 4 billion, and millions more each month for operating the railway, not to mention the additional expenses."

(b). But Sybil sent the following more positive information:

"Rakevet Ha'emek is opening on October 16 and travel on the line will be free until November 4th. Passengers coming from other stations must buy a ticket to Haifa, and then onward travel is free.

The stations are already listed on the IR website and trains will run hourly in each direction, starting from Atlit (yes, that surprises me!).

Sunday-Thursdays depart Atlit 06:23 and hourly until 19:23, depart Beit She'an 06:53 and hourly until 20:53. Fridays from Atlit 07:12 and hourly

until 14:12; Beit She'an 07:35 and hourly until 14:35; Saturdays from Atlit 20:45 and 21:45, and from Beit She'an at 20:08 and 21:08.

The intermediate stations are officially called Yokne'am-Kfar Yehoshua, Migdal Ha'emek-Kfar Baruch, Afula." See videos by KOBIZ99', sent to us by Yaron Dozetas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQB3UbJwgr4>

(c). And there was a 'Second Official Opening' -

From a press release of 08.11.2016 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

"Prime Minister Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Transport Minister Mr. Israel Katz, the railways' Acting General Manager Mr. Benny Lavie, as well as mayors of the cities of the Valley Line and other VIP's officially celebrated today - 08.11.2016 - the start of regular train operation on the line after three months of test running. The ceremony took place at the station of Afula. Minister Katz said that during the three months the railways carried more than 100,000 passengers, and each day 5,000 are using the line from various stations; he added that this shows the line's success."

However, Aharon adds, this will only become fully clear later due to the fact that until 06.02.2017 free tickets are used; after that and for the coming two years journeys will cost half the normal price.

Minister Katz added that on 06.11.2016 the railways started a new freight service between the ports of Ashdod and Haifa to Beit-She'an on the Valley Line; a temporary freight terminal has been built near Beit-She'an; further on a permanent terminal is to be built nearby; he has instructed his ministry to promote the rail link to Jordan and added that a revival of the line between Afula and the Arabian city of Jenin in the Palestinian Authority is also on the agenda."

(d). VALLEY LINE OPENING CELEBRATIONS.

Israel Railways Ltd. announced in their website that with the official opening of the Valley Line on 16.10.2016, the eve of the Sukkot holidays, there will be a lot of activities particularly for children at and near each of the stations along the line; it is expected to attract a lot of passengers, particularly due to free journeys along the line and from each of its stations to all over the network. For this purpose, the railways have trained their teams of stewardesses, station masters, conductors, etc. to be prepared to the "flood" of passengers.

And the timetable soon needed to be expanded! From Israel Railways Ltd. announcement on their website on 01.11.2016: "An additional train has been introduced on the Valley Line at rush hours between Beit-She'an and Haifa between 06:00 and 08:00, between Haifa and Beit-She'an between 16:00 and 17:00 and between 18:00 and 19:00."

(iii). MORE AGONIES ON THE 'SHABBAT WORK' ISSUE.

Soon after issue 114 went to press there was of course further news and although it is lengthy we have decided to incorporate a lot (not all!) for the sake of the historical record. This is an issue which is pretty well unique to Israel and many outsiders will simply not understand the fuss. On 4th. September 'Times of Israel' carried the following items:

(a). By Raphael Ahren: "More than the Jews have preserved the Sabbath, the Sabbath has preserved the Jews, Agriculture Minister Uri Ariel told reporters Sunday morning as he headed into the weekly cabinet meeting.

Ariel, a senior member of the Orthodox-nationalist Jewish Home party, recycled the much-cited bon mot from early Zionist thinker Ahad Ha'am in order to justify his position in the current traffic-crippling controversy over the state conducting maintenance work on the national railways during the Jewish people's day of rest. The holiness of the day, Ariel argued, trumps (nearly) all other considerations.

In response, political analyst Amit Segal - himself an Orthodox Jew - quipped on Twitter that more than Israel has safeguarded the Sabbath, trains running on the Sabbath have safeguarded Israel. Segal was presumably implying that in order to survive in today's world, the Jewish state had (and still has) to make certain compromises.

The always-contentious conflict between religion and state in Israel reared its head again loudly this weekend, resulting in nasty political mud wrestling within Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling Likud party and bona fide chaos on Israel's streets. Here's a look at what caused the crisis, how idling trains and angry commuters could have shaken up the government, but why the dispute won't topple the coalition.

The so-called status quo regulating the state's approach to religious issues mandates that the government not publicly violate the Sabbath, save in cases of life and death. That's why, for instance, when the prime minister wants to issue statements on Shabbat he never does so in a formal manner but via "briefings" from his aides.

On paper, official bodies do not operate on Shabbat unless lives are at stake, in which case the seventh day's sanctity is suspended and any usually prohibited act is permitted, even encouraged by Jewish law.

In practice, however, major public works, including even standard maintenance work on Israel's railroad system, has taken place on the Sabbath for decades, even when ultra-Orthodox parties were essential parts of the governing coalition.

Crises have arisen occasionally, especially when news of government-sanctioned work on the day of rest that was not a matter of life and death somehow found its way onto the front pages of Haredi newspapers. It's the Haredi media coverage that has sometimes turned otherwise standard procedures into political dynamite.

That is what happened with the current spat. Israel Railways had scheduled standard maintenance work to be carried out on a series of late summer Saturdays, when no trains are running. This was fully backed by Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz, who also just so happens to (reportedly) be eyeing the leadership of the Likud party in the post-Netanyahu era.

When the issue hit the headlines late last month, the Haredi parties felt the need to put their foot down and threatened to leave the coalition — and thus bring down the government — if the repair work was not cancelled. A week ago, a partial compromise came into play, with much of the work going ahead.

Netanyahu proposed a compromise for this past Saturday's work, too, in which repairs would not go ahead at 17 out of 20 originally scheduled sites. He argued that work on the three remaining could proceed because the repairs were necessary for passengers' safety — a matter of life and death. At first, the Haredi factions — United Torah Judaism, led by Health Minister Yaakov Litzman, and Shas, headed by Interior Minister Aryeh Deri — agreed to the deal. Subsequently, though, they pushed Netanyahu to cancel the planned work at all 20 locations.

The last-minute changes of plan caused chaos: Complex preparations for the work had begun on Friday, but because it was not carried out on Shabbat, the train service was not usable in many locations. As the work belatedly got under way, some 150 train departures on the Haifa-Tel Aviv route, the country's busiest, were cancelled on Sunday morning, affecting an estimated 150,000 travellers and commuters.

Since soldiers returning to their bases after a weekend at home were particularly affected, the Defense Ministry organized a fleet of buses to help alleviate the chaos, but anger was still widespread among troops and the general public alike. Some felt that Netanyahu had folded to Haredi pressure, others that he had sacrificed their well-being in order to show his ostensibly rebellious transportation minister who's boss.

Netanyahu, for his part, rejected any blame. "This crisis is completely unnecessary. There was no need to reach this situation," he said at the beginning of Sunday's weekly cabinet meeting. He was sitting right next to Katz, though avoiding any eye contact with him. "There has been a status quo in the State of Israel for many years; we honor it. When work needs to be done on Shabbat — it is done, as it was last Shabbat on the Ayalon highway," Netanyahu went on. "When it does not need to be done on Shabbat — it is not done. This has been our guiding principle; this is the principle that will continue to guide us."

Katz, who heads the Likud secretariat, and Netanyahu have been at odds over control of some key party institutions for years. But the crisis over the train works has provoked an unprecedentedly harsh slugfest.

On Saturday night, the prime minister issued a statement blaming his transportation minister for having "initiated" an unnecessary crisis in order to undermine his relations with the ultra-Orthodox public or damage his image among the general public. "The prime minister is outraged over Minister Katz's cynical attack on passengers and soldiers," the statement added.

During Sunday's cabinet meeting, Netanyahu continued his public rebuke of Katz. "When nobody wants a crisis, it is possible to avoid it. On this matter I expect full cooperation by all ministers. Ministers are appointed in order to avoid crises and solve problems, not create them."

Rumours of Netanyahu's intention to fire Katz have been swirling since Friday, but on Sunday proved to be premature. The prime minister's chief of staff, Yoav Horowitz, met with Katz on Sunday in a bid to sort out the crisis, and the word after the meeting was that, at least for now, the transportation minister will keep his job.

There are already too many disgruntled former Likud ministers (Kulanu leader and Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon, ex-Education minister Gideon Sa'ar, ex-Defense minister Moshe Ya'alon) for Netanyahu's liking, and the Prime Minister would prefer not to push another Likud heavyweight into their arms.

Thus Netanyahu seems unlikely to spark a bigger Likud crisis over the issue, and the ultra-Orthodox parties have no need to. So the government will not fall over this episode, it appears. Besides countless missed appointments, soldiers arriving late for duty, and perhaps a growing sentiment in some parts of the electorate that the prime minister is susceptible to ultra-Orthodox pressure, this weekend's crisis will not have drastic consequences. Not yet, at least.

For now, though, Shas, United Torah Judaism and even the more modern-minded Jewish Home have scored another victory in the ongoing struggle over the state's ostensible violations of the Sabbath — and emphasized their coalition leverage. "The entire world knows to rest on the seventh day; certainly the Jewish state needs to do so," Minister Ariel said. Even if for decades, non life-saving maintenance work has been performed on train tracks on Shabbat, the time has come to change that, he added triumphantly. "If for 60 years they did something that wasn't right, is that a reason to continue doing it?" Ariel asked reporters.

Litzman, of UTJ, disputed the assertion that Israel Railways had regularly violated the Sabbath on the scale that had been intended now. "There was nothing," he insisted. Litzman also rejected the argument that work on the three sites that both sides had initially agreed on was crucial and thus permissible on the Sabbath. All maintenance work could be done on weekdays, for instance during the eight-day shutdown of the railroad planned to take place in the near future, Litzman argued. If the work was planned properly, he said, there were ways to avoid major traffic chaos. As he spoke these benignly reassuring words, minutes before Sunday's cabinet meeting, however, thousands of Israelis were still stuck en route to work, the army and other

appointments, bitterly trying to figure out how to reach their destinations.

(One could of course add that the number of people forced to work to organise and run alternative bus services far exceeded that of the rail workers who would have had to work on the tracks on the Sabbath!)

(b). In 'Times of Israel' 04.09.2016: "Traffic unsnarls after train stoppage makes mess of morning commute. Police report movement 'as usual' along nation's highways after hours of traffic jams from Netanyahu-Katz spat.

Israeli traffic returned to normal on Sunday afternoon, following a morning marked by jams and congestion amid an ongoing political spat that spurred the halting of trains to and from Tel Aviv, police said. The traffic centre reports that in all parts of the country, transportation on intercity highways is 'flowing as usual', a police spokesperson said.

Sunday morning saw large traffic jams reported on highways between Haifa and Tel Aviv, the country's busiest, as well as along smaller alternative routes, after some 150 train departures on the coastal route were cancelled, the spokesperson said.

Planned repair work to the rail line was ordered frozen by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday evening when ultra-Orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism complained over the violation of the Jewish Sabbath, threatening to topple the coalition if it were not prevented.

The cancellation affected an estimated 150,000 travellers and commuters, including thousands of soldiers returning to their bases after weekends home."

and: (c). "... The prime minister's chief of staff, Yoav Horowitz, on Saturday night accused Yisrael Katz of trying to carry out a "putsch" against Netanyahu, Israel Radio reported. Horowitz said that the political maneuver caused deliberate harm to soldiers and other train passengers. According to Horowitz, Katz promised the religious parties that there would not be any non-essential work on Shabbat, but suddenly presented 20 projects that he claimed had to be carried out on the weekend.

The chief of staff said Netanyahu did everything in his power to avoid disruptions to passengers, and ordered, inter alia, alternative transportation for soldiers on Saturday night and Sunday morning. Netanyahu's office said the prime minister also instructed the Transportation Ministry to increase the number of bus lines in Tel Aviv and Haifa to alleviate delays caused by the suspended rail service.

Rumours that Netanyahu was planning to fire Katz surfaced Friday, with Channel 10 television reporting that the prime minister is sure his transportation minister deliberately triggered the coalition crisis. Netanyahu and Katz, both Likud heavyweights, publicly fought last month amid speculation over a possible leadership contest in the ruling party in the next election cycle. Netanyahu summoned Katz to a meeting a day after the latter

pushed through the Likud's secretariat a series of decisions that weakened the position of the party chairmanship, held by Netanyahu.

The Likud secretariat, of which Katz is chairman, is the internal organ responsible for party operations, including staff, budget, regional offices and election campaign efforts.

Also Saturday, the head of the left-wing Meretz party Zehava Galon petitioned the High Court of Justice to overturn Netanyahu's decision to halt the weekend railway work. "The court must put an end to the prime minister's unbridled frenzy on the backs of thousands of passengers," Galon said.

Meanwhile, members of the opposition announced on Saturday they collected 25 MK signatures required to force a special committee session to discuss Netanyahu's decision. Demonstrations against the suspension of rail lines also took place at central Tel Aviv and Haifa train stations on Saturday night."

(d). From 'Times of Israel' 11.09.2016.

'EIGHT DAY CLOSURE TO WORK ON EXPRESS LINE TO JERUSALEM.

On the heels of a political tussle over Shabbat train work that briefly threatened to bring down the government, Israel Railways on Sunday announced closures to several Tel Aviv stations later this month in order to complete construction work on the much-delayed new train line to Jerusalem.

Infrastructure work on the new high-speed train link between the two cities will see Tel Aviv's Savidor, University and Hashalom stations closed shortly after midnight on Monday, September 19, and reopen Tuesday, September 27 at 5 a.m., the rail company announced on its website Sunday.

Only Tel Aviv's Haganah station will remain open, leaving the country's financial hub bereft of almost all train service. The changes will temporarily halt the express train between Tel Aviv and Haifa, and alter half a dozen other routes across the country including ones connecting Beersheba, Netanya, Herzliya, Hod Hasharon and Jerusalem to the economic centre of the country. In an effort to alleviate heavy traffic delays, Israel Railways said buses would be available to commuters during those dates at a number of Tel Aviv train stations.

Israeli commuters were treated last week to a preview of what delays may await them when infrastructure work shut down several train lines, forcing some 150,000 travellers to find alternate routes and creating traffic headaches.

Tel Aviv and Jerusalem are less than 70 kilometres (44 miles) apart but are currently served only by a winding 90-minute railway line on a route designed during the British mandate. Road traffic can be badly congested at peak times, with the journey taking up to two hours.

Following many delays and budget breaches, Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz last month

announced the project was on track for its slated opening in early 2018. Katz, who in recent weeks has been embroiled in a political tussle with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over work on the train line on Shabbat, told journalists last week the new line is an important part of the "public transport revolution" underway in Israel. At peak times, there will be four trains an hour in both directions. The service will also stop at Ben Gurion International Airport, 10 kilometres east of Tel Aviv.

Israel Railways director Boaz Tzafirir has said 4,000 passengers are expected during rush hour, 50,000 per day and more than 10 million a year on the new service. A January report by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development on the Israeli economy concluded the country's railway infrastructure is underdeveloped in relation to high population density, leading to significant congestion. Trains comprise just 6 percent of public transport, compared to 30 to 60 percent in many other OECD countries, the report said.

In recent weeks, Katz has publicly sparred with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for ordering a stop to repairs on the state-funded rail lines on Shabbat, after ultra-Orthodox parties threatened to topple his coalition if work continued on the Jewish day of rest. The order led to mass transportation delays across the country and sparked protests by angry commuters.

As with much other public transportation in Israel, trains do not run from Friday afternoon to Saturday night, but repair work considered vital has generally been allowed with the government's approval. Last Tuesday, The High Court of Justice issued an interim injunction permitting Israel Railways to continue work on Shabbat, nullifying Netanyahu's controversial order to halt the work. Later last week, Labor Minister Haim Katz said Israel Railways would resume weekend work on the Tel-Aviv-Jerusalem line, and added that employees who prefer not to work on Shabbat would be allowed to opt out."

(e). When we went to press with issue 114 this issue was still burning. Without wanting to repeat EVERY news report it is important to complete the coverage of this controversy and its political consequences:

On 4.9.2016: In 'Times of Israel': "Prime Minister Netanyahu's chief of staff, Yoav Horowitz met Sunday with Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz in an attempt to end a public feud over train works on Shabbat. Following the meeting between Horowitz and Katz, officials apprised of the matter said that there was no longer a chance that Katz would be fired and that efforts were being made to bring the transportation minister's public dispute with Netanyahu to an end. On Saturday night Horowitz accused Katz of trying to carry out a 'putsch' against Netanyahu. The prime minister claimed in a statement issued over the weekend that Katz instigated the spat between Likud and leaders of ultra-Orthodox parties last week when he ordered the continuation of railway construction projects on Saturday, the Jewish day of rest, ostensibly in order to avoid train delays.

According to Horowitz, Katz promised the religious parties that there would not be any non-essential work on Shabbat, but suddenly presented 20 projects that he claimed had to be carried out over the weekend. However, Israel Railways boss Boaz Tzafirir said Sunday that he is responsible for which projects are carried out and when they are done. "All the professional considerations are mine alone. The Prime Minister's Office didn't order me... and nor the transportation minister." Tzafirir noted in an interview with Army Radio that it is not unusual for work to be done on Shabbat, which lasts from sundown Friday until Saturday night, and that every weekend there are around 10 rail projects carried out. The railways usually receive special dispensations, obtained a month in advance, permitting them to do work on Shabbat that cannot be completed during the early hours of weekday mornings when the trains aren't running, he explained.

Negotiations with ultra-Orthodox parties to find a solution to the weekend fracas failed due to inflexibility by the religious parties, he claimed. "We offered representatives of the ultra-Orthodox parties a compromise suggestion, but they weren't prepared to listen to any compromise," Tzafirir said. Labor Party MK Shelly Yachimovich dismissed ultra-Orthodox claims that the train construction violated the law and charged that the citizens of Israel were 'pawns' in Netanyahu's political games. United Torah Judaism MK Meir Porush told Israel Radio that the ultra-Orthodox parties learned that non-life saving work was being done on the Sabbath, which they plan to halt. The conflict between Katz and Netanyahu doesn't interest them, he said.

.... Netanyahu's Friday decision to halt the infrastructure work following pressure from ultra-Orthodox parties drew harsh criticism from opposition lawmakers and complaints from thousands of commuters in Tel Aviv and Haifa who began their workweek Sunday morning with gridlocked highways and hundreds of cancelled trains. Work on the rail projects began on Saturday night – after Shabbat ended - and into Sunday, leading to the cancellation of at least 150 [sic!] train departures on the Haifa – Tel Aviv route Sunday morning, affecting an estimated 150,000 travellers and commuters...."

(f). And from the same source, same date: "Israel Railways restored full services Sunday evening, at the end of a day in which trains ground to a halt.... Sunday morning saw large traffic jams on highways between Haifa and Tel Aviv, the country's busiest, as well as along smaller alternative routes, after some 150 train departures on the coastal route were cancelled, a police spokesman said. The cancellation affected an estimated 150,000 travellers and commuters, including thousands of soldiers returning to their bases after their weekend furloughs.

With the gradual return of trains running on the Tel Aviv – Haifa route.... normal service was resumed. However, the first train to make the run from Tel Aviv to Haifa hit a wild boar on the line, somewhere between Binyamina and Atlit, forcing the driver to make an emergency stop. Passengers waited 20 minutes as railway staff verified that the

train had indeed hit an animal and not a human being, The train eventually continued on its way.

The CEO of IR offered his appreciation to staff for finishing the maintenance work that was pushed off from the quieter weekend and into Sunday, one of the busiest days of the week for the trains. "I thank all the technical teams and the railway workers who worked from Saturday night to carry out the infrastructure work thoroughly, efficiently and with professionalism," said Boaz Tsafrir. In all, Netanyahu cancelled repair work on 17 out of 20 sites throughout the rail system. The three sites that continued operating involved repairs deemed necessary for passengers' safety, and so were acceptable to ultra-Orthodox lawmakers, as Jewish religious law allows violating the Sabbath to save lives. The surprise cancellation along the Tel Aviv – Haifa route caught Israel Railways crews after they had already disassembled parts of the track. Unable to return the tracks to their places due to the onset of the Sabbath on Friday night, the company was forced to leave the tracks unusable throughout Saturday, and were only able to begin concluding the repairs Saturday night.

..... During the weekly cabinet meeting, Netanyahu wanted his ministers not to step out of line and 'create' problems. "Ministers are appointed in order to help prevent crises and solve problems, not create them," he said, with Katz sitting by his side. "I expect the full cooperation of all ministers in this matter.".....

Despite the humiliation endured by Katz at the cabinet meeting, the prime minister may prove to be the party battered harder by the crisis sparked by the Shabbat railway works. A poll published by Channel 2 Sunday evening found that nearly half of the public (49%) blames Netanyahu for the spat, as opposed to only 14% who hold Katz responsible. In addition, only 25% backed Netanyahu's decision to cancel construction work on Shabbat, while 63% oppose the move."

(g). Then in 'Times of Israel' 18th. September: "Amid Row over Shabbat work, Finance Panel delays train funding. In a purported case of revenge for infrastructure work carried out on Shabbat, the ultra-Orthodox-led Knesset Finance Committee on Sunday dropped an anticipated vote on a Transportation Ministry request for NIS 600M for the country's railways. The committee, headed by MK Moshe Gafni of United Torah Judaism, was to have debated the budget. But in a surprise move it was taken off the agenda and not discussed at all, Channel 2 News reported.

The money was earmarked for the construction of the high-speed train between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, further development of the Jezreel Valley railway line in the north and payments for contractors. Stalling the budget approval could lead to the projects being delayed and the unpaid contractors may sue the government. Sources within the Transportation Ministry claimed that the decision was 'revenge' for the construction work carried out on the railways on Shabbat. They claimed that Gafni intentionally stalled the discussions..... UTJ, along with the fellow ultra-Orthodox Shas

party, are vehemently opposed to work on the Sabbath.

Gafni rejected the allegations. 'I am not obligated to discuss everything on the day's agenda,' he told Channel 2. "I will consider it and if appropriate, the money will be transferred."

Pushing off the work scheduled for Shabbat on September 2 weekend caused massive traffic delays on the following Sunday.... A High Court of Justice petition later rules that the work lies under the purview of Labour Minister Haim Katz (no relation to Yisrael Katz). Katz promised to allow only repairs deemed critical to safety to take place on Shabbat, but would push non-essential repairs to weekdays."

(h). And in the 'Times of Israel' on 19th. Sept.: "Israel commuters in the Tel Aviv area contended with bumper-to-bumper traffic for the first of what is expected to be a week of traffic nightmares: three of the four train stations in the country's economic hub were shut down for infrastructure work on Monday. Jams were reported on highways all over the country Monday morning as railway workers installed tracks for the new express train between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, as well as doubling the lines between Herzliya and Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv's Savidor, HaShalom and University stations will remain shut until 5 a.m. on Tuesday September 27th. HaHaganah, at the city's southern end, is the only station that is operating in Tel Aviv..... Some 150 buses were added to ferry passengers between the Herzliya and HaHaganah stations. However, commuters reported overcrowding and disorganisation as they tried to navigate the temporary arrangements. Travellers looking to bypass Tel Aviv are also able to take special trains between Herzliya and Lod." [Jeremy Topaz points out the work was actually completed more swiftly and services resumed on the morning of the 25th.]

(i). From 'Times of Israel' 16.09.2016.

"The heads of the ultra-Orthodox factions in the Knesset objected Wednesday to the continued repair work taking place at Tel Aviv train stations on Friday evenings and Saturdays, the Jewish Sabbath. In a joint message, Interior Minister Aryeh Deri (Shas), Health Minister Yaakov Litzman (United Torah Judaism) and MK Moshe Gafni (UTJ), condemned what they called the public desecration of Shabbat. "Doing repair work on Shabbat eve is extremely serious and we express our strong condemnation at [the disregard for] the honour of Shabbat," the MKs wrote, according to a Channel 10 report. The three acknowledged that the situation has improved since Shabbat work was halted on September 3.

"There has been a significant lessening in the work [being done] and a large portion of the workers are not Jewish," (and thus, under Jewish religious law, permitted to work on the Sabbath), they wrote. "Nevertheless, we protest vehemently against the conduct of the police who are acting unprofessionally when they force (the railways) to do the work on Shabbat eve, when it would have been possible to do the work during the week."

The parliamentarians called for a meeting with Israel Police Commissioner Roni Alsheich to explain what they called the severity of breaking the religious laws surrounding Shabbat. The message may have been intended as an insult to Alsheich, an observant Orthodox Jew.

Israel Railways announced it would carry out work in two locations overnight on Friday as part of an upgrade for a new high-speed rail line.

The latest comments follow a coalition crisis last month that saw Haredi politicians threaten to topple the coalition if Shabbat work continued on the Tel Aviv-Haifa rail route. Netanyahu ordered the work stopped over the September 2 weekend, causing massive traffic delays on Sunday as the repair work was bumped to the workday and forcing some 150,000 Israelis to find alternate transportation for their morning commutes.

A High Court of Justice petition later in the week revealed that Netanyahu did not have the legal authority to order the work stoppage, which lies under the purview of Labour Minister Haim Katz. Both Netanyahu and Katz welcomed the court's ruling, with Katz vowing to allow any repairs deemed critical to safety to take place on Shabbat, but would push non-essential repairs to weekdays.

None of that will help commuters to and from Tel Aviv later this month, when Israel Railways plans to shutter three of the city's four train stations for an entire week, from Monday September 19 until 5 a.m. on Tuesday, September 27. The Savidor, University and HaShalom stations will be closed, with only the southernmost Haganah station staying open for the duration of the period.

The changes will temporarily halt the express train between Tel Aviv and Haifa, and alter half a dozen other routes across the country, including ones connecting Beersheba, Netanya, Herzliya, Hod Hasharon and Jerusalem to the coastal metropolis.

The closures are necessary to carry out major

(iv). VARIOUS STOPPAGES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS.

(a). From a press release of 12.09.2016 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

In order to build the electrification infrastructure on the AI which will be the first Israeli electrified line, the railways are quadrupling the Herzliya - Tel-Aviv University section.

Due to the fact that these works are carried out on or near the existing tracks and include dismantling and relaying, traffic is impossible and therefore, between Monday 19.09.2016 and Tuesday 27.09.2016 at 05:00 there will be no trains between Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central, and Tel-Aviv HaShalom stations.

The works in question are a continuation of those already carried out between Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and Herzliya stations. The extra-long closure time is due to the size of Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central station - Israel's biggest - and the

need to make it fit for electrification and ECTS Level 2.

The following changes will take place:

1. Traffic from the south will terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station.
2. The suburban trains from/to Binyamina will start/terminate at Herzliya.
3. There will be no fast trains between Haifa and Tel-Aviv; going by bus is recommended.
4. Night trains between Nahariya and Ben-Gurion airport will start/terminate at Herzliya.
5. Trains on the Jerusalem (Malkha)- Herzliya line will operate between Beit-Shemesh and Lod only.

Alternative transportation:

1. A special service bypassing Tel-Aviv will be operating once an hour on both directions between Nahariya and Beer-Sheva, calling at Acre, Kiryat-Motzkin, Kiryat-Haim, Hutzot-Hamifratz, Lev-Hamifratz, all Haifa stations, Binyamina, Herzliya, passing through B'nei-B'rak, Petakh-Tikva stations and Rosh-HaAyin, then calling at Lod, Ramla, Kiryat-Gat, Lehavim and Beer-Sheva stations; this service will run between 04:59 and 09:30 and 12:59 and 19:27.
2. A special service will be operating twice an hour in both directions between Binyamina and Hod-HaSharon, calling at Caesarea-Pardes Hanna, Hadera West, Netanya, Beit-Yehoshua, Herzliya, B'nei-B'rak, Petakh-Tikva stations, Rosh-HaAyin North and Kfar-Sava.
3. The Transport Ministry will provide special buses at high frequency and free of charge between Tel-Aviv HaHagana and Herzliya stations; additionally, there will be a significant strengthening of bus services between Herzliya and the following stations: Haifa, Binyamina, Zikhron-Ya'akov, Hadera, Netanya, Kfar-Sava, Hod-HaSharon, Rosh-HaAyin, Rehovot, Rishon-LeZion and Beit-Shemesh.
4. A special free bus service will be provided as an alternative to night trains between Herzliya and Ben-Gurion Airport in both directions.

Israel Railways Ltd. General Manager Mr. Boaz Zafir said: "We are aware of the inconvenience which will be caused to the passengers and will do all we can in collaboration with the Transport Ministry to reduce it to the minimum".

(b). Temporary closure of Tel Aviv stations and significant changes within train traffic

Starting from Monday the 19.9.2016 (at 12:15) and until Tuesday the 27.9.2016 at 05:00 the stations of Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv Savidor Central and Tel Aviv HaShalom will be closed.

Due to closure of Tel Aviv stations there will be significant modifications within the schedule and the journeys of trains, the train traffic shall be restricted and permanent journeys shall be modified.

The closure of Tel Aviv stations is part of the development works which are required for the integration of the new train lines over the next few years including the High-speed railway which will be operated between Herzliya, Tel-Aviv and Jerusalem – the first electric railway line of Israel Railways.

The aforementioned is a complex development project which obligates sequential work 24 hours a day, within which railroad tracks are being disassembled, doubled and diverted and all within the narrow area in between Ayalon Highways. Due to the project complexity, train traffic termination is required until the assembly of the railway tracks into their new location and the operation of all of the required examinations up to their reactivation.

The main expected modifications:

The train departing from Beer Sheba Central Station on Sunday 18.9.16 at 10:59 will terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana Station (instead of Netanya).

The train departing from Nahariya Station on Sunday 18.9.16 at 11:15 will terminate at Herzliya Station (instead of Modi'in).

Trains coming from/to north: it is possible to arrive by train from/up to Herzliya Station (without change); we recommend driving from/up to Haifa Hof HaCarmel Station and from there continuing by bus towards Tel-Aviv/Nahariya.

Trains coming from/to south: it is possible to arrive by train from/up to Tel-Aviv HaHagana station.

Designated journey during the closure: two designated bus routes will be operated: Binyamina - Hod HaSharon, in both directions (via B'nei Brak) and a route which is bypassing Tel-Aviv stations in the line of Nahariya – Beer Sheva Central, in both directions.

Jerusalem – Herzliya Line: the stations of Jerusalem Malkha and Jerusalem Biblical Zoo will be closed; It will be possible to travel only between the stations of Lod - Ramla – Beit Shemesh.

Night trains to Ben Gurion Airport: will be operated from/to Herzliya Station. Shuttle services will be operated between Herzliya Station and Ben-Gurion Airport Station, through Tel-Aviv Savidor Central Station, in both directions.

Public transportation:

During the closure, the Ministry of Transportation will reinforce the bus lines.

For your convenience, we recommend you to use alternative Public Transportation.

Designated (free of charge) shuttle services between Tel Aviv stations and Herzliya Station:

(c). From a press release of 07.12.2016 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"The railways are continuing the infrastructure works of linking the AI to Jerusalem with the network, as well as progressive works on the Sharon

(531) railway line between Hod-HaSharon and the coast line. These works include realignment of tracks between Tel-Aviv University and Herzliya stations as well as an additional double-track section near Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central station. The new lines are an important part of the railways' development plan and are expected to serve hundreds of thousands new passengers daily, and thus to reduce car traffic, bottlenecks and air pollution. The new alignment and double-track section will immediately improve operational flexibility of trains between Herzliya and Tel-Aviv.

The infrastructure works will be carried out on active tracks or at the nearby, and due to the need to dismantle and reassemble tracks, traffic can't continue and the section Herzliya and Tel-Aviv will be closed for traffic between Wednesday 21.12.2016 at 19:00 and Sunday 25.12.2016 at 05:00.

As a result, traffic volume will be reduced, and services will be changed. Traffic from/to the north, will start/terminate at Beit-Yehoshua station (south of Netanya). Traffic from/to the south, will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central station. Trains from/to Jerusalem and from Beer-Sheva (through Ashkelon and Rishon-LeZion West) will start/terminate at Tel-Aviv HaHagana station.

During the morning and afternoon rush hours of Thursday, 22.12.2016, passenger services will be provided between Hod-HaSharon, Kfar-Sava, Rosh-Ha'ayin North, Petakh-Tikva, and Bnei-B'rak; trains will not reach Tel-Aviv stations; on all other days of works, all the mentioned stations will be closed. Traffic will resume on Sunday, 25.12.2016 at 05:00.

Arrangements have been made with the Transport Ministry to provide bus shuttle services between the stations of Beit-Yehoshua, Herzliya, and Tel-Aviv stations in order to minimize time losses and other disruptions.

Israel Railways Ltd. General Manager in chief Mr. Benny Lavie said: "The complex infrastructure works to be carried out impose line sections closures; we've made all the arrangements needed in order to minimize the disruptions; after completion of works, the service improvement will compensate on the suffer caused to the public".

(v). I.R. STATISTICS.

(a). FIRST HALF 2016.

From a press release of 27.07.2016 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

"Transport Minister Mr. Israel Katz announced on 27.07.2016 an impressive rise of 5% in the number of passengers carried by public transport in the first half of 2016. The National Authority for Public Transport has provided the following data:

During this period 356M have been carried by buses compared with 341M over the same period in 2015 - up by 4.2%. But the rise in traffic of Israel Railways Ltd. was much more remarkable; 30M

passengers compared with 26M; a rise of 16%! And the figures exclude soldiers and children under the age of 5 who travel free.

According to Minister Katz the reason for the rise in passenger traffic are the intensive improvements introduced such as the multi-line smart card valid on all lines (including Israel Railways Ltd. but excluding for now the Jerusalem LRV), increasing service frequencies, reduced fares, and putting into service hundreds of new buses.

According to Trachtenberg Committee responsible for the economy, each additional percent of public transport users saves the economy about \$104M (NIS 400M); the rise in users proves that the public is gradually preferring public transport over private cars. Between 2010 and 2016 the rise in all modes of public transport was 22%, but Israel Railways Ltd. had a better achievement; 53M were carried in 2015 compared with 36M in 2010; up by 47%!"

(b). HALF-YEAR TRAFFIC STATISTICS.

From a press release of 05.10.2016 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

The tendency of rise in the number of passengers using public transport services continues:

Between January and August 2016, the number of passengers using buses rose by 6.5%, while by rail the rise was 15.2%! 487 Million used buses and 41 Million used rail.

In August 2016 alone, the rise by bus was 9.5% while by rail it reached 17.2%; 62.3 Million used bus and 6 Million used rail. All these figures are compared with the same half year and month of 2015.

(c). THIRD QUARTER 2016 STATISTICS.

From a press release of 29.11.2016 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

On 29.11.2016, the railways reported their achievements during the 3 quarters (Q3) of 2016 including financial reports, according to which the tendencies of profitability, positive cash flow, increasing passenger and freight traffic and high punctuality continued.

1. The railways completed the 3 quarters of 2016 with a net profit of \$22.5M (NIS 86M), compared with \$14.7M (NIS 56M) over the same period of 2015 - up by 53%.

The profit in the 3rd quarter of 2016 was \$5.8M (NIS 22M) compared with \$1.83M (NIS 7M) over the 3rd quarter of 2015 - i.e. tripled.

2. The profit from current activity - EBITDA - over the 2016 3 quarters reached \$32.5M (NIS 124M) compared with \$21M (NIS 80M) over the same period of 2015 - up by 55%.

The 3rd quarter of 2016 brought a profit of \$9.2M (NIS 35M) compared with \$5.2M (NIS 20M) of the same quarter of 2015 - up by 75%.

3. The railways achieved a positive cash flow of \$38M (NIS 146M) from current activity during the 2016 3 quarters compared with \$0.26M (NIS 1M) negative cash flow during the same period of 2015.

The railways achieved a positive cash flow of \$11.8M (NIS 45M) over the 3rd quarter of 2016 compared with a negative cash flow of \$30.9M (NIS 118M) over the same quarter of 2015.

The railways keep on implementing the main targets of the development plans, i.e. promoting the completion of the AI line, electrification, and purchase of new rolling stock and motive power. Additionally, the railways are in progress of upgrading 10 railway stations and adding 2,500 parking places at an investment of \$13M (NIS 50M).

Passenger sector:

1. During the 3 quarters of 2016, the railways carried 44.7M passengers compared with 38.6M passengers at the same period of 2015 - up by 16%.

2. The revenues (including operation fees) reached \$368.6M (NIS 1.4Bn) compared with \$356M (NIS 1.36Bn) over the same period of 2015 - up by 3.5%; this seems modest, but it must be noted that the drastic reduction in tariffs due to the reform of tariffs in public transport introduced by the government during the last year has affected revenues.

3. The average of daily passenger traffic was 218,000; compared with 198,000 in 2015; up by 10%.

The rise in demand was both on the existing and new lines; during August 2016 a record number of 255,000 daily passengers was achieved; the highest ever.

4. On the Ashkelon - Tel-Aviv line traffic grew by 22%; the stations between Beer-Sheva and Ashkelon also contributed.

5. There was a rise of 12% on the Hod-HaSharon - Tel-Aviv line; Many passengers use it due to severe road bottlenecks to/from Tel-Aviv during rush hours.

6. A rise of 21% on the Binyamina - Tel-Aviv line.

7. Average punctuality during the 3 quarters of 2016 was 95.2%; the average punctuality between 2013 and 2016 was 95%; this is similar to leading railways within the OECD; it has been achieved thanks to managerial attention, employees' commitment, an updated timetable and increased railway infrastructure.

Freight sector:

1. During the first 3 quarters of 2016 the revenues from freight services reached \$73M (NIS 279M) compared with \$61.8M (NIS 236M) during the same period of 2015; up by 18%. The revenues were up 30% when compared with the same period of 2013.

2. During the 2016 3 quarters the railways carried 6.9M tons compared with 5.5M tons during the same period of 2015; up by 25%.

The rise in freight traffic was 40% when compared with the same period of 2013.

3. During the 2016 3 quarters the freight sector revenues were \$6.5M (NIS 25M) compared with \$1.05M (NIS 4M) during the same period of 2015; 6 times more!

The General Manager in Chief Mr. Benny Harel said: "The 3 quarters of 2016 are characterized by significant positive rises in all activities; we're proud of the fact that both existing and new lines are attracting more and more passengers; we see the same in the rise in freight haulage; we thank our customers who keep trusting us, and of course the dedicated railway employees without whom we would not be able to show our impressive achievements."

(vi). GUIDED TOURS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM STATION

On Friday 23rd. September guided tours were offered to the public to enable them to see the works under way. The advertisement read:

"Project developer: the Ministry of Transportation, executed through Israel Railways/The Hi-Speed Line to Jerusalem Administration; Engineering plan: Amy Metom Engineers; Station design: Barchana Architects & Town Planners; Project management: Dana Engineering. A project in progress.

A special opportunity to visit the site where construction works for the train line to Jerusalem are underway (the Jerusalem - Tel Aviv line). The project managers will talk about the technological challenge and engineering complexity of digging tunnels, tens of kilometres in length, inside a mountain, erecting bridges which are among the longest and tallest in Israel, and building the largest and deepest train station in the country.

The tours will include a brief explanation about the project and entry to the station building which is presently under construction. Participants will also go down to the station's platform tunnels, located 80 metres below ground.

The tours will be in groups of 20. Participants are asked to arrive 15 minutes before their reserved tour starts so they can be advised of the safety instructions. Participation is contingent on wearing long pants and closed-back shoes. Anyone dressed in different clothing will not be allowed to enter the site. Advance reservations required; each of the 10 tours, which will start every 30 minutes, is limited to two groups of 20 participants."

On 14.09.2016: From a press release of 13.09.2016 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

"Transport Minister Mr. Israel Katz, has decided today to name the Jerusalem HaUma station - currently under construction - after the 5th.



president of Israel Mr. Yitzhak Navon, who was also a Jerusalem citizen and belonged to a family who lived there for generations. This follows a request of the current president of Israel Mr. Reuben Rivlin and the Navon family."

Aharon notes: "It seems that the ministry's people are weak in history; an uncle of Mr. Navon, Mr. Joseph Bey (a Turkish title similar to Sir) was one of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem in the second half of the 19th. century and the one who obtained the concession for building the first railway line in Palestine between Jaffa and Jerusalem opened on 26.09.1892; this is the original line still in use today; so, for the late Mr. Navon the name of the new station will mean closing a circle."

Some pictures by Aharon Gazit of the new Jerusalem station under construction.

(vii). NEW (REBUILT) INLAND LINE PLAN!

From Globes [online], Israel business news - www.globes-online.com - on September 15, 2016:

"The new Hadera - Lod railway will bypass the Greater Tel Aviv region. Israel Railways has begun planning a new north-south line, which will bypass the Greater Tel Aviv area, "Yediot Ahronot" reports. The new line from Hadera to Lod will link northern and southern Israel in terms of trains without entering Tel Aviv, just as Road 6 does for the country's highway system.

The new line, which involves the construction of nine new stations, was approved by the cabinet four years ago and should have been operational by 2018. Now that Minister of Transport Yisrael Katz has given the green light and allocated a budget of NIS 8 billion, the planning will take 18 months and construction a further four years so that the railway should be operational by 2022.

Under the plan, a branch line will run southwards off the coastal line between Binyamina and Hadera. Five new stations will be built between there and the existing Rosh Ha'ayin North station at the end of the Tel Aviv - Hasharon branch line - Hadera Central, Ahituv, Taibe, Tira and Kfar Saba North.

From Rosh Ha'ayin North the existing single track to Lod will be upgraded to double track with four more stations built - Rosh Ha'ayin South, Elad, Airport City, and Lod North.

Katz said, "The eastern track will bring about a strategic revolution in the national rail network by linking the north and south while bypassing the Gush Dan and the bottleneck on the Ayalon railway corridor. It will also create a cargo rail transport artery that will increase the conveyancing capacity from Haifa and Ashdod ports throughout the country."

He added that removing freight trains from the coastal railway line will free up capacity for passenger traffic."

Later came an unofficial announcement of 28.11.2016 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

Under the headline "30 minutes from Tel-Aviv" Transport Minister Mr. Israel Katz announced today, 28.11.2016, that he has instructed Mr. Nissim Peretz, the General Manager of Israel Roads who carry out rail projects, to promote the building of the so-called Samaria Station to be located on the Eastern Line (part of the historical line between Haifa and Egypt) north of Kfar-Sava, which is to be rebuilt soon.

The station is planned to provide a journey time of 30 minutes (hence the name) to Tel-Aviv as the Eastern line between Kfar-Sava and Hadera East will be linked to the rail link between Kfar-Sava and the coast line; this is called '531' after the highway number in the median of which it is constructed. The station is to serve 100,000 people of the settlements in Samaria who suffer currently from severe bottlenecks en-route to Tel-Aviv."

Aharon adds: "However, not everyone agrees with the name; some say it should have been called Kokhav-Yair after the nearby urban settlement and besides, the station is not located within Samaria, an area which is politically highly explosive.

One positive point: Mr. Katz is really pressing the government to promote the construction of the really essential and long awaited rail link."

(viii). BEER SHEVA AND DIMONA WORKS.

From Israel Railways' Ltd. website:

"Due to infrastructure works to take place, the stations of Beer-Sheva Central and Dimona will be closed between Thursday, 29.09.2016 and Sunday, 02.10.2016 at 05:00. As a result, all trains originally destined to Beer-Sheva Central will start/terminate at Beer-Sheva University station. The Beer-Sheva University - Dimona will be closed for traffic.

The train departing Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central on Thursday 29.09.2016 at 23:07 and the train departing from Hod-Ha-Sharon/Sokolov on 29.09.2016 at 22:08 will both terminate at Beer-Sheva University. Traffic will resume on Sunday, 02.10.2016 at 05:00. The railways will provide bus shuttle services between the stations of Beer-Sheva and Dimona."

(ix). HIGH HOLY DAY FESTIVAL TIMETABLE CHANGES.

October 2016 was a month of Jewish holidays, during part of which trains did not operate (in addition to Fridays evening and Saturdays till Saturdays nights, in which trains do not operate regularly). The following changes were to be made to the timetable:

"On Sunday 02.10.2016, the eve of Rosh-Hashanah (the beginning of the Jewish new year), trains will operate as on Fridays.

On Monday 03.10.2016 and Tuesday 04.10.2016 trains will not operate.

On Tuesday night, 04.10.2016 trains will operate as on Saturday night.



Some photos of the new Jerusalem station construction from Aharon Gazit





Between Tuesday 18.10.2016 and Thursday 20.10.2016, trains will operate as on regular weekdays (Sunday to Thursday).

On Sunday, 23.10.2016, the eve of the last day of Sukkot holidays, trains will operate as on Friday.

On Monday 24.10.2016 trains will not operate (as on Saturday).

On Monday night 24.10.2016 trains will operate as on Saturday night.

On Tuesday 25.10.2016 trains will operate as on Sundays."

(x). SHIMON PERES.

Aharon Gazit offers this brief obituary thought. "On Tuesday night 27.10.2016 Mr. Shimon Peres, who was at various times the President, Prime



Minister, Defence Minister and Transport Minister (in addition to many other jobs, some of which are still secret) died at the age of 93. As a person of vision and who was always ahead of his time, he said in 1972: "Israel must have a developed rail system between all the big cities (including Beer-Sheva, then considered under-developed) attaining speeds of 170 km/h". The railway people thought his ideas were those of a lunatic; at last his vision has become a reality. May he rest in peace."

(As one of the most admired leaders worldwide, and due to more than 50 leaders coming to his funeral - which caused a big security headache - his coffin was put on 29.09.2016 at the front of the Knesset (parliament) so the public would be able to pay their last respects.

The railways increased the number of trains to/from Jerusalem as well as extending train stops to Jerusalem Biblical Zoo and Malkha stations instead of terminating at Beit-Shemesh; this referred to trains departing from Herzliya at 09:29, 11:29 and 13:29.

In the opposite direction the trains departing from Jerusalem Malkha station at 10:16, 12:16 and 15:16 called at all intermediate stations, terminating at Herzliya.

The Defence Ministry provided bus shuttle services from Modi'in Outskirts, Jerusalem Biblical Zoo and Jerusalem Malkha stations and back.

(xi). BOOMBOX FESTIVAL SPECIAL TRAINS.

"On Saturday night, 01.10.2016, there will be a BOOMBOX festival at Hadera river, not far from Hadera West station. The following trains will call at Hadera West station:

Trains departing Kiryat-Motzkim at 19:47 to Beer-Sheva Central; from Nahariya at 19:55 to Modi'in Central; from Nahariya at 20:29 to Beer-Sheva Central; from Nahariya at 20:51 to Modi'in Central; from Kiryat-Motzkim at 20:59 to Beer-Sheva Central; from Tel-Aviv Hahagana at 19:46 to Nahariya; from Tel-Aviv HaHagana at 20:13 to Nahariya; from Modi'in Central at 20:1 to Nahariya; from Beer-Sheva Central at 20:01 to Nahariya; from Modi'in Central at 21:11 to Nahariya.

An additional train at 20:14 from Haifa Central will call at all Haifa stations, Binyamina, Caesarea, terminating at Hadera West at 20:57. An additional train at 20:06 from Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central station will call at Tel-Aviv University station, Herzliya, Beit-Yehushua, Netanya, and terminate at Hadera West at 20:43.

After the festival, the trains of 04:51 and 05:51 from Nahariya will call at Hadera West and will then continue to Tel-Aviv stations, Ben-Gurion airport, terminating at Modi'in Central.

The train of 05:27 from Nahariya will call at Hadera West and then continue to Tel-Aviv stations, Lod, Kiryat-Gat, Lehavim-Rahat, terminating at Beer-Sheva stations.

The trains departing Modi'in Central at 05:11 and 06:11 will call at Hadera West and then continue to Binyamina, Atlit, Haifa stations, Lev-HaMifratz, Hutzot-HaMifratz, Kiryat-Haim, Kiryat-Motzkim, Acre and Nahariya.

The train departing Beer-Sheva Central at 05:01 will call at Hadera West and then continue to Binyamina, Atlit, Haifa stations, Lev-HaMifratz, Hutzot-HaMifratz, Kiryat-Haim, Kiryat-Motzkim, Acre and Nahariya.

An additional train will depart from Hadera West at 05:43 calling at Netanya 05:49, Beit-Yehoshua 05:53 and Herzliya 06:00; this train will continue as a regular train to Jerusalem.

Another additional train will depart Hadera West 06:43 calling at Netanya 06:49, Beit-Yehoshua 06:53 and terminating at Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central station at 07:00."

(xii). DOUBLE DECK MULTIPLE UNIT BIDS.

From a press release of 28.09.2016 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

"Six Best and final bidders presented by the deadline today – 28.09.2016 - their quotations for the international tender No. 51403: The Supply of 60 Double-Deck e.m.u.s (electric multiple units) of different configurations, which totals 330 cars.

The tender is for trains with a capacity of up to 1,700 seats each (depending on configuration); this means an increase of 37% of the car fleet which is currently 520 cars.

The six bidders are: Siemens of Germany, Alstom of France, Stadler of Switzerland, Hitachi Rail Italy

(Ansaldo Breda), Skoda of the Czech Republic and Bombardier of Germany.

According to the plans the first cars are expected in Israel towards the end of 2019 and will be operated amongst others on the AI fast link to Jerusalem.

Since the line is to be opened in April 2018 - if there are no last-minute delays or difficulties - the first trains to be operated on this line, as on other lines to be already electrified by this time, will be electric double-deck push/pull trains.

The emu's maintenance will be carried out by the winner at the Ashkelon depot to be built by them."

(xiii). FIREFIGHTING EXERCISE.

The fire brigade of Haifa has recently carried out a series of exercises for evacuating passengers from a burning train.



To this purpose they used a damaged and unrepairable double-deck car at the Haifa Kishon works. (Attached herewith is picture of the car with the works' main building in the background; this 1937 built building will soon be demolished and replaced by modern buildings as part of an enormous plan to rebuild the whole works area.)

The picture has been provided by courtesy of Mr. Shahar Wiesman from the railways spokesman office.

(xiv). NEW ASSISTANT GENERAL MANAGER.

From a press release of 05.10.2016 by the Transport & Roads' Safety Ministry:

"Colonel (Reserve) Jacob Blittstein has won the ministry's offer as Assistant to General Manager and was appointed as such, succeeding Mrs. Keren Turner-Eyal who was appointed to that job just 3 months ago.

For the last five years Mr. Blittstein was responsible for Israel Roads projects including the Valley Line, the Acre - Carmiel line and the AI line.

He will be responsible in addition for human resources, also on developing projects of highways, railway lines, and mass transit consisting of BRT and LRV lines.

He served for 25 years in the IDF (Israel Defence Forces) particularly in management of technological projects and after the service in consulting in South America for Israeli companies. He is a lawyer with an M.A. in Business Management and B.A. in Legal Affairs and Economy; married with 3 children.

(xv). ELECTRIFICATION WORKS.

From a press release of 10.10.2016 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

The railways are in the full momentum of preparations for the electrification programme, and as a part of this have published Tender No. 21611 for building a Depot for the electric rolling stock (DP3) at the railways' complex of Lod station.

It is the first depot of its sort; the depot for electric locomotives is already under construction at Ashkelon. The depot will have an area of 9,300 sq.m. and will be located between two active depots. The depot will serve both the rolling stock already converted to electric traction and the double-deck e.m.u.s currently in tender. Implementation time is 20 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 29.12.2016.

(Attached herewith is a computer generated picture of the depot provided by courtesy of Shahar Wiesman from the spokesman office; credit for the picture: Bar-Hanah Architects. N.B. it shows an SBB '2000' Bo-Bo loco in IR livery!)



(xvi). KFAR MENACHEM STATION PROGRESS.

On 27.10.2016 Sybil wrote: "Today I made a point of taking a bus from Beit Shemesh along the road that crosses the railway line at Kfar Menahem station. I looked out of the window and saw real live workmen actually working on the platform! This is after years of nothing happening there.

On my way back from Tel Aviv Merkaz I saw stickers next to each door of the train saying "Converted for electrification". The train was the 18:37 departure from TA Merkaz to Beersheva (ex Haifa Merkaz 17:36). None of the other double-decker trains that I saw had the stickers.

(xvii). ANOTHER VIEW OF THE AI LINE UNDER CONSTRUCTION.

From 'Times of Israel' 29.10.2016, a 'Blog' by James Galfund:

"In August, I journeyed to Israel on behalf of Development Corporation/Israel Bonds, the organization that has helped build every sector of Israel's economy. My goal: to find the alternate Israel, the Israel beyond perceptions of conflict and controversy.

The search led me to the headquarters of Israel Railways' fast rail project, a high-profile, game-changing initiative. After overcoming the kinds of delays inherent in an enterprise of this magnitude, as well as setbacks stemming from political and special interest considerations, the so-called "Capital Express" officially launched in 2005 and is expected to become fully operational in 2018.

When that happens, passengers will zip from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on trains reaching speeds of 100mph. The journey, currently a tedious one and a half hours each way, will be whittled down to just 28 minutes.

The high-speed electric trains – the first in Israel not to be diesel-fuelled – will race along a complex network of bridges and tunnels that, says Batsheva Segev, manager of the project's visitors center, stands apart as "one of the largest infrastructure projects in Israel's history."

By the Numbers

The sheer scope of the undertaking becomes apparent as Segev lays out the numbers. The six tunnels are a combined 24.8 miles, and the eight bridges span 4.3 miles in total length. The longest tunnel stretches



7.2 miles, while the longest bridge extends more than 4,100 feet. The highest bridge, at 318 feet, is the tallest in the country.

Development has been particularly challenging because the route runs through daunting mountainous terrain and high over valleys. Consequently, building the line has necessitated employing massive numbers of people with diverse skill sets, 1,500 in all, including 700 engineers.

Ultimately, Segev tells me, the expenditure of such large amounts of human and financial resources – totalling some \$2 billion – will result in “a whole new ballgame” for Israel. She explains the project will have “ripple effects that are wider than connecting the two cities.” In particular, Segev cites “economic and social benefits for all sectors of Israeli society” that will result from the dramatically shortened trip.

Segev knows, nonetheless, that “we have to prove ourselves, because we received billions of shekels from the government.”

Overcoming Topographical and Environmental Challenge

Those shekels have been put to use for a wide range of elements essential to the line’s successful completion, like tunnel boring machines, or TBMs. The German-made TBMs, custom-manufactured at a cost of approximately \$22 million apiece, are monster machines stretching nearly 500 feet in length and weighing 1,800 tons.

Three TBMs are being utilized to chew through solid rock at a rate of 50-65 feet per day, depending on the difficulty of the terrain. The task is complicated by the fact that the TBMs bore two adjacent tunnels, as opposed to just one for trains going in each direction. The reason, explains Segev, is to ensure that trains keep running in the event of an emergency.

Environmental concerns also received considerable attention from planners. Every tree and every rock removed from a hilltop to bore a tunnel was eventually put back exactly as before.

Illustrating the enormity of the task, trees in the path of the TBMs were carefully uprooted and moved to a fenced-off location outside the construction zone, where they were replanted and marked for eventual return. Special precautions were taken to ensure the relocation zone remained undamaged. The care taken to minimize environmental damage underscored Israel’s stature as a global leader in sustainability.

Another case in point was building a bridge spanning the Yitla Nature Reserve. Environmentalists opposed a bridge and proposed a tunnel instead, which would have added millions to the cost. The solution was to build a bridge spanning the valley that rested on just one central pillar instead of four. The ingenious engineering feat preserved the integrity of the reserve and the project moved forward with all parties satisfied.

Beyond its careful approach to the environment, Israel is also protective of its past. A uniquely Israeli consequence of infrastructure development is the uncovering of artifacts dating back to antiquity. When this happens – which is frequently – work must stop until the finds are studied by the Antiquities Authority, often setting back schedules for months. In this instance, Israel Railways caught a break. Only one olive press was discovered, with no implications for the rail line’s timetable.

This being Israel, however, there is another essential component to major projects – security. The final stop along the line, Jerusalem’s Ha’uma station, is being built more than 260 feet below ground to double as a shelter that can accommodate thousands of people in the event of an unconventional weapons attack.

Prior to launch, trains will run without passengers for a three-month testing period to ensure everything is safe and operating correctly. Then, when the line officially opens in 2018, three trains will run during peak hours. By 2020, the number will double to six.

There is no doubt the “Capital Express” will have a transformative effect on Israel. Reflecting on the enormous undertaking, Segev says, “There are so many reasons it shouldn’t have gone through, but it’s happening.” She concludes with a prediction. “Its influence,” Segev states with confidence, “will be huge.”

And so, the search for the alternate Israel has taken me another step forward, but my journey is certainly not complete. In this land of outside-the-box thinking, the potential for amazing discoveries is seemingly limitless.”

(xviii). NETANYA SAPIR STATION OPENS.

“On Saturday night 05.11.2016 a new passenger station, (pictured here) named Sapir, located at the southern industrial zone of Netanya between the main station of this city and Beit-Yehoshua will be opened; many of those working there, as well as those wishing to visit IKEA which is within a 5-minute walk, will also use it. As a result,



frequency of service on the Tel-Aviv - Netanya section will increase, as will hours of service.”

(xix). TIMETABLE ALTERATIONS.

A train between Tel-Aviv Savidor/Central and Beer-Sheva Central stations has been added at 05:43.

On the Akko (Acre) - Haifa Hof-HaCarmel line, departures from Akko are now 5 minutes earlier to coordinate with the Valley Line times; the later merges with the Haifa - Nahariya line near Lev HaMifratz.

(xx). THE FUTURE OF THE OLD JERUSALEM LINE?

From Aharon Gazit: “According to an article in one of Israel’s most popular newspapers, ‘Yediot Aharonot’ – i.e. ‘Latest News’ - the Transport Ministry is checking (not for the first time) the future of the old line to Jerusalem, particularly after the planned opening of the A1.

One of the ideas is to haul waste material (garbage) by rail from Jerusalem to the deposit site in the Negev (the desert in the south of Israel), as the railways are successfully doing from other parts of Israel. Also sand and construction materials from Jerusalem to other construction sites in Israel to be hauled by trains are on the agenda.

I personally have suggested to the railways they haul containers and fuel using the Rail-Runner system, thus saving the need for railway cars; in any case, a freight terminal is planned at the edge of Jerusalem Malkha station.

Regarding passenger services, the idea is to use the line for tourism and to operate few trains each day at the rush hours only; The option of using the lines for all these purposes together is also on the agenda.

I add here some personal notes:

1. For years I have suggested that building 2 platforms at the loop station of Bar-Giyora (between Beit-Shemesh and Jerusalem) would bring many passengers there, particularly those with bicycles, provided that each train will have facilities for them.

2. Freight trains were running on the line for years when the conditions were much worse; their revival should be simple.

3. I suggested the rebuilding of the Bittir loop station (between Bar-Giyora and Jerusalem) and to add a café where tourists will be able to visit the historical village and surroundings. My assumption was that business may replace hostility; I’ve been accused as being too pro-Palestinian; the idea was rejected, and the historical station building demolished during rebuilding of the line.

4. Finally, it seems to me that the best way to operate the line for passenger services (in addition to freight) is to introduce a hybrid tram/train service between Beit-Shemesh and Jerusalem which will enable the service to reach the city center; This is included in the Jerusalem Transportation Master Plan; the question is who will take responsibility for the section.

Another idea considered is the revival of the restaurant car which ceased to exist in the 1990’s in favour of the desperate need for seats due to the extraordinary growth in the number of passengers.

“Its Influence Will Be Huge”

The reason for the idea is that the outgoing General Manager Mr. Boaz Zafirir travelled with his granddaughters who asked for some sweets which he could not give them! He has also suggested the revival of the beverage trolley.

The strangest idea is to introduce a restaurant car on the AI to Jerusalem and on the line to Carmiel in the Lower Galilee; in both cases the journey will not take more than 30 minutes and many doubt whether such a service is needed there at all.

From experience in the past the trolley may also be found to be a trouble-maker as it blocks the aisle and angry passengers in a hurry, particularly in rush hours, may damage it; it seems that installing automatic drinks and sandwich machines on trains to be operated by a sub-contractor may be a better solution."

(xxi). EXTENSION OF THE NEW RAILWAY TO THE KOTEL?

From 'Times of Israel' 01. Nov. 2016:

"Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz reportedly plans to extend the upcoming high-speed Jerusalem-Tel Aviv train line to the Western Wall. Katz spoke of his intentions at a meeting attended by experts from the transportation and finance ministries, Israel Railways and the Jerusalem Transport Master Plan team, 'Yedioth Ahronoth' reported Tuesday.

The line would be extended via a tunnel that would skirt the Old City and end near the Western Wall.

Katz reportedly said that the extension of the line would relieve pressure on the main Jerusalem station and make it easier for tourists, students and others to reach the Western Wall directly from the center of the country.

"The fast line to Jerusalem is the largest project to date in the development plan of Israel Railways," he was quoted as saying. "It will allow thousands of workers to commute to Jerusalem, and to arrive in the capital quickly and comfortably." The Tel Aviv-Jerusalem rail project, which is already projected to cost an estimated NIS 7 Billion (\$1.8 Billion) and has been in planning since 2001, is expected to cut travel time to 28 minutes, down from 78 minutes on the old line built during the days of the Ottoman Empire.

The trains will reach speeds of up to 160 kph (100 mph). When fully operational, they will depart every 15 minutes in each direction, carrying up to 1,000 passengers.

The massive public works project has faced many hurdles since planning started 15 years ago. Originally slated to be completed in 2008, environmental activists stalled the plans after raising a number of concerns about potential damage to the protected hills and valleys surrounding the capital. Nevertheless, construction work is expected to be completed by the end of 2017 and train will begin operations for passengers in time for Passover 2018.

Katz also discussed plans to extend the existing Jerusalem light rail north to Neve Yaakov and south to reach Hadassah Hospital in Ein Kerem, the report said. In addition, preparatory work will begin soon on a separate line that will link the two campuses of Hebrew University on Mount Scopus and Givat Ram."

As was to be expected, on 03.11.2016 from the 'Jerusalem Post':

"Palestinian officials said Wednesday reported plans to extend a train line to the Western Wall in Jerusalem's highly sensitive Old City have the potential to lead to a dangerous conflagration, while also slamming a proposal to run the capital's light rail to several settlements surrounding the city.

On Tuesday, the Hebrew daily Yedioth Ahronoth reported that Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz was floating a plan to extend the new express train from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem into the heart of the capital, where it would reach the holy site of Western Wall. The line would be extended via a tunnel that would skirt the Old City and end near the sacred site.

In a statement, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry called on the international community and the United Nations, particularly UNESCO and the UN Security Council, to take action to thwart "this dangerous settlement escalation, which threatens to explode" the conflict.

UNESCO recently passed a resolution condemning Israeli construction projects in the Old City, which Palestinians claim as territory for their future state, as well as casting doubt over Jewish links to the Temple Mount and Western Wall, Judaism's two holiest sites.

Katz reportedly said that the extension of the line would relieve pressure on the main Jerusalem train station that is currently being built at the western entrance to the city, and make it easier for tourists, students and others to reach the Western Wall directly from the Tel Aviv region."

Aharon notes: "Recently both newspapers and TV have shown two plans of Transport Minister Mr. Israel Katz; one speaks of a 2 km extension of the AI in a tunnel directly to the Western Wall in the Old City; the other speaks of a significant extension of the Jerusalem LRV lines into a network to link the city with all the surrounding Jewish settlements. I asked the office of Mr. Katz about these sensational news items; they said that these were his own ideas and that no official announcement has yet been published. This has led to rumours saying that it is Mr. Katz's political balloon as he sees himself a possible successor to Prime Minister Netanyahu."

(xxii). FURTHER DISRUPTIONS DUE TO WORKS.

From an announcement of Israel Railways Ltd. of 07.11.2016 in their website: Due to infrastructure works to take place to link the AI with the Tel-Aviv - Modi'in line, the section between Ben-Gurion airport and Modi'in will be closed for traffic between Saturday night 12.11.2016 and Sunday 13.11.2016 at 05:00. As a result, the trains of 19:11, 20:11, 21:11, 22:08 and 23:08 from Modi'in Central station will instead depart from Ben-Gurion airport. Trains to Modi'in will terminate at Ben-Gurion airport at 20:55, 21:55, 23:15 and 00:15. Alternative bus shuttle services will be provided between Modi'in Central station and Ben-Gurion airport calling also at Modi'in Outskirts station as per railway timetable.

(xxiii). 'NEW' SECOND HAND CONTAINER FLAT WAGONS FOR IR.

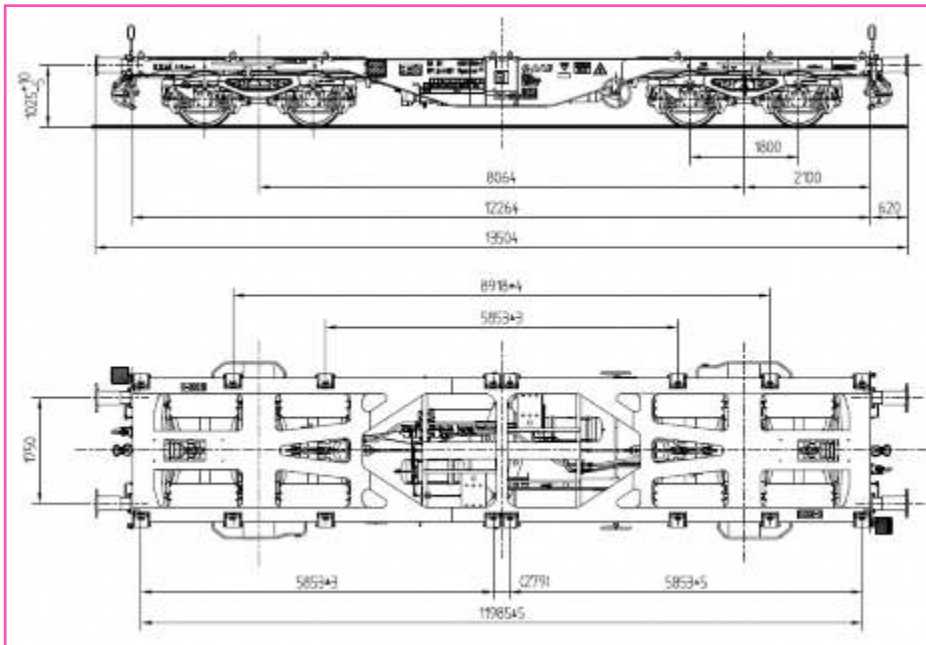
On 14.11.2016 Chen wrote: "Israel Railways recently received 50 used 40' container flats, purchased from AAE. The attached files show technical details, as well as former and current numbers. All were built by Konstal in 1990/1, and are painted red-brown. They were renumbered in the same order as their former numbers." This led to some correspondence amongst wagon experts, because it seemed that these wagons had been shortened from 60' to 40'.

Paul Scheller wrote: the origin of these "new" container flats is the same as in the 2014 purchase of AAE-Sgns. From 1985 onwards DB developed a more simple 60'-container wagon with outer fishbelly girders and ordered ten prototypes in 1987 as type Sgns 694. These ten wagons were the "grandfathers" of all following 60'-container wagon with minor differences in length and arrangement of container fittings. First Intercontainer ordered 400 wagons from Konstal in 1989. These wagons were built in 1990/91 as Polish type 429Z(r) - 429Z without, 429Zr with strengthened brakes - and registered by SNCB as SNCB type 6420B0 Sgnss 88 457 5 500/899 P ICF or Sgns 88 455 5 500/811 (after reduction of max. speed from 120 km/h to 100 km/h).

In 1999 ICF sold these wagons to AAE. They were renumbered 68 455 8 000ff Sgns or 68 457 3 200ff Sgnss and became later AAE type S 4. Meanwhile UIC had adopted the Intercontainer wagon as Standard type and AAE had ordered

thousands of these wagons for its wagon hiring business from 1992 onwards. Also the ex-Intercontainer wagons were immediately on hire to different customers like Hupac or HLS (Switzerland) or CEMAT (Italy). And they were renumbered and renumbered... Therefore nobody knows the exact history of all AAE wagons. A friend of mine, Per Topp Nielsen; made an attempt to register all AAE wagon movements

Works are under way still to build the northern entrances/exits at TA Arlosoroff. North of Universita it seems the quadrupling is taking place between the two running tracks! Sapir is now open. At Hadera West were 17 empty container wagons. At Hof Carmel new signs with 'Hof Karmel' (wth a 'K') were up or about to go up. The Beit She'an trains start at Atlit, presumably because here there is a third track and an island platform thus enabling the train to be stabled clear of the running lines while reversing. At Lev HaMifratz a platform is being built on the right side of the track on the viaduct. At Beit Shean only one platform is in use, the track on the other extends further eastwards by a couple of hundred metres and here stood several container wagons being unloaded at what is clearly still an improvised freight depot – but the loco of the freight train can run round at the station.



(xxv). FIRE ON THE LINE.

On Sunday, 27.11.2016 the line between Binyamina and Hadera West was closed for several hours due to a fire which occurred near the remote-controlled loop station of Zichron-Ya'akov (north of Binyamina); as a result, punctuality was down to 60%; only after several hours was traffic resumed and punctuality improved slowly until returning to normal the next day.

(xxvi). INVESTMENT IN NEW SIGNALLING.

The Knesset (parliamentary) Economics Committee discussed this week the investment in railways; they finally agreed to allocate money for new signal boxes and control rooms along the lines due to the introduction of ETCS and GSM-R; they have not yet agreed on financing larger signal and control rooms in big cities where railway lines pass.

(xxvii). GETTING READY FOR WINTER!

(<http://www.dansk-jernbanearkiv.dk/europ/u68.htm>).

From a press release of 12.12.2016 by Israel Railways Ltd.:

The actual container flats are shortened. AAE began its shortening program in 2015. An AAE employee then wrote: "I was responsible for the operative part of this project. First 110 Sgmnss in 2015 and then 50 Sgmnss 40' this year. All are Konstal wagons. The rebuilding (of the Konstal 60' wagons) in Sgmnss 40' was executed by EKKW Ostrov in Poland, the specific IR-preparation by LRS Leipzig. The shipment was always via Antwerpen/Anvers. If it seems that the rebuilding is not recognizable ... then this shows that EKKW Ostrov did a good job in shortening the wagons...."

"As an integral part of being ready for the coming winter, the railways have carried out during the past months a lot of activities in order to prepare the tracks and stations for winter conditions.

This year, the railways will operate - for the first time in history and only if necessary - point machine heaters on the old line to Jerusalem, in order to enable regular services in cases of heavy snow. Among the activities performed so far to prepare the track infrastructures are:

- Cleaning of ditches and removal of debris etc. near stations and sites to prevent flooding.
- Strengthening of boards on platforms.
- Cutting-back of overgrowing trees at railway stations, adjacent parking areas, and sites.
- Performing a thorough maintenance of drainage pumps of railway stations and of the main pumping stations.
- Checking and sealing of stations' roofs.

The numbering is random. We (AAE) would have liked to rebuild the MSV 2184 type, but IR wished exactly this Konstal type as a (shortened) 40' wagon. Therefore we had to shift the delivery date, because we had first to find, collect and rebuild the Konstal wagons. Maybe next year a further delivery of container flats (to IR) is coming."

As an integral part of preparedness at the stations of Beit-Shemesh and Jerusalem (the old line) for snow storms or a scenario repeating what happened last year when rail was the only link between Jerusalem and the Greater Tel-Aviv Area, the following precautions have been taken:

(xxiv). BALLAST HOPPERS ON KVISH ECHAD.

On 17.11.2016 the Editor was sitting in an Egged bus heading from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv when suddenly, near Latrun, he noticed the bus was overtaking a large yellow railway wagon on a lorry! Quickly grabbing a camera it turned out we were passing a second – No. 33 56 SK-LTS 6989 011-3. Presumably these were on their way from wherever they had been used on the Jerusalem line construction, but why and where to was not clear.

- Heating apparatus at each of the stations.
- Stations will be equipped with salt to melt the snow; the first batch is at Jerusalem Malkha station.
- Tools for digging and other equipment is stored at each of the stations.
- Additional storm suits have been purchased.
- Beds and sleeping bags are stored at Jerusalem Malkha station.
- The railways have purchased additional sets of emergency lighting and other LED lamps."

The day's journey revealed the following:

TENDERS.

(i). Israel Railways Ltd. tender No. 21603: Carrying out Alumino-Thermic and Flush Butt Rail Welding: The railways reserve themselves the right to select separate winners for each type of welding, or a single winner for both types. The contract is for 5 years. Latest date for submission of proposals: 22.09.2016. Note: so far the sole welder is Lesico Ltd.

(ii). Tender No. 41608: For the supply of LED headlights for JT42 and GM Locomotives. Bids by 8th. August 2016.

(iii). Tender No. 21608: Providing editing and upgrading services for programmes of stations, structures, sites, lines, and terminals:

The railways intend to select up to 2 bidders. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 10.11.2016.

(iv). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 11603: Supply, Installation, Guarantee, and Maintenance of the new MIV system for monitoring and selling smart Magnetic Cards. The contract is for 60 months with optional extensions of up to additional 60 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 28.12.2016.

(v). Israel Railways Ltd. RFI for a system of events management; Latest date for submission of proposals: 30.11.2016.

(vi). Tender No. 21616: Performing rescue works at Archeological Sites near railway lines. The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 23.11.2016.

(vii). Israel Railways Ltd. Tender No. 11627: Providing cognitive diagnosis services for the railways' candidate to work as well as for railways employees: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 28.11.2016.

(ix). Developing technologies.

Israel Railways Ltd. have recently published a call for developing technologies for the railways.

The railways are implementing an extensive development programme which is turning them into the transportation company with the highest growth rate in Israel and the largest infrastructure company. In order to preserve its position as a leading public transportation company in Israel an innovation center - or as it is called a "Start-Up Station" in which initiators will have the possibility to integrate the technology they developed in the railways' Beta site and check whether it is commercially viable – is to be established.

The successful technologies will have a great potential in the railways industry and particularly Israel Railways Ltd.

The Start-Up Station is open for offers in a variety of rail activities such as:

Developing applications supporting progressive sales platforms.

Improving passenger service and journey experience.

Developing location-based cellular applications.

Energy-saving technologies at passenger stations, depots, etc.

Improving track operation and maintenance.

Technologies and means of improving security, confidence, and safety of trains and at railway stations.

Technologies for improving the railways' overall safety.

Environment and air pollution.

Innovation in cargo haulage.

Other areas of daily railways activity or of the customer connected with track infrastructure development.

The destined public: independent initiators, start-up companies, universities and technical institutes who develop railway technologies and are interested in receiving access to the Beta site to check in real conditions the developed technology.

A special railways committee will check the offers and considerations will be according to the product originality and suitability to the railways needs, a potential market for sales, personal abilities, skills, and professional and academic experience of the initiator and development team, and the initiator's financial abilities.

(x). Israel Railways Ltd. call (27.07.2016) for joining the creation of a pool for suppliers for the railways regarding the Manufacture and supply of Rolling Stock Spare Parts: The contract will be for 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 10.08.2016.

(xi). Tender No. 11653: Safety Officer for operation of an office and road vehicles in service of the railways: The railways currently own a fleet of 300 vehicles and 50 forklifts and their trailers. The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 48 months. Latest bid for submission of proposals: 27.09.2016.

(xii). Tender No. 11605: Providing services of design, supply, building, operating, and maintenance of GSM-R services along lines: Latest submission date postponed to 15.12.2016.

(xiii). Tender No. 41603: Various Types of Wooden Sleepers ("Tender")

General Terms and Conditions

Israel Railways Ltd. wishes to obtain bids for:

The manufacture and supply of all of the following types of wooden sleepers, in accordance with the Technical Specifications attached hereto as Appendix A (collectively "the Wooden Sleepers"):

1. Track Wood Sleepers 2600 mm (the "Track Wood Sleepers")

2. Bearers/Crossing Timbers 2300 mm – 4900 mm (the "Crossing Timbers")

3. Bridge Timbers 250*260*2800 mm (the "Bridge Timbers").

The Agreement will stay in force for a period of three (3) years all in accordance with and subject to the terms specified in these General Terms and Conditions and the accompanying Tender Documents. ISR estimates that approximately fifty (50) Track Wood Sleepers, two hundred (200)

Crossing Timbers and fifty (50) Bridge Timbers shall be ordered during the first year of the Agreement Period. However, this estimate shall not be construed under any circumstances as a commitment of any kind whatsoever on the part of ISR, to purchase from the winning Bidder any quantity of Wooden Sleepers during any period of time.

1. Pre-requisites for Participation in the Tender (the "Pre-requisites"):

1.1 The Bidder has manufactured and supplied from 2012 and up to the final submission date (not necessarily every year) Track Wood Sleepers and/or Crossing Timbers and/or Bridge Timbers for railways in accordance with the EN 13145 standard and/or the UIC 863 standard and/or the AREMA manual of railway engineering.

1.2 All or part of the Wooden Slippers manufactured and supplied from 2012 and up to the final submission date (not necessarily every year) were preserved and treated in accordance with EN 13991 and/or in accordance with AWWPA standards.

The terms of supply and delivery of the Wooden Sleepers shall be "DAP" "Delivery at Place" (as that term is defined in Incoterms 2010, International Rules for the Interpretation of Trade, ICC Publication No. 715) Kishon Workshop in Haifa Bay (the "Site"), in accordance with the terms and the conditions specified in the Agreement. All proposals must be submitted no later than November 15th, 2016 by 13:00 (Israel time) in three separate envelopes, as specified below, which shall read Tender No. 41613

(xiv). Tender No. 21528: Building a Central Rail Command and Control Centre in the basement of the railways' general management building at Lod station: The building is to include several centres, computer rooms, a communication room, technical rooms and offices with an overall area of 3000 sq.m.; it has to be resistant against missiles, biological and chemical attacks. Latest date for submission of proposals: 03.01.2017.

(xv). RFI for providing maintenance services for the 55 Rail Cranes of Israel Railways Ltd.: The contract is for 24 months with optional extensions of up to

additional 36 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 29.12.2016.

(xvi). Tender No. 21607: Building a 2,000-car parking area and an acoustic wall at the eastern side of Acre station; Latest date for submission of proposals: 02.01.2017.

(xvii). Tender No. 116115: Delivery, installation, and maintenance services for automatic vertical storage areas: The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 96 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 12.01.2017.

(xviii). Tender No. 11536 : Providing services of development, building, installation, and maintenance for the railways' new operation system as an integral part of the railways' modernization project:

Requirements: The existing operation system is in use for more than 3 decades. The aim of the project is to replace it by the most modern system as an integral part of the railways' modernization project, in order to cover all the operation subjects for the following 15 years.

The emphasis is on the following aspects:

- Flexibility to enable performance of changes.
- Upgrading the computerization architecture.
- Improving maintenance ability by training railway employees for support and backup.

In order that the system will be able to provide a comprehensive solution, it has to work closed yet combined with several parallel systems, some of which already exist, and others are in various test phases.

The most distinctive are:

- The signalling system - ARAMIS.
- The driver safety systems - GSMR+ETCS.
- Planning of trains and their configurations - TPS.
- Planning of work arrangements and placement of drivers/inspectors/rolling stock.
- Management of marshalling/classification yards and depots.
- Interaction with driver's cab.

The supplier has to define work procedures as per ISO 9001.2008 management as well as per EN 50126, and RAMS. The instructions for performing the RAMS in the project, have been prepared by the Israeli hi-tech company Dvir Systems Engineering Ltd. who have been specializing in similar procedures for the air force and the navy. The contract is for 36 months with optional extensions of up to 120 additional months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 23.01.2017.

(xix). Tender No. 11621: Providing marketing communication and advertising services: The tender includes: crystallizing the communication strategy in all sorts of media including the digital media,

providing creative solutions compatible with strategic marketing, creating campaigns for ideas, shape design, copy, marketing contents and recommendations for the media channels, as well as managing services of purchasing and managing campaigns in the digital media.

The contract is for 12 months with optional extensions of up to additional 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 09.01.2017.

B. Israel Railways Ltd. Tenders Extended.

- (i). Request for Information for Diesel Particle Filters – extended to 15th. Nov. 2016.
- (ii). Tender 41603: Notice No. 2 to Participants: Re. Manufacture and Supply of Various Types of Wooden Sleepers. "This notice is being issued to Bidders in accordance with the provisions of the General Terms and Conditions of the Tender Documents... The Final Submission Date referred to in Section 15.1 of the General Terms is hereby postponed to November 30th, 2016, at 13:00 (Israel time)."

C. Israel Railways Ltd. Tenders Awarded:

- (i). The following local companies won IR Tender No. 21432 : Providing design and implementation management services of building and upgrading tracks, stations, and additional facilities:

- Category A - Mashik Civil Engineering Ltd.; Geocom Ltd.; Nissim Shuker Engineers & Consultants Ltd.; Gadish Engineering Company Ltd.

- Category B - Ehud Livyatan Engineering Ltd.; E.S.L. Eshel Engineering; Vaxman Govrin Geva Engineering Company Ltd.; A.D. Rahat Engineering & Management Coordination Ltd.; A.Sali Engineering Ltd.; S.A.D.G. Engineering & Construction Ltd.; Nativ Engineering Coordination & Management (2008) Ltd.

- Category C - Vaxman Govrin Stern Projects Management North Ltd.; Eitham Civil Engineering & Projects Management (1996) Ltd.; Magolin Brothers Engineering & Consultants Ltd.; Pro-S.I.A. Construction and Infrastructures Engineering Ltd.; Poran Shrim Engineering & Land Valuing Ltd.; A.Spivak Engineering Company Ltd.

- (ii). The local construction company Ben-Ari Telem Ram Projects Ltd. won the \$6,772 (NIS 26,772.3) tender No. 21529: building an overhead pedestrian bridge over the tracks at Lod station.

(iii). The local construction company Y. D. Ashush Ltd. won the \$2.55M (NIS 9.75 M) Tender No. 21512: excavation and wall works at the Lod station complex.

(iv). The local company Dr. Oren Gottfeld won the \$423,242 (NIS 1.63M) Tender No. 21522 : Rescue archeological excavation at the Akko railway station.

(v). The local construction company Olnik Company for Transportation, Earthworks, & and Roads won the \$1.5M (NIS 5.76M) Tender No. 21408 : enlarging the Cargo Terminal at Hadera West railway station.

(vi). The following local companies won Tender No. 21424: Surveys, tests, design, rebuilding, of existing and new bridges and structures: Shamir-Pozner-Brown Engineers & Consultants; P.K.C. Engineering Ltd.; Z. Zakut Engineers Ltd.; Yaron Shimoni Shakham Engineers & Consultants Ltd.

(vii). Israel Railways Ltd. have announced in their website, that the winner of the EUR 613,520 International Tender No. 41504 for the Design, Manufacture, and Supply of Road/Rail Shunting Vehicles is: Unilokomotive Ltd.

(viii). The winner of Tender No. MS/RC/2016/8 for operating a car parking are is Gal Parking Services Ltd.

(ix). The winner of Tender No. MS/RC/2016/10 for operating taxi services to/from Beit-She'an station is M.S. Beit-She'an Transportation Services (2009) Ltd.

(x). The winners of Tender No. 11628 for providing maintenance services for the railways' fuel and lubrication facilities are:

In the north: D.Amikam Metal Sub-Contracting Ltd.

In the south: Lesico Ltd.

A. TEL AVIV.

(i). TENDER 140/2016: OVERVIEW

NTA – Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. ("NTA") is a wholly government owned company authorized to promote the design, supply, construction, installation, integration, testing, commissioning, operation and maintenance of a mass transit system to be implemented in the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area, which will include up to eight (8) lines out of which five (5) are Light Rail Transit lines and up to three (3) are Bus Rapid Transit lines (the "Current Project"). On August 12, 2016, the Government has approved the Economic Plan for years 2017 and 2018. According to the Economic Plan, the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety will instruct NTA to prepare within twenty two (22) months a feasibility report for a preliminary design of a next-stage mass transportation system in the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area, including with respect to a design of a metro line connecting the northern and southern parts of the metropolitan area, and additional lines on the basis of the joint work conducted by the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety, the Ministry of Finance and the relevant planning authorities.

NTA, acting through the Tender Committee, hereby invites competent bidders to participate in the tender process according to the terms and conditions of the Tender Documents, for the preparation and submission to NTA of a detailed feasibility study report for the development of a high-capacity metro rail system in the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area (the "Metro Project") and integration thereof within the Current Project, and to provide other related services as provided, inter alia, within the Scope of Services which includes the preparation of the Metro Project's design guidelines and requirements, the scheme design, the characterization of the Metro Project's components, the environmental impact assessment, an estimate of the costs for construction and operation of the Metro Project and integration thereof with the Current Project and the existing master plan for mass transit network, the formulation of the method for implementing the different phases of the execution of the Metro Project, and all other services required in accordance with the Tender Documents (the "Tender" and the "Services", respectively).

2.2. Description of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area Mass Transit Network

For the purposes of providing the Bidders a general description of the current and planned mass transit systems in the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area, reference is hereby made to Annex I (Description of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area Mass Transit Network).

Without derogating from any of the Successful Bidder's undertakings made under the Tender Documents, the Successful Bidder awarded with the execution of the Consultancy Agreement shall be required to implement the Services taking into consideration the proposed system of metro lines

LIGHT RAIL.

and routes as provided in Clause 4.4 (Description of Proposed Metro Lines) of Annex I (Description of the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Area Mass Transit Network)...."

(ii). TENDER No. 127/2016

For the Provision of Instrumentation Installation and Monitoring Services for the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Mass Transit System - The Turkish Alignment N.T.A - Metropolitan Mass Transit System Ltd. ("NTA") is a government-owned company, appointed by the Government of Israel to promote the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Mass Transit System.

2. NTA hereby invites proposal for the provision of Instrumentation Installation and Monitoring

Services for the Tel Aviv Metropolitan Mass Transit System - the Turkish Alignment, as set out in

the Tender Documents.

3. The engagement period for the provision of the Services shall be 36 months, as set out in and subject to the Agreement. NTA shall be entitled to extend the term of the Agreement for three additional periods of one year each.

4. The Bidders are required to demonstrate full compliance with the Threshold Criteria set forth in the Tender Documents, which include the following:

4.1. The Bidder meets all the applicable requirements.

4.2. All Bids must be submitted to the Tender Box located at NTA's offices, at 26 Harokmim St.

Holon, Israel - Building A, 9th floor by Wednesday, 26 October 2016 12:00 pm (Israel time).

The Bidders are responsible for receiving a confirmation from NTA

NTA Tender No. 2016/0093: Tracing, verification, sensing, exposing, measuring, and non-destructive mapping works of Underground Infrastructures: The contact is for 24 months. Latest date for submission of proposals: 03.08.2016.

NTA Tender No. 2016/0146. Recruitment of Professional Personnel to serve as Shadow Operator for the Metropolitan Tel Aviv Mass Transit System. "NTA is seeking a Company that shall present in the Bidding Stage three individuals for the performance of the following positions: (1) Operation Manager; (2) Red Line & OCC Manager; (3) Rolling Stock Manager. All three individuals shall serve together as NTA's 'shadow operator' all as specified in the Tender Documents..... The term of engagement... is for a period of three years. NTA shall have the option at its sole discretion to extend the term of the Agreement for 3 additional periods as follows: the first option shall be for 3 years and the other 2

options shall be for 1 year each. Bids to be submitted by October 27th. 2016.

(iii). CHINESE CHOSEN.

'Metro Report International' Sept. 2016 p.53. "Finally, Tel Aviv light metro promoter NTA has signed a contract with CRRC Changchun for the supply and maintenance of 90 LRV's for the 23km. Red Line, with an option for 30 more. CAF was selected as reserve bidder, and Alstom had also been shortlisted. Expected to open in 2021, about half the route linking Petach Tikva with Bat Yam will be underground. Perhaps no other project more clearly highlights the changes in the tram world over the past 15 years. Around 2000, the first iteration envisaged a fleet of 60 Combinos, using 12-module vehicles no less than 72m long."

B. JERUSALEM.

(i). HOLIDAY SCHEDULES.

The operator CityPass has announced that during the holidays of the eve of Yom Kippur and the Sukkot holidays, when tens of thousands passengers are expected, the frequencies of the services will be significantly increased.

(N.B. This press release came with a picture of a tram but for reasons made clear elsewhere we will not be publishing it. Ed.)

(ii). JERUSALEM GREEN LINE APPROVED.

From 'R.G.I. Metro Report International' Sept. 2016 p.9: "Tenders are to be called soon for the construction of two more light rail lines in Jerusalem. The 19.6km Green Line would start in Gilo in the south, pass the Binyanei-HaUma terminus of the A1 fast line railway, then cross the existing Red Line tram route and run to Mount Scopus. There would be 36 stops and ridership is predicted at 200,000 passengers/day.

The 23km Blue Line would run from the Ramot district in the northwest, through the city centre up to Talpiot and Gilo, with branches to Malkha and Mount Scopus. It would have 42 stops and carry a predicted 250,000 passengers/day.

Work is also underway to extend the Red Line north to Neve-Ya'akov and south to Hadassa Ein-Kerem."

(iii). UNESCO OPPOSES THE CABLE CAR PLAN!

In the rather bizarre UNESCO Resolution of 13th. Oct. 2016: "Executive Board: Two hundredth session: PROGRAMME AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS COMMISSION (PX): Item 25: OCCUPIED PALESTINE: DRAFT DECISION: Submitted by: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Qatar and Sudan: 1.A Jerusalem", Paragraph 16 reads:

"Deplores the Israeli decision to approve a plan to build a two-line cable car system in East Jerusalem and the so called "Liba House" project in the Old City of Jerusalem as well as the construction of the so called "Kedem Center", a

visitor centre near the southern wall of the Al-Aqṣa Mosque/Al-Ṣaram Al-Sharif, the construction of the Strauss Building and the project of the elevator in Al-Buraq Plaza “Western Wall Plaza” and urges Israel, the occupying Power, to renounce the above-mentioned projects and to stop the construction works in conformity with its obligations under the relevant UNESCO conventions, resolutions and decisions;...”

(Incidentally, there was a previous cable-car in Jerusalem, constructed in the desperate days of 1948 to transport munitions and supplies across the Hinnom Valley to the fighters in the besieged Old City, from close to the current Cinemathèque towards the Zion Gate. It is retained as an inconspicuous memorial. There is a 'Rakevel' street off Ben Yehuda Street with a short explanatory plaque recalling this feat.)

(iv). JERUSALEM SYSTEM EXTENSIONS PROPOSAL.

From 'Jerusalem Post' 02.11.2016, by Tovah Lasaroff.

"News of the plans come amid a campaign by politicians to sway the government and Knesset to annex the city (Ma'aleh Adumim) that is home to over 37,000 people.

Transportation Minister Israel Katz said the issue was equity for all Israel's citizens. "I see Jerusalem and the greater area around it as one unit," he told Channel 2, which broke the story. "Those who live in Gush Etzion, in Binyamin, in Ma'aleh Adumim, in Beit Shemesh and in Mevaseret [Zion], must receive transportation services," Katz said.

Although there are those who say "an artificial barrier" must be placed between those who live on one side of the Green Line and the other, he said, "We, of course, do not accept this."

The Transportation Ministry provided The Jerusalem Post with a map of the new lines, which show five extensions. In addition to Ma'aleh Adumim, the train will reach the settlements of Givat Ze'ev and Geva Binyamin [Adam], both of which also are just outside of Jerusalem.

There also will be one new line that will reach Atarot, near the Kalandiya checkpoint leading into Ramallah.

The fifth line will connect Jerusalem with the nearby town of Mevaseret Zion.

The ministry said the plans are in their infancy and still have many bureaucratic hoops and hurdles to pass through before final approvals are given and work can begin.

Ma'aleh Adumim Mayor Benny Kashriel said the plan would alleviate the increasing traffic jams at the checkpoint into Jerusalem, noting that the traffic is so bad during rush hour that a trip to Jerusalem that should take only 10 minutes can take as long as an hour.

Efrat Council head Oded Revivi called on Katz to add a sixth line to the plan and send the light rail

in the direction of Gush Etzion, as well. "Thousands of Gush Etzion residents are stuck in huge traffic jams on their way to work every morning. A light rail is the ultimate solution," he said."

(vi). EMEK REFAIM CONTROVERSY.

Not all extensions are welcomed of course, and the Editor has seen several posters along Emek Refaim protesting against the plan to run tracks down the street. But in 'Times of Israel' 01.12.2016 stood: "Jerusalem City Hall announces light rail line to run on Emek Refaim St. Mayor tells worried locals Blue Line will improve quality of life.. Economy, won't harm character of German Colony neighbourhood.

"Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat gave the go-ahead Thursday for a new light rail line that will traverse one of the city's most popular shopping streets. Jerusalem City Hall announced that it will go ahead with the creation of the new Blue Line that will run from the northern neighbourhood of Ramot to the southern neighbourhood of Gilo by way of Emek Refaim Street. The new trains 'will bring many people to the street and will raise the revenues of the businesses substantially and benefit the merchants, the residents and lovers of the German Colony', Barkat wrote. The train's 'budget will allow the investment of hundreds of millions of shekels in a new appearance, while also preserving the uniqueness and appearance of the street and the German Colony,' he wrote. The German Colony was founded by German Christians in the late 19th. Century and is today one of Jerusalem's most upscale neighbourhoods, known for its architecture from the Ottoman and British eras. Emek Refaim... is known for its upscale yet quaint character. Residents of the neighbourhood have protested the planned light rail line, saying that it will ruin the area's uniqueness and lead to its commercialization.

(vi). LIGHT RAIL STABBER SENTENCED TO 18 YEARS. From 'Times of Israel' 24.11.2016:

"Subhi Abu Khalifa, 19, was sentenced Monday to 18 years behind bars for stabbing and wounding two people at a light rail station in October 2015, at the height of a wave of Palestinian attacks.

One of the victims, a 25-year-old yeshiva student, was seriously injured and taken to a hospital with a knife still buried in his neck. A second Israeli, apparently a light rail security guard, was very lightly hurt after wrestling with the attacker in an attempt to prevent him from fleeing the scene.

Abu Khalifa, from the capital's Shuafat neighborhood, was convicted in May of attempted murder, causing serious injury, and carrying a knife. Defence and prosecution attorneys agreed to ask for an 18-year prison term. The terror attack took place just after noon in October 2015 at the light rail stop near the Israel Police's national headquarters close to Ammunition Hill in northern Jerusalem."

After the stabbing, the attacker reportedly attempted but failed to steal a gun from a light rail security guard. After an altercation with the guard, the attacker fled the scene, but was pursued and caught by police motorcyclists.

115:08.

NOTES AND COMMENTS.

(i). MUSEUM PROJECTS: CORRECTION TO 114:04 (i):

Chen Melling writes. :

"No. 4720 was not built in the UK but in Egypt, probably using Belgian-made steel frames. Its current number is not its last Egyptian one but its first Israeli one, the last Egyptian number was 2375. Both numbers were in the departmental series of the respective railways. 2375 will be the number I intend to apply to the vehicle when restored as an ambulance coach, as I do not know its earlier Egyptian numbers. We do not really know whether or not this specific vehicle was used by the British Army in any way during WW1. As it was captured in the 1956 war, it certainly did not work in Israel from 1948. Its current livery is completely bogus. We have not yet decided to add any media equipment. Most of the damage to coach no. 314 actually occurred after it was brought back to IR metals in 1995."

(ii). FRANKFURT MEMORIAL.

From the blog of Hanno Loewy of the Jewish Museum, Hohenems, Austria, August 2016.

"The European Central Bank is a masterpiece of a skyscraper, following the deconstructionist design of the Coop Himmelblau architects from Vienna. It's located right next to the former and truly giant Market Hall. The Frankfurt Market Hall was an icon of modernity in itself, built in 1928 by Martin Elsaesser and functioning till 2004, when it became part of the future European Central Bank complex, which finally opened last year.

But there was a time when the Market Hall was not only delivering food—fruits, vegetables and meat to Frankfurt's grocery shops—but human cattle for transport to the East. From October 1941 until February 1945, the deportations of Jews from Frankfurt to the camps and Ghettos began here in the

market hall, where the deportees had to assemble in the basement of the building and wait for their transport. A number of "very distant cousins" of the "Hohenemser" and other Hohenems families started their last journey from here. (The Jaffés, Felix's Frankfurt-based part of his family already had left the town in the 1920s).

Last year—the same year the European Central Bank building opened—there also opened a memorial that reaches from within. Due to ECB security, visitors can only enter with special permits and elevated security standards, but passersby are drawn to the environment of the building and the story with inevitable curiosity. "What is written there?" a little girl asks her father as we walk by. To my disappointment, I was not able to follow their family discussion. I am a curious person, that's one of my "deformations professionnelle"—or the other way round: one of my weak points that put me on the track of museums."

(iii). MEISSNER PASHA EXHIBITION.

We have received information from Peter Heigl, who worked on the exhibition 'Bagdad- und Hedschasbahn' at the German Railway Museum in Nürnberg in 2005. Now, together with a great-great-grandson of Heinrich Meissner he is preparing an exhibition on this famous German engineer who did so much in the Ottoman Empire, including contemporary plans and photographs and personal papers. It is hoped to put this exhibition together professionally and to show it in Germany, in Istanbul and possibly even in Israel.

(iv). THE BURNING TRAIN.

A frightening report in the newspaper 'De Sumatra Post' of 1st. May 1931, sent in by Marc Stegeman: (Translation from the Dutch by the Editor).

"46 Persons Killed. Cairo, 29. April. (Aneta Reuter). 41 travellers died in the flames or came to their deaths by jumping from the train, while 41 persons were injured when the express train between Cairo and Alexandria caught fire. All the victims, including ten children, were natives with one exception, a French lady who suffered injuries. The engine driver was unaware that his train was on fire, with the result that the burning train ran on for several miles, before a signalman was able to warn the driver.

Cairo, 3. April (Aneta Reuter): In total 46 people were killed in the accident on the Cairo-Alexandria express and 41 injured. Many of the injured have survived despite initial doubts. The rescuers who went along the tracks looking for human remains, many of them now unrecognisable, had to fight many times with nightmare scenes. Through the strength of the flames the telephone and telegraph wires had melted so that telephone and telegraph communication has also been interrupted."

(v). THE DOVER OSTEND FERRY ROUTE.

Some time ago I was sent an article in English and French, undated but referring to recent

developments in 1986 and clearly of Belgian origin. This includes:

"The service Ostend-Dover has been organised since 1846. Indeed the first crossing under Belgian flag took place on 4 March 1846 with the 'Chemin de Fer', a paddle steamer which was also equipped with a set of emergency sails. Many rich Britons embarked at Dover with their own carriages. Often their carriages were loaded on railway waggons after disembarkation at Ostend. Sitting in their carriages they were then able to make part of their journey by rail. Afterwards they could hire horses from the post office in order to travel further on..... Already in 1836 the Brussels – Ostend railway had been inaugurated whereas in 1841 the London-Dover railway was completed. In 1873 an agreement was made with the 'Cie: Internationale des Wagons-Lits' which was created by the Belgians. Some years later it was possible to travel from Ostend by sleeping car to Berlin, Vienna, St. Petersburg and Constantinople (now Istanbul). Although at present not so many train tickets London – Istanbul may be sold, this train-ship connection does still exist."

(vi). FIRST WORLD WAR 'SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY' CONFERENCE IN ISRAEL.

The 'British Overseas Railways Journal' No. 40 (Summer 2016) of the British Overseas Railways Historical Trust, pp. 53f. has an extensive report by Nick Lera on this conference, organised by Tony Travis and held at the Edelstein Centre, Hebrew University Jerusalem, 29th. June – 1st. July 2015. This includes the Field Trips to explore remains of the military branch built into Sinai to Kusseima (see <edelstein.huji.ac.il> 'Events' for fuller details) and other relics in Israel of World War I railways.

(vii). TURKISH RAILWAY VIDEO.

A look at

<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvjyloCrrA>> brings one to a collection of interesting still shots – the video lasts almost 7 minutes and is a mish-mash with some modern and standard-gauge themes but also includes some shots well known and others less so – including the unloading of an HR boiler at Haifa, unusual 6-wheel or 4-wheel coaches on what may be the Damascus - Muzerib line, viaducts under construction, inspection trains with a 6-wheel saloon coach, a freight on the Jaffa – Jerusalem line and more.

This is followed by a Travelogue film of just over an hour - "Hicaz Demir Yolu – Belgesel" following the route Istanbul – Medina but unfortunately of very poor technical quality.

(viii). OBITUARY: RAY ELLIS.

Further to 114:09.(iii) on 19th. July John Browning wrote: "I am afraid I have some very sad news.

Ray Ellis, a long time CRC member, passed away in hospital in Brisbane last week. Ray was an expert on British owned and financed colonial railways in the age of steam and contributed articles to many

publications. He had been working on a book on the railways of Malawi (Nyasaland).

He was a true gentleman and a generous one."

David Mewes of Queensland wrote: "Ray Ellis passed away last Wednesday 13 July following an operation for throat cancer. Apparently the operation was a success and Ray seemed to be recovering well but suddenly he just gave in. A neighbour of Ray's at his home unit in Cherside phoned me a short time ago to tell me the news. To say I was shocked is an understatement. So very sad and a great loss to historical railway research and a loss of a great friend. Ray's unit was damaged by fire earlier this year and he was still living there despite the fire damage."

From Chen Melling: "I have to admit this is not a big surprise to me, as several months ago Ray wrote that he was not well lately, and since then I did not manage to contact him. I am, however, surprised to hear of the fire in Ray's home and of its consequences. Ray was indeed a great researcher and lover of railway history, and his collection concerning the railways of the Middle East is priceless. In the last decade-or-so he has also become a true friend of mine, and before his becoming ill we used to have regular phone calls and email correspondence, about railways as well as family and job matters, even delving into international politics issues on occasions. I will deeply miss him, and hope that his legacy and collection will survive his passing."

From Greg Martin: "Thank you for informing me of Ray's passing. The sudden loss of a good friend is always a shock. Ray and I exchanged information for quite a few years. His interests in the railways of Africa, the Middle East and the Far East led to him educating me about these, and I helped him by supplying information on the Great Western Railway and railways during the Second World War. As an illustration of what Ray was like, he once recommended to me a specific railway book and I responded saying I couldn't afford it due to my financial circumstances (the result of fraud and poor health). Next thing I knew he had sent me a free copy at his own expense from Australia to England. It was Ray's unselfish action that inspired me to look for similar opportunities to help others when my circumstances improved. Ray was a top man. I will miss him."

From Paul Scheller: "Waiting for his remarks on WWI Ambulance Trains - another of Ray's many interests - now these sad news. Yes, we will miss him."

(ix). DERAILMENTS IN THE 1940's.

In the 'Jerusalem Post' weekend edition of 11.11.2016 in the Magazine pp. 8ff. is a portrait of Munib al-Masri, a Palestinian billionaire. It includes:

"Masri, born in 1934, grew up in middle-class neighbourhood of Nablus with two sisters and eight brothers. His mother largely bore the burden of raising him and his siblings because his father, who was a businessman and mukhtar (local leader) died

when he was two years old. His mother made education a priority for him and his siblings, ensured that they all studied hard and completed their homework. However, Masri did not spend all his time studying indoors, and often concocted plans with his brothers to undermine the British Mandate, then the ruling power between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. "I used to place rocks along the train tracks near Nablus to derail the trains," Masri says. "I was very successful and derailed approximately eight out of every ten trains."

Derailing trains and other acts earned Masri and his brothers the reputation of naughty children among the local British leaders, who frequently summoned their mother to tell her what they had done. The governor said there would be harsh consequences if they went on like this but, unwilling to comply, Masri and his brothers continued....."

[Ed. Queries this – the line from Afule to Nablus was indeed re-opened during the war but there were hardly so many trains working it....]

(x). MESSIANIC VISIONS.

Slightly reminiscent of Herzl's 'Altneuland': In November the Editor addressed the 'A.A.C.I.' in Jerusalem and met Dr. Steve Sattler who has contributed the following enthusiastic and optimistic vision:

"The Futureactually the near future..... The Middle East and her trains.

The Great Empires of Europe regarded the Middle East some 120 years ago as primitive, desolate and neglected. The Ottoman Empire –'The sick man of Europe' was incapable of improving and upgrading their Syria/Palestine province.

Trains eventually came to Syria/Palestine [the J&J to Jerusalem, the S.O.R and the long Hejaz line] but commercial traffic was lacking and so many lines were closed by company accountants.

WWI and WW2 were able to resuscitate several train tracks and services but once war-time necessity was over many tracks became "just-history".

The State of Israel, evolving from a poor Socialist country in the 50s into a mega-Success in the 90s and then a 'gas-giant' over the last 5 years has been developing her 'train tracks' into a scientific and economical system and now transports thousands of commuters every working day.

So, What about the FUTURE?

Here is the picture for the next 25 years. [Some of this is a dream but many dreams come true and –at least–this dream is based on some degree of reality!]

I...Greater Tel Aviv will have a 6-line Metro. It will be modern, efficient and reduce significantly the 'mass' of cars trying to get into the 'State of Tel Aviv' every day.

2...The High-Speed electric train connecting Tel Aviv, the airport and Jerusalem. Bridges, tunnels and ultra-modern stations.

3...Jerusalem will have a 3-line Light Rail with some 70 stations. The red, blue and green lines. Parts of central Jerusalem will be closed to cars!

4... A 'up-in the air' Cable-Car from the Greek Colony to the Mount of Olives, with stops in the Old City and the Kotel will reduce significantly the 'car-jams' in/around the ancient Old and Holy City. (We can let the SWISS build this.)

5...A freight and passenger line from Ashdod port to Eilat, with branches to Hotel complexes, Aqaba, and Petra. [The Suez Canal has become too expensive for many ships. Shipping containers from Ashdod to Eilat by rail is cheaper.]

6...A major passenger [and freight] line from Haifa; Tel Aviv, skirting Gaza, and then across the top of the Sinai to Cairo.

Tourism will be a major economic 'crane' in many Middle Eastern countries and a good link from Beirut?, through Israel to Egypt by dedicated Hotel-trains will be a success!

Even further into the future a 'Round the Whole Mediterranean Sea' train service, by Hotel-trains, covering 16 countries and through the new Gibraltar Tunnel will be a "tourism-wonder".

7...A Haifa - Bet-Shean - Amman train [Freight and Passengers] will bring a 'happier' connection for Jordan to a port and tourism.

8...A routine train service from Haifa to Carmiel, Safat, Tiveria and then Metulla is an almost reality. [Only tunnels and snow to deal with.]

9...A politically correct and useful train service –on pillars –in a straight line North-to South system from 'Afula –Nablus' in the North, through Ramallah, Jerusalem, Beth-Lechem and then 'Hebron-Beersheba'. This line, built cheaply on concrete pillars can serve the mixed residents of the major towns/cities across the hill-tops of the central Israel.

10...Light rail services [or megaBuses-as seen in Haifa] will serve all the large cities.

11...In the mean-time – until Syria settles down - a routine train service from Tiveria across the top of the Kinneret, up the Golan Heights up to Kunetra! [Later on---a train service to Damascus.]

12...Finally - a scenic, passenger and freight line from Tzemach southwards, through Jericho, Ein Gedi and Arad and on to Beersheba. This line will later on be extended to Petra, and then South to Medina and Mecca. The millions of Haj Pilgrims will be happy to sail into the new Haifa-Pilgrim terminal, and then by train on the Emek Service, to Bet-Shean and then onto Mecca by air-conditioned Hotel trains.

13...OK....One more Dream. A Chunnel Service from TLV to Cyprus.

Each one of these dreams is an almost reality.....

Just a little money, some planning, engineering and then the Commuters/Tourists/Pilgrims will come flocking! Dr. Steve Sattler, Jerusalem. November 2016."

(xi). THE LMS 'JUBILEE' LOCO No. 45623 'PALESTINE'.

A Letter in 'Black Eight' issue 138, Autumn 2016 (p.28) by Steve Leyland adds the following information: "I can confirm that the left-hand nameplate still exists - I purchased it privately on 13.97.2006 but let it go just over three years later via Talisman Railwayana Auctions... I still have however the speedometer cover off the engine from its days at Central Wagon Co., Ince and a replica nameplate as a leftover from before I got the real one. No other nameplate has gone through the auction houses specifically for railwayana in the last 30 years or so; likewise the smokebox numberplate, but of course both may still be in collections."



A. AFGHANISTAN.

(i). CHINA SERVICE.

From 'R.G.I.' 07.09.2016. "The first through freight train from China was formally welcomed into the northern rail port at Hairatan on September 7, although it was reported to have arrived a day earlier following a 3,000km transit taking 14 days.

With the locomotive carrying a headboard proclaiming Central Asia Train: Nantong – Afghan – Hairatan, the 45-wagon train had been dispatched from Nantong in eastern China's Jiangsu province on August 25, carrying 84 containers.

The welcoming ceremony was attended by the former governor of Balkh province, Mohammad Ishaq Rahguzar, and the Chinese ambassador to Afghanistan.

Azarakhsh Hafizi, Head of International Relations at the Afghan Chamber of Commerce & Industries, said 'the inauguration of a cargo train service linking China to Afghanistan marks the revival of the ancient Silk Road'. As part of China's One Belt, One Road initiative to improve Asian transport connectivity two trains are scheduled to run each month on the route via the Alatau Pass, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Noting that rail offered a 15-day transit time compared with two or three months by sea, Hafizi felt the service would 'open up new opportunities for Afghanistan's commerce and economic activities'. Government spokesman Javid Faisal pointed out that the rail link would reduce the country's dependence on Gwadar port in Pakistan.

There are hopes that traffic levels will increase sufficiently to support the operation of a weekly train by the end of this year. The westbound services are expected to carry Chinese-made mechanical equipment, IT products and clothes to the land-locked country, returning with Afghan products such as marble, saffron, dried fruit and carpets.

Construction on the cross-border rail link between Khaaf in Iran and Herat in western Afghanistan has reached the border; a ceremony was held on September 7 to mark the start of tracklaying on the Afghan side."

(ii). THE LAPIS LAZULI LINE OPENS.

From R.G.I. 28.11.2016: "A line running 85 km from Atamyrat in Turkmenistan to the Ymamazar border crossing point and 3 km onwards to Afghanistan's border facilities at Akina was officially opened by Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani who ceremonially tightened a golden bolt on November 28.

The 1,520 mm gauge line forms the Afghan end of the Lapis Lazuli Corridor which is being developed to improve freight links from Central Asia across the Caspian Sea to the Caucasus, Turkey and Europe.

OTHER MIDDLE EAST RAILWAYS.

The first freight train on the new line comprised 46 wagons carrying flour, grain, cement, urea and sulphur. There is a fuel terminal near the border, and Turkmenistan anticipates that the line will carry exports to Afghanistan which currently go by lorry including oil and gas, cement, grain and transit traffic including humanitarian freight. Afghan exports include fruit.

Initial discussions for the railway project began in 2008, and a framework agreement was signed when Afghanistan's then President Hamid Karzai visited Ashgabat in May 2011.

Afghanistan lacks indigenous capabilities for railway construction, and Turkmenistan agreed to take on responsibility for surveying, designing and constructing the entire route, with the section within Afghanistan to be considered as a donation to the country.

Construction was launched by the presidents of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan with an elaborate ceremony in Atamyrat on June 5 2013.

The civil works were undertaken by staff from construction train No 2 from Amyderya, with the track laid by staff from Mary. The formation has been raised several metres above surrounding ground to protect the line from flooding, and shrubs planted to mitigate the effects of drifting sand. Two bridges were built in co-operation with Ukrainian company Altcom, one 256m long at 15 Years of Independence Lake and one 363m long over the River Karakum. A ceremony at Akina on October 30 marked the laying of the final rails.

A planned continuation of the line would extend it 35 km to Andkhoy, the first significant town in Afghanistan. The line also forms the first section of the proposed TAT Railway corridor from Turkmenistan via northern Afghanistan to Tajikistan. In the longer term this could link up with other projects to provide a route between China and Iran.

The new line is the second cross-border railway between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, after a short Soviet-built line to a freight terminal at Towraghondi north of Herat. There is also a line from Uzbekistan to Mazar-i-Sharif, and construction of an Iranian-backed 1,435mm gauge line to Herat is underway. Pakistan is undertaking studies for long-planned extensions of its network from Chaman to Spin Boldak and for a line from Torkham to Jalalabad."

B. TURKEY.

(i). BURSA TRAMS.

(i). From R.G.I. 17.06.2016: "Bursa Mayor Recep Altepe attended the start of passenger tests of new light rail vehicles on the city's Bursaray network on June 15.

The high-floor Green City LRVs have been supplied by local manufacturer Durmazlar. In early 2015 Bursa Metropolitan Municipality placed an order for the LRVs along with 12 Silkworm trams, which started testing in October."

In addition we can state here that Durmazlar displayed at Inntrans in September 2016 a prototype of its new 'Anatolian' tram, which is 100% low-floor (350mm above rail level), bi-directional with capacity for 50 seated and 240 standing; length is 33m and width 26.5m; weight empty is 41.5 tonnes and top speed is 70km/h.

(ii). ESKISEHIR TRAMS.

From 'R.G.I. Metro' 05.09.2016. TURKEY: "Škoda Transportation announced on September 5 that it is to supply 14 trams capable of catenary-free operation to Eskişehir. They are to be delivered within 19 months of signing the contract, which is worth €26m.

Škoda beat Turkish manufacturer Bozankaya to supply trams to Turkey's only metre-gauge tram network. The low-floor ForCity Classic trams will be equipped with batteries to allow off-wire operation on a planned 1 km section that will have no catenary. The unidirectional trams will be 30m long with capacity for 276 passengers. They will have four sets of double doors and two single doors, and will be equipped with air-conditioning."

Škoda had previously supplied 72 trams to Konya, of which 12 are equipped for catenary-free operation."

(iii). ANKARA METRO LINE M4 COMMENCES.

From 'R.G.I. Metro Intl. 02.09.2016.' "Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım and Ankara Mayor Melih Gökçek attended a ceremony to mark the start of test running on the city's metro Line M4 on August 31. Testing on the northern section of the line is expected to continue for at least 2½ months. Construction of the 10.6km underground line started in 2004. The route linking Gazino in the north with Kızılay in the south will have 11 stations, including an interchange with Line M1 at Atatürk Kültür Merkezi. Test running is limited to the 9.2km northern section from Gazino to Atatürk Kültür Merkezi, with nine stations. CRRC Zhuzhou is supplying a fleet of stainless steel bodied trainsets as part of a 2.5bn Yuan contract signed in 2012 covering 342 cars for use on M2, M3 and M4. Being built at CRRC's Sincan plant near Ankara, the M4 trains draw third-rail power at 750V DC and have a maximum speed of 80 km/h. They will run at minimum headways of 90 sec. In the longer term Line M4 could be extended to Esenboğa International Airport in the northeast of the city, although a heavy rail link to the airport is also being studied. The planned Line M5 could also link Kızılay with Esenboğa."

(iv). BOZANKAYA TRAM IN KAYSERI.

From 'R.G.I. Metro' 03.10.2016: "Kayseri Mayor Mustafa Çelik and Bozankaya CEO Murat

Bozankaya boarded a Bozankaya tram in Kayseri on October 2 for the start of passenger-carrying tests. Bozankaya delivered the first of 30 trams to Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality on March 23. This forms part of a €42M order placed in August 2014. The 100% low-floor Bozankaya trams are being built in Ankara with traction equipment from Traktionsssysteme Austria and Medcom. The bi-directional trams are 35m long and have five sections."

(v). ISTANBUL METRO LINE 4 EXTENSION:

From 'R.G.I. Metro' 10.10.2016: "A 4.5km extension of Istanbul metro Line M4 was inaugurated at 06.00 on October 10, running southeast from Kartal to Tavşantepe with intermediate stations at Yakacık - Adnan Kahveci and Pendik. Line M4 is now 26.2 km long with 19 stations. The end-to-end journey time from Kadıköy to Tavşantepe is 38½ min. A further eastern extension from Tavşantepe to Sabiha Gökçen Airport is planned to open in 2018. This would add 7.4 km and four stations. Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality plans to grow the city's metro network to 400 route-km by 2019."

On 23.11.2016 'R.G.I. Metro Report'. The first driverless metro trainset for Istanbul metro Line M5 was delivered to Çakmak station on November 21.

CAF is supplying 21 six-car trainsets with Mitsubishi electrical and automation equipment under a €119M order placed in June 2014. The 132m long sets consist of four motor and two trailer cars, and have capacity for 1,622 passengers. Maximum speed is 90km/h and power will be drawn from overhead wires at 1.5kV DC. The fleet will be stabled at a depot near Dudullu station, shared with the future Line M8 and accessed by a 2.8km branch.

Line M5 is under construction between Üsküdar and Çekmeköy on the Asian side of the Bosphorus. The 16.7km line with 16 stations will run entirely underground and is due to open next year. Construction of the €564m project began in March 2012 and is being undertaken by Doğu Construction Group.

Bombardier is supplying its Cityflo 650 CBTC signalling, and the line has a design capacity of 55,000 passengers/h per direction. The end-to-end journey time is expected to be 27 min.

(vi). SAMSUN TRAM – SECOND PHASE EXTENSION OPENS.

From 'R.G.I. Metro' 10.10.2016: "Samsun Mayor Yusuf Ziya Yılmaz attended the opening ceremony for an extension of the Samsun tram line on October 10. The 7 km south-eastern extension from Balçıkçı to Tekkeköy extension will enter regular revenue service within a week. It forms the second phase of a 12 km extension from the previous southern terminus of Gar; the first phase opened as far as Balçıkçı on August 27. Samsun's only tram line is now 27 km long."

And in 'Metro Report' 23.11.2016: "The second Durmazlar tram arrived in Samsun on November 17

after a journey by road from Durmazlar's factory in Bursa that began the previous day. Samsun Metropolitan Municipality ordered eight five-section trams for Durmazlar in 2015 under a €12.3m contract. The first arrived in the city in late October. Required for services on the newly extended tram line, the vehicles are 31.8m long, 2,650mm wide and 3.3m high with capacity for 290 passengers."

(vii). CARRIAGES FOR ISTANBUL – BAKU SERVICE.

From 'R.G.I. 30.09.2016: "AZERBAIJAN: The first of 30 coaches which Stadler Rail is building for use on overnight services on the future Baku – Tbilisi – Kars – Istanbul route was unveiled at InnoTrans 2016. Deliveries are scheduled to start this year and run until mid-2017.

The coaches may initially be deployed on ADY domestic services or routes to Russia, as the launch of the Istanbul route is dependent on the much-delayed completion of the cross-border link from Turkey to Georgia.

The order placed by national railway ADY in June 2014 marked Stadler's entry into the Azeri market, and includes the supply of spare parts as well as staff training. There is an option for a further 70 vehicles.

The 160km/h coaches are assembled from extruded aluminium sections and meet the GOST and UIC requirements. The DB AG/Rafil Type V adjustable wheelsets supplied by BVV will enable them to run through from the 1520mm broad gauge used in the former Soviet Union to the 1435mm standard gauge in Turkey. Gauge-changing equipment is to be installed at Akhalkalaki near Georgia's border with Turkey, and according to Stadler it will take around 5 min for an entire trainset to change gauge at low speed without needing to stop. The wheelsets are also compatible with other variable gauge systems along the borders of the 1520 region.

The 30 vehicles will operate as three 10-car sets each offering a total of 257 berths. All the cars have redundant air-conditioning systems designed for temperatures from -40°C to 45°C, controlled-emission vacuum toilets and an emergency generator which can provide power for 24hr.

The doors are fitted with retractable steps suitable for multiple platform heights between 200 and 1,100 mm, with sliding elements to cover the gap between the train and the highest platforms.

The vehicle on show in Berlin was one of the three first class cars, which have eight twin-berth compartments each with a toilet and shower unit. The 18 second-class cars will each have 34 beds mostly in four-berth compartments, with one toilet and one shower. The three composite first/second-class cars will have a 10 two-berth compartments, with en suite toilets and showers in the first-class and family compartments.

There will be three accessible cars each with four four-berth second-class compartments, a train manager's compartment and a spacious compartment for disabled passengers. These cars

will be fitted with a UPL-300 wheelchair lift supplied by Swedish company U-Lift, which Stadler commissioned to develop an all-electric design to avoid the need for hydraulic fluid on the night trains. There will also be three 28-seat dining cars."

(viii). SAMSUN – KALIN LINE MODERNISATION.

From 'R.G.I.' Sept. 2016 p. 26: "Siemens is to supply ETCS Level 1 signalling, including Trackguard Westrace electronic interlockings, point machines, level crossing and telecoms for the modernisation of the 380km line from Samsun to Kalin."

(ix). AUSTRIA – TURKEY THROUGH TRAIN STOCK.

From 'R.G.I.' Sept., 2016 p.27: "Villach – Edirne operator 'Optima Express' has awarded Bulgaria's Dryanovo rolling stock plant a 10-year contract to repair up to 2,700 vehicles, including couchette and restaurant cars and car-carrying wagons." (Wikipedia informs that Optima Express GmbH runs through trains up to three times weekly from Villach Terminal 2 to Edirne Station, 1,400km in 35 hours, an average speed of 40km/h due to the frequent border controls and loco changes necessary en route; rolling stock is of Bulgarian BDZ origin and the car wagons are covered bi-level vans.)

(x). IZMIR METRO AND TRAM DELIVERIES.

From 'R.G.I.' Sept: 2016. p.22: "The first two of 19 five-car metro trainsets that CRRC is supplying to Izmir have left the factory in China and were due to arrive at the Turkish city at the end of August. Ordered in March 2015 under a TL 192M contract, the first of the new trains are due to enter service in May 2017. Deliveries are to be completed by the end of next year. Their entry into service is to coincide with the commissioning of upgraded signalling by Bombardier. This will enable the current peak headways of 4 min. to be brought down to 90 sec.

Meanwhile, the first of 38 trams that Eurotem is supplying for the two lines under construction has arrived at the city. The five-section low-floor tram is 32.2m long and 2650mm wide with capacity for 285 passengers including 48 seated. The air-conditioned interior features LCD passenger information screens, dynamic route maps and CCTV."

(xi). SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS.

From 'Fahrplancenter News' p.26:

"The TCDD has revived passenger traffic over the European section between Kapikule (border to Bulgaria) and Halkali on the city boundary of Istanbul. There is a daily train pair departing Kapikule at 07.10, arriving Halkali 11.38, departing 18.00, arriving Kapikule 22.27. The train halts at all 14 intermediate stations.

Further reconditioning of the railway network is continuing at a fast pace. In May 2016 the rebuilt section from Karabük to Zonguldak was reopened to traffic. On 14.02.2016 the 30km line Izmir – Torbali was opened as a part of the new Izmir S-Bahn system. With this the 'IZMIT' system has now reached a length of 110km. At present works are

continuing between Selcuk and Bergama, which will mean the network reaching a total of 187km and a daily traffic of 550,000 passengers. Within the scheme for the construction of a new railway from Kars to Georgia and Azerbaijan the opening of a new freight logistics terminal in Kars was celebrated.

Following a bomb attack on the line Van – Tazu (Iran) rail traffic in the direction of Iran is suspended until further notice."

(xii). TURKISH METROS FOR BANGKOK.

In 'Eisenbahn-Revue' 7/2016 p. 360: A consortium of the Turkish vehicle manufacturer Bozankaya and Siemens has won the tender for supply of 22 4-car Metro trains for the Elevated system in the Thai capital of Bangkok. Siemens is responsible for the development of the trains and will deliver the bogies, driving and braking systems as well as the reserve-emergency motors. The trains will be built at the Bozankaya works in Ankara. In addition the German supplier is responsible for maintenance of the trains for the first 16 years.

(xiii). KOMBIVERKEHR TO TURKEY.

From 'Eisenbahn Revue' 7/2016 p. 365. The Logistics company Kombiverkehr is expanding its network around the harbour of Ambarli situated west of Istanbul. Practically all maritime container traffic from and into Turkey passes through this central transfer terminal. Until now Kombiverkehr was only present in some other ports in the Asiatic part of Turkey. Involved are transports by rail and ferry, which between Germany and Turkey are conveyed through the Italian port of Trieste."

(xiv). TURKISH WAGONS IN AUSTRIA.

An item in 'Eisenbahn-Revue Österreich' 8-9/2016 p.411 refers to a freight train running every two weeks from Eskisehir via Kapikule – Svilengrad – Ruse – Giurgiu – Curtici – Lökösháza – Hegyeshalom and the Westbahn to Hochfilzen in Tirol, conveying Magnesit in TCDD bogie Tadns swing-roof covered hopper wagons. The empty wagons return sometimes as an own train, sometimes attached to other freights.

(xv). VELARO DELIVERIES.

The Velaro TR trains from Siemens in Krefeld for Turkey are transported through Austria and a photo in 'Eisenbahn-Revue' 8-9/2016 p. 375 shows set 9801 061 at Salzburg Hbf. in 16th. June 2016.

Siemens won in 2013 the contract from TCDD for delivery for initially seven 8-car high-speed sets 'Velaro TR' for use under 25kV/50Hz; in 2015 a further ten were ordered. They are intended for the 300km/h new lines Ankara – Istanbul and Ankara – Konya. The second order was worth 400M Euros and includes a maintenance contract for three years. The trains are prepared at the works in Krefeld, although the Siemens works in Graz provides the bogies. The sets are then hauled on their own wheels, with a match van, from Krefeld through to Turkey.

(In 'Eisenbahn-Revue Schweiz' 4/2016 p. 186 was a report and photo of two intermediate trailer

coaches which on 10th. February were being shunted out of the Wind Tunnel Climate Test tunnel at the Rail-Tec Arsenal centre in Vienna.)

(xvi). TRAMWAY COMPONENTS.

From 'Metro Report International' Sept. 2016 p.66: "CEE Elektrik has awarded Powerlines Products a contract to supply overhead electrification components for two tram projects in Turkey. Powerlines is to supply 500 GRP cantilevers that will form part of the overhead line electrification that Powerlines is supplying for the line in Izmir, due to open next year. Powerlines is also supplying overhead electrification equipment, including 1,400 GRP cantilevers, for use on the tramway now under construction in Izmir. This will be operated with a fleet of Eurotem trams using TSA traction motors. TSA is also supplying motors to the trams that Eurotem is building for Antalya."

(xvii). NEW HIGH-SPEED STATION FOR ANKARA.

From 'R.G.I.' 31.10.2016: "National railway TCDD opened a dedicated high speed station in Ankara on October 29, with the inauguration celebrations attended by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım, a former transport minister.

Comprising three island platforms with six running lines, the station has been built adjacent to the capital's existing main station, which is to remain in use for conventional and suburban trains.

The station was constructed in two years at a cost of €214m under a build-operate-transfer model. A Cengiz-Limak-Kolin consortium was lead contractor and will manage the station for a period of 19 years and 7 months.

TCDD reports that the station will be able to handle 50,000 passengers per day. It is served by the nearby Maltepe and Ulus metro stations, while the M4 metro line which opened in September, is to be extended to the new hub from Atatürk Kültür Merkezi.

Among the non-railway features of the eight-storey station are a 134-room hotel, 200 apartments for rental and a car park with spaces for 1,900 vehicles. In total, the station covers 194,000sq.m.

TCDD Tasimacilik runs high speed services from Ankara to Gebze, east of Istanbul, and to Konya; the Turkish government plans to complete 4,000 km of new main lines by 2023; these will be a mix of fast mixed traffic routes and purpose-built high speed infrastructure."

(xviii). ANTALYA EXTENSION.

From 'Metro Report International' Sept. 2016, p.7. "Regular services on an extension of the Antaray light rail network in Antalya started on July 14. The 15.4km extension from Meydan to Expo 2016 has a 2.4km branch to the airport."

C. DUBAI.

(i). METRO EXTENSION.

From 'R.G.I. Metro' 07.09.2016: "Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum laid the foundation stone for the Route 2020 project to extend Dubai metro's Red Line at a ceremony on September 5. The 15km branch will start at Nakheel Harbour & Tower on the existing Red Line, then run on 11.8km of viaduct with stations serving The Gardens, Discovery Gardens and Al Furjan. The stations at Jumeirah Golf Estates and Dubai Investment Park would be on a 3.2km underground section, before the terminus at Expo 2020 site.

Trial operation is expected to start in the fourth quarter of 2019, with passenger services due to begin on May 20 2020, five months ahead of the opening of the Expo. The journey time from the Expo site to Dubai Marina is expected to be 16 min. Roads & Transport Authority had awarded the contract to build Route 2020 in June to the Expolink consortium of Alstom, Acciona [Spanish] and Gülermak [Turkish]. The 10.6Bn Dirham [€2.6 Bn.]contract includes the supply of 50 trainsets, of which 15 are needed for the new line and 35 to increase capacity on existing routes. Thales will provide railway systems.

Route 2020 will have capacity for 23,000 passengers/h per direction. Initial ridership is expected to be 125,000 passengers per day, rising to 275,000 by 2030. RTA expects that 35 000 passengers will use Expo station each weekday and 47,000 per day at weekends, making up one-fifth of the forecast number of visitors to Expo 2020. The metro extension forms part of RTA's strategy to increase public transport modal share from 15.3% to 20% by 2020."

From 'R.G.I. Metro Report International' Sept. 2016 p.9: "Construction is scheduled to start this year, with opening planned for May 5 2020. [Note the different date to that given above!] ... An extension of the line to Al Maktoum International Airport is planned for the future."

'Eisenbahn Revue' 8-9/2016 p.410 added: "The existing Metro network, some 75km in length, was built by a Japanese consortium. Alstom has already delivered trams to the UAE capital."

(ii). TRAM EXTENSION PLAN.

'R.G.I.' Sept. 2016, p.40 "Dubai's Roads & Transport Authority has called tender for a feasibility study on extending the city's Al-Sufouh tram route."

D. JORDAN.

RAILTOUR POSTPONED TO MAY 2017. This from the organiser, Iain Scotchman on 13.09.2016:

"Disappointingly, bookings to date are currently only 50% of the number required for the tour to be viable, this despite receipt of sufficient intentions to book prior to booking forms being distributed. With no further bookings in the last week, it is clear that we will not attain the required number for the tour to go ahead. In the light of this, an early decision

has been made to postpone the tour until spring 2017.....

Details from: isco@btconnect.com

Then on 21.11.2016 came better news:

"The new dates for the tour at 10-15 May 2017. The train will comprise restored and modernised Jordan-Hejaz Railway (JHR) stock hauled by their locomotives. The requested use of Aqaba Railway Corporation (ARC) locomotives has been refused due to their incompatibility with the JHR coaching stock and non-authorisation for passenger train use. Details of the tour are given, although final details and confirmation are still awaited from JHR. A supporting hotel / air conditioned coach transfer / packed lunch package will be offered, provided by an Amman-based travel company..... Unfortunately costs for the tour have increased considerably due both to strengthening of the Jordanian Dinar and the US\$ against Sterling post-Brexit.... 'Train Only' cost is GBP 1,200 with a full supporting hotel / coach transfer / packed lunch packages for GBP 550 or GBP 440 for single or twin rooms."

The basic plan is to work southwards – 09.05 – arrive & Hotel; On 10.05 Amman and steam-hauled train to Al-Mafraq and back; On 11.05 steam-hauled train to Al-Jeza, then Diesel onwards to Al-Qatrina; (Overnight at Petra); 12.05 Al-Qatrina by Diesel to Ma'an, including visit to Phosphate branches at Al-Abyad and Al-Hasa. 13.05 from Ma'an to Wadi Rum and ARC Ma'an depot and by train to Phosphate loading terminal at Aqaba. 14.05 Wadi Rum to Aqaba Port and back. 15.05 coach transfer to Amman Airport. If at all interested contact Iain on the address above as soon as possible.

E. IRAN

(i). TEHRAN METRO EXTENSION.

From 'R.G.I.' Metro 19.09.2016: "The Tehran Metro now serves a total of 104 stations, following the opening to passenger traffic on September 14 of Shahid Ghoddoosi station on Line 3. Line 3 runs for a total of 37 km from the southwest suburbs of the Iranian capital to the northeast. It is the longest metro route in the Middle East, as Dr Ahmadi Bafandeh, Managing Director of Tehran Urban & Suburban Railway Co, pointed out at the official opening of the new intermediate station. Located at the Qasr crossroads, Shahid Ghoddoosi is open to traffic from 05.30 to 22.30 and is served by a train every 15 min."

(ii). NEW UNDERGROUND TRAINS.

From 'Fahrplancenter News' No. 55 (Mai-Okt. 2016) p. 20: "For the further expansion of the Tehran Metro Iran will require a large number of further trainsets; this means a possible total of some 2,000 vehicles, which would probably be built by Stadler; an 'Expression of Interest' was signed in May 2016. The contract would have a total volume of around \$US2 Billion, albeit it still needs to be considered in which currency this would be paid since there are still some restrictions on business in US Dollars with Iran."

On this a similar item: STADLER METROS FOR IRAN?

In 'Eisenbah-Revue' 7/2016. p. 354. "Stadler has signed an option for the delivery of up to 2,000 Metro carriages to Iran. The company confirmed a report in the Swiss 'Handels-Zeitung' but refused to comment on the extent of the contract. The document is not binding but was signed in mid-May at a Rail Fair in Iran."

(iii). SIEMENS LOCO CONTRACT.

From 'R.G.I.' 04.10.2016: "Siemens has signed a contract to support the modernisation of the rail network and supply local industrial group MAPNA with components for the assembly of 50 Safir diesel-electric locomotives at its factory in Karaj. The contract was signed on October 3 during an official visit to Iran by Germany's Vice-Chancellor and Minister for Economic Affairs & Energy Sigmar Gabriel. It follows Siemens' signing of a memorandum of understanding for co-operation with Islamic Republic of Iran Railways on January 6.

'As Iran seeks to modernise its railway infrastructure, Siemens is proud to support these ambitions', said Siemens management board member Siegfried Russwurm. 'We are pleased to work with our partners at RAI and MAPNA Group and look forward to contributing to the country's sustainable economic development, of which rail is a key component.' In 2008 Siemens and MAPNA signed a technology transfer agreement covering the production of 150 ER24PC IranRunner diesel locomotives, the first 30 of which were delivered from Germany."

(iv). CHINESE LOCO CONTRACT.

From 'R.G.I.' Sept. 2016 p. 27: "Rail Pardaz has ordered 15 passenger and 15 freight diesel locomotives from CRRC Ziyang."

(v). THROUGH LINKS TO INDIA.

In the 'OSJD Bulletin' No. 2/2015 ('Organisation for Cooperation Between Railways') (acquired at Innotrans) is a fulsome article (p. 19f.) about a visit by an OSJD Committee delegation to Turkmenistan in March 2015. The Minister of Railway Transport of Turkmenistan welcomed the delegation "and provided information on the main activities of the Railways of Turkmenistan, having noted their successful work in the field of freight and passenger transportation. He recalled the opening of a new 825-km long railway line, which along the Caspian Sea connects Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Iran and cuts by more than 1,000km the distance from Russia to Turkmenistan and Iran, opening further opportunities for connection with Pakistan and India." (See next item).

From 'Eisenbahn Revue' 8-9/2016 p.409. "The Russian State Railways RZD are promoting the expansion of freight traffic on the North-South axis via Azerbaijan into Iran and further through Pakistan by rail to India, with shorter transit times than by sea. In early June a congress was held in Sochi with the State Railways of Azerbaijan and

Iran and an agreement signed. One aim is to increase container traffic from Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf to Moscow – although there has not been as yet any through rail link along the Caspian Sea coastline. This however will soon change – with Russian finance the missing link between Astara via Rasht to Qazvin should be ready by 2019. Another aim is to create a link east of the Caspian Sea via Turkmenistan. Here the RZD is involved in the electrification of the Iranian stretch."

And from 'R.G.I.' on 8.12.2016:

"Tracklaying on an 8.3km extension of the Azerbaijan Railways network from Astara station to the River Astarachay, which marks the border with Iran, was completed on November 7.

The 1,520 mm gauge line will cross the border on an 82.5m long bridge which has been under construction since April, and then continue a further 1.7km to the Iranian town of Astara. Here there will be transshipment facilities with a 164 km long 1,435mm gauge line which is under construction to link Astara with the Iranian network at Rasht. This is expected to open next year, completing the north-south rail corridor from Iran's ports to Russia and Europe via the west side of the Caspian Sea. The first direct freight service from India to Russia along the corridor ran in late September and early October, with the sea and rail journey between Mumbai and Moscow taking 23 days, including road transport for the 180 km between Rasht and Azerbaijan."

(vi). ESFAHAN METRO EXTENDED.

From 'Metro Report' 03.11.2016: "An extension of Esfahan's sole metro line by 800m south from Shohada to Takhti opened on November 2, along with three more intermediate stations at Baharestan, Golestan and Shahid Chamran on the existing route. This takes Line 1 to 12.5km with 11 stations. Most of the line is underground with a 0.5km section at Kaveh station on the surface. A further southern extension of Line 1 from Takhti to Soffeh is under construction and will add 10 stations. Imam Hossein station would provide interchange with the future 20km east-west line Line 2 from Zeinabieh to Khomeinishahr, while Azadi station would be the terminus of the planned Line 3 which would run west to Eslamabad. A 22km northern extension of Line 1 from Qods to Shahrinshahr is being considered, and a further 16km southern extension from Soffeh to Baharestan is planned."

F. QATAR.

(i). TUNNELLING COMPLETE.

From 'R.G.I. Metro' 27.9.2016: "Qatar Rail celebrated the completion of tunnelling for the Doha metro on September 25, when tunnel boring machine 'Mshaireb' broke through at the site of the future Hamad International Airport station.

In total, 111 km of tunnels have been bored for the first phase of the metro since July 2014. The 21 TBMs in use have been certified by the Guinness Book of Records as the largest number of TBMs operating simultaneously on a single project.

Opening of the first three lines is expected in late 2019."

(ii). DOHA METRO MANAGEMENT.

From 'R.G.I.' Sept. 2016 p.27: "QR has extended a contract for a joint venture of Hill International (80%) and ASTAD (29%) to provide project management services for the Doha metro Green Line. The 30-month deal is worth an estimated US\$43.1M."

(iii). TRAMS READY.

From 'Metro Report International' Sept. 2016, p.48. In an article on low-floor tram designs - "The 19 GT6N Avenios for Doha's Education City light rail line have been completed, but most are still parked at Wildenrath as construction of the 12km catenary-free line is taking longer than expected. Extensive tests have been undertaken to optimise the Sitras HES energy storage system. This is energy efficient and simple to operate, but perhaps needs a more elegant design for the overhead pick-up at stops so that it blends into an urban landscape."

In 'Today's Railways Europe' 252 (Dec. 2016) p. 25 David Haydock noted: "Siemens is supplying 19 3-section Avenio trams to the Qatar Foundation for a network of five lines totalling 11.5km serving the 'Education City' university campus... The trams are distinguished by two things. The first is that there will be no overhead wires, the trams running on power from batteries and supercapacitors. A small pantograph over each roof is raised at each stop where there is a roof conductor rail. These are also fitted in tunnels. In addition, braking energy feeds into the batteries. The second feature is the interior, which is very light and luxurious by European standards. Almost all the trams have now been built and the first eight are now in Doha."

G. SAUDI ARABIA.

(i). MAINTENANCE CONTRACT.

From 'R.G.I.' 27.9.2016: "Saudi Railway Co has awarded Thales a renewable one-year contract for predictive and corrective maintenance of onboard and lineside ETCS Level 2 equipment on the 2,400 km North-South Railway network. Thales said the contract builds on the relationship formed during the installation and commissioning of the equipment. The 1,486 km freight route from the Ma'aden mine near Al Jalamid to Az Zabirah Junction and Ras Azzawr port on the Gulf coast has been fully operational since November 2015. The 1,418 km passenger route from Riyadh to Al Qurayyat near the border with Jordan at Al Haditha is expected to be operational by the end of 2016."

(ii). DELAYS TO HIGH-SPEED LINE.

From 'Eisenbahn-Revue International' 7/2016 p. 358: Construction of the 450km high-speed line between Mecca and Medina is massively delayed. Rather than December 2016, it will more likely be opened in the second half of 2018. Apparently those involved had underestimated the difficulties associated with the challenging climactic conditions

in the desert. The project is largely in the hands of Spanish firms, with Talgo providing the train sets.

And from 'R.G.I.' 01.11.2016: "An agreement to end the dispute over delays and cost over-runs affecting the Haramain High Speed Rail Line could be reached in the next few weeks, following a visit by Saudi Railways Organization President Dr Rumaih Mohammed Al-Rumaih to Madrid on October 25-26.

During his visit to discuss progress with the 450km railway being built between Makkah, Jeddah and Madinah, Dr Al-Rumaih met Spain's Acting Development Minister Rafael Catalá, who succeeded Ana Pastor in July.

In May Pastor had announced that completion of the project had been put back by 14 months from January 2017 to the first quarter of 2018. This appeared to satisfy neither SRO nor the Al Shoula Consortium of 12 Spanish and two Saudi contractors responsible for the €6.7bn railway systems contract, and in September both parties agreed to the appointment of an independent arbitrator to try and resolve ongoing disagreements. The job was given to Paul Taggart, an expert in construction contract management.

After the meeting with Dr Al-Rumaih, Spain's Development Ministry said both parties had acknowledged that 'good overall progress' had been made with the project and that much of the civil engineering work had been finished. Four sections of the line are substantially complete and work is proceeding on two other sections.

The objective now is to reach an agreement between SRO and the Al Shoula Consortium on costs and the completion timescale, with SRO possibly granting another three months to the contractors. The consortium had sought to push the completion date back to early 2019.

Rolling stock builder Patentes Talgo said in September that it had delivered eight trains to Saudi Arabia, with 10 more finished and awaiting shipment. The company is supplying 35 Talgo 350 trainsets plus a luxury version for use by the royal family.

The Haramain scheme has faced a number of difficulties since the railway systems contract was signed. These include allegations of delays to the civil works which were let under separate contracts, windblown sand in the inhospitable climate and disputes within the Al Shoula Consortium."

AGREEMENT REACHED: In 'Jerusalem Post' 20.11.2016 p.21 (from Reuters) is: "A Spanish consortium which is building a high-speed rail link... has reached a preliminary deal with Saudi Arabia to finalize the works after a series of delays and setbacks, Spain's Public Works Ministry said on Friday. The Al Shoula consortium composed of 12 Spanish companies including OHL and Indra as well as two Saudi firms had become embroiled in a dispute over payments with the Saudi government. The consortium's contract to construct and maintain the Haramain railway is valued at €6.7 billion (\$7.11 bn.) 'This preliminary deal resolves the

problems that arose on both sides during the process, clearing the way for the works to be finalized,' the Spanish government said. The Saudi government still has to ratify the agreement, a spokesman for the consortium said, but it would extend the construction period until March 2018, 14 months later than originally planned. Under the agreement, the state-owned Saudi Railways Organization is to pay the consortium €150 million in compensation for additional costs on the project."

[Interestingly only Moslems are allowed to enter the region around the Holy Cities so one wonders what role Spanish engineers and experts will be able to play. Ed.]

(iii). NORTH-SOUTH LINE PROGRESS. But from 'R.G.I.' 25.10.2016: "Saudi Railway Co is on course to launch regular passenger services on the North-South line at the beginning of 2017, the Governor of Riyadh Prince Faisal Bin Bandar confirmed following a test run from the capital on October 20.

Speaking after the trial run with a CAF-built trainset between Riyadh and Al-Majma'ah, he said services would begin 'within two or three months'. The passenger trains will operate over a 1,250 km route linking Riyadh, Unayzah, Buraydah (Al Qassim), Hail, Al Jawf and the northern city of Al Qurayyat; bulk freight trains have been running on the SAR network since 2011.

CAF is supplying a fleet of trains for both daytime and overnight services under contracts signed in 2012 and 2014. The original order covered six diesel-electric power cars and 27 coaches for day services plus two power cars and 13 coaches for the overnight trains; an additional power car and five further coaches were ordered as spares. The 2014 order added three further power cars and 17 more coaches. Each power car has two diesel engines rated at 1,800 kW.

Although Saudi Railway Co says train lengths will be variable to match demand, a standard day set will have seats for 444 passengers while the night trains will offer berths and seating for 377. The day services will operate at up to 200km/h between Riyadh and Hail with night trains running at up to 160km/h between Riyadh and Al Qurayyat. The trains will operate through areas where temperatures can fluctuate between -5°C and +50°C. Wind-blown sand is a particular hazard with wind speeds reaching 90km/h.

There are eight types of intermediate vehicle: sleeping and restaurant cars, luggage vans, car carriers and four types of car with seating in business or economy class; in each class there are special cars with prayer sections or family areas. Accommodation is also provided for passengers in wheelchairs."

(iv). SIEMENS BUILDS METRO TRAINS FOR RIYADH.

From 'Eisenbahn Revue' 8-9/2016 p.404. "Riyadh, capital of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with more than six million inhabitants, is currently constructing a 175-kilometre Metro network with

six lines. Siemens won the contract for the supply of traction current, for signalling and communications, as well as 74 two- and 4-car trains of the 'Inspiro' type. Total worth of these contracts is 1.5 Billion Euros. Operation is planned to be fully automated with trains running at up to 90km/h. They are being built in Wien with the bogies coming from Graz. Especially powerful air-conditioning and special measures to prevent ingress of sand into the bogies, transmission, braking systems and doors are necessary due to the local climatic conditions. At the time of publication one train was located at the Testing Centre at Wegberg-Wildenrath in Germany. Siemens is keeping secret the route and manner in which the trains will reach Saudi Arabia, in order to reduce risks from sprayers and other contemporary menaces! A photo shows one two-car set at Wien Kaiserebersdorf station with, according to labels in the windows, the number 2106, prepared for despatch with match wagons to Wegberg-Wildenrath. Livery is black with a red stripe over the front and roofline and grey at floor level.

(A brief reference in the 4/2016 issue p.192 stated that at this time the first train was under test at the Rail-Tec Arsenal centre in Vienna).

In 'Today's Railways Europe' 252 (Dec. 2016) p.25 David Haydock waxed lyrical on the set displayed at Innotrans: "The German company has a massive contract for 74 driverless metro trains – 26 2-car and 45 4-car – for the future Lines 1 and 2, totalling 63km out of a planned network which will total 176km. Siemens is also supplying the electrification, the automatic train control and other subsystems in a consortium with US company Bechtel and local construction companies. One of the 4-car trains was on show, meaning that all of the internal variants could be seen. The interior was designed by Siemens and French company Avant Première and includes First Class, Family Class and Single Class. As Single Class is basically for single men, there is a glass partition between them and Family Class, while there is an automatic door between the latter and First Class. Traction is... with a third rail supply."

From 'Metro Report' 07.12.2016: BOMBARDIER METRO SET DELIVERED TO RIYADH.

"Bombardier Transportation delivered the first driverless trainset for Line 3 of the Riyadh metro to the Saudi capital on November 29. Bombardier is supplying 47 two-car Innovia 300 trainsets to operate on the 40.7 km Orange Line under its US\$383m share of a US\$5.21bn contract awarded to the Arriyadh New Mobility consortium. Bombardier is part of the E&M team, led by Ansaldo STS with a US\$680m share; the consortium also includes an infrastructure team of Salini-Impregilo, Larsen & Toubro and Nesma.

Testing of the train was completed at Bombardier's Kingston site in Canada in September. The vehicles are being assembled at Bombardier's Sahagún plant in Mexico and incorporate Mitrac

traction equipment, Flexx Eco bogies and aluminium bodyshells.

As with rolling stock for other metro lines in Riyadh, the Line 3 trains have first-class, family and single accommodation. There are three double doors per car and walk-through gangways.

Construction of the 176 km metro network has been divided into three works packages, with all six lines due to open in 2019. Rolling stock is being built to the same design specifications. Siemens is supplying 45 four-car Inspiro trainsets for Line 1 and 29 two-car sets for Line 2 from its Wien plant in Austria. Alstom is building 69 two-car Metropolis trainsets for lines 4, 5 and 6 at its Katowice plant in Poland.

H. ETHIOPIA. STANDARD GAUGE LINE TO DJIBOUTI OPENED.

From 'R.G.I.' 05.10.2016. Since we have covered the Horn of Africa in the past, this item also deserves coverage: "Ethiopia's Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and President of Djibouti Ismail Omar Guelleh officially inaugurated the 756 km Chinese-built railway linking their countries with a ceremony in Addis Ababa on October 5.

'It is the first standard gauge electrified railroad on the continent built with Chinese standards and technology, and certainly it will not be the last.'



The new driverless Metro train set for Riyadh Metro, seen at Innotrans in Berlin. (Photo: Editor).

Chinese Ambassador to Ethiopia La Yifan told the local media. 'Many stand to benefit from it.'

The 1,435 mm gauge line electrified at 25 kV 50 Hz replaces the out-of-use metre-gauge railway which opened throughout in 1917. The new line is designed to China's specifications for operation at up to 120 km/h, providing a freight transit time of between 10 h and 12 h, compared to two or three days by lorry.

The line is initially being used for freight, with passenger services expected to start following three months of test running. The first freight services had actually run to a temporary unloading facility in Merebe Mermersa, 112 km south of Addis Ababa, in November 2015, when the partially-completed line and construction locomotives were

used to move wheat which the government had imported for use in areas affected by drought.

Operations will be managed by Chinese staff for an initial five years, to give time for local employees to be trained; staff have also been sent to China and Russia for specialist training.

Construction of the Ethiopian section of the route has cost around US\$3.4bn, financed 70% by China Exim Bank and 30% by the Ethiopian government.

In 2011 state railway development agency Ethiopian Railway Corp awarded China Railway Group a contract to build the 330 km Sebeta/Addis Ababa – Miesso section, and China Civil Engineering Construction Corp the contract for the 339 km between Miesso and the border with Djibouti. The 100 km Djibouti section of the route was built by China Railway Construction Corp under a separate US\$505m contract awarded by the government in February 2012.

In June 2014 CSR Zhuzhou was awarded a contract to supply three passenger and 32 freight electric locomotives for the line. Rated at 7.2 MW, these are based on proven technology, but adapted for local conditions including the 2,000m altitude difference and the desert environment with daytime temperatures of 50°C but cold nights.

CNR Dalian supplied diesel locomotives for use during construction, and wagons and coaches have also been supplied from China.

The line is planned as the first step in a wider national and eventually regional rail network. In June 2012 ERC signed a US\$1.7bn turnkey contract for Turkish firm Yap? Merkezi to build a 389 route-km line starting at Awash on the Djibouti – Addis Ababa line and running north to Weldiya/Hara Gebeya. Completion is planned for April 2018. China Communications Construction Co is building the next 220 km north from Hara Gebeya to Mek'ele under a US\$1.5bn contract. A line is also planned to run from Hara Gebeya eastwards to the port of Tadjurah in Djibouti, providing a second route to the sea."

And in 'Fahrplancenter News' No. 55 p.9: "Construction of the new standard gauge line from Djibouti to Addis Ababa is making good progress. The tracks are complete over the entire length of over 700km. In January 2016 a goods train with Diesel traction reached the capital of Addis Ababa with 3,000 tons of grain. In May 2016 the first 30 passenger carriages were delivered from China and transported to Addis Ababa and at the same time the first three electric locos came to Djibouti. Passenger and freight traffic should commence around the turn of the year 2016/17 on the whole line. The exact time will depend upon the completion of the stations; in June 2016 the station building at Adama was almost finished, although in July the road to the station and the access square were still at the phase of initial preparation.

Since April the future railwaymen from Ethiopia have been brought to Shenzhen in China for

training; the first 55 personnel – locomotive drivers, signalmen and maintenance workers – completed their training in August 2016.

In mid-2016 work began on construction of the first 35% of tracks on the 350km long line from Awash to Weldiya."

And: From 'Fahrplancenter News' p.27: The construction of the standard gauge line from Djibouti to Addis Abeba was officially declared completed on 25.09.2016. Commercial operations will begin in stages from November 2016. Of the 656km line, 115km between Addis Abeba and Adama are double track. The entire line is electrified. The railway will have 1,171 goods wagons and 41 electric locomotives delivered from Chinese manufacturers, as well as passenger carriages. Most of the vehicles have already been delivered. Each passenger train can convey 1,100 passengers and in addition to seating coaches offers couchettes and a restaurant car. The goods trains will traverse the entire line at a speed of 90km/h, the passenger trains at 120km/h. Journey times for the passenger trains, including halts for border controls and intermediate halts, should never be above 12 hours. As yet no details of the intended timetable are available. Traffic should be expanded gradually over a test phase of some six months; before the end of 2016 at least one passenger train in each direction should be running weekly.

According to reports from Diré Daoua traffic over the old metre gauge line has been steadily reduced since May 2016 and until the end of the year there should still be a mixed passenger and freight train every two weeks between Djibouti and Diré Daoua. However these facts cannot be confirmed. According to the Customs Administration of Djibouti most of the customs officials have been withdrawn from the old station of Ali Sabieh, but no more specific details to rail traffic could be given."

[It should be noted here that other entries in this magazine refer to Chinese locomotives and stock or Chinese assistance with building and rebuilding railways in Ghana, (construction of standard-gauge line near Takoradi); Kenya (construction of new standard-gauge line Naivasha – Kisumu and Kisumu – Malaba, total 369km), plus Mombasa – Nairobi – Naivasha, with expected extensions into Uganda and Rwanda and possibly South Sudan); Mozambique, South Africa (232 Diesel locos from CNR Dalian), Thailand (115 carriages)... And a note (p.7) on Angola reports that an order with General Electric in the USA for 100 new Diesel locos is currently suspended because the Republicans in Congress demand the closure of the State-owned Export-Import Bank which finances and supports such deals through credits, from 30.06.2016. Until now the purchaser pays a proportion for such deals 'up front', the Exim Bank covers the rest with a credit and the purchaser repays the Bank in instalments at low interest; the Republican Party considers this "a risk" and demands that only private banks be involved and the purchaser pays the full sum up front. The consequence would be that orders such as this for the Benguela Railway will in future also

go to China, with the loss of several thousand jobs in the USA!]

I. SUDAN.

POSSIBLE PASSENGER SERVICE EXPANSION: From 'Fahrplancenter News' p.26.

"The capital Khartoum, the State Railways SRC and the government are jointly developing a plan to use the north-south line that runs through the city for a local railway system in order to relieve the over-congested roads. There is talk of a first stage employing diesel locos on passenger trains and, should these do well, to modernise the line which would then be doubled and electrified. No more exact details are known."

J. IRAQ.

(i) 'A 'ROLLENDE LANDSTRASSE'?

From 'Fahrplancenter News' No. 55 (Mai-Okt. 2016) p.20: (Translation by Editor): The Iraq Republic Railways and the state organisation for Land Transport SCLT, which itself and sometimes with private operators runs lorry traffic, are working on a project for what is called in German a 'Rolling Road' – lorries carried by rail on flat wagons. There are several reasons for this. The security situation is still poor in many parts of the country and road traffic suffers especially from this. Lorries are often ambushed or attacked with bombs and the many control posts also slow traffic down. Substantially. Nevertheless the country depends upon the export of raw materials and the import of finished goods, and in addition transit traffic from Turkey to countries in the Arab Crescent could bring in vitally-needed foreign currency – albeit only when the above factors have been resolved. In effect there are two main north-south rail routes that are at the moment poorly used: Al Yaroubieh (border to Syria) – Mossul – Bahdad – Basra and Erbil – Baghdad – Basra. In recent years much has been invested in the rebuilding of the Baghdad – Basra line but at present regular traffic is limited to a night train each way, some suburban traffic from Baghdad Central to southern suburbs of the city, a goods train approximately daily in each direction, plus some additional trains for passengers and freight that run 'as required'. Northwards from Baghdad traffic is much less regular and Mossul and the areas north of this not reachable at all. The line to Erbil is open, but sees only limited freight traffic. As soon as the region around Mosul has been cleared of the Islamic State and rendered stable once more, the IRR and the SCLT would like to operate trains in partnership that would convey, as well as containers, lorries as this would speed up traffic and also reduce costs. There are some 1.5 Million lorry movements on the country's roads in international traffic alone and according to the Transport Ministry they cause twice as much damage to the roads than did the wars of the past twenty years! In addition the number of road accidents is very high. Carbon Dioxide pollution caused by transport forms 90%, whereas all other factors together – industry, oil production etc. create only 10%. At present the railway conveys some 1.5M tons of freight per year internally, albeit with the existing lines and locomotives this could rise to 4.5M tons. In

consequence the partners are looking for possibilities to purchase the appropriate low wagons in order to transport lorries regularly by rail. There are even hopes, should peace eventually return, to extend and run through trains to Turkey."

(ii). BAGHDAD STATION.

There are a number of preserved steam locos in and around Baghdad station, including:

- Standard Gauge 0-6-0 No. 405 (Borsig 8480/1912) plinthed outside the station;

- Standard Gauge 2-8-0 TD class No. 1429 (NBL 24740/1941, ex WD 8F No. 547);

- a Metre Gauge Sentinel shunter at plinthed at the workshops;

See

<http://www.andrewgrantham.co.uk/iraq/steamlocomotives/>

This Metre Gauge loco however seems to be a new addition, the most recent Google Earth image dates to 11/2010 when it was not yet there.

K. EGYPT.

HUNGARIAN INVOLVEMENT IN NEW CARRIAGES.

From 'Eisenbahn-Revue' 8-9/2016 p.404: "The Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto visited Cairo in early June to discuss the involvement of the renationalised Dunakeszi Workshops (DJJ) in the ordering of 700 new passenger carriages for the Egyptian railways. The agreement, supported by a credit agreement from the Hungarian Export Bank, is worth some 126 Billion Forints, i.e. Some 400 Million Euros. The firm Ganz also signed an agreement for the delivery of bogies worth some 9M Euro. Details of the contracts were not given.

Prior to this there had been other complex negotiations whereby a purely Hungarian deal did not come to fruition; instead Russia won its aim to make the deal with Egypt and Hungary is involved in the form of a Joint Venture, which is not limited to this Egyptian deal.

L. SYRIA.

(i) FREIGHT TRAFFIC RESUMES.

This is a bit of a surprise entry, but a passage in R.G.I. 12.12.2016 under 'World Freight' : "It is reported that services on Syria's 65 km coastal line between the port of Tartus and Jableh have been reintroduced after repairs supported by Russia. This is expected to reduce transit time by a half compared to road haulage, and significantly increase capacity. The next section of line towards Latakia is also to be rehabilitated, and there are plans to reinstate the line to Homs."

(ii) 1960's DIESEL RAILCARS.

SGP built 'on spec' a bogie diesel railcar in 1960 which became Abmot VT10. ÖBB were not

interested, but in 1967 Syria purchased seven as AB4 1T to 7T. In 'Eisenbahn Bilderalbum Nr. 8' by Alfred Horn p. 188 is a photo of a test run of T7 on 25/7/1967 on ÖBB tracks.

115:10.

M. EURASIA RAIL FAIR 2017.

This will take place in Istanbul and visitors are expected from Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Libya, Qatar Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (!- there are no railways here) Turkmenistan, Turkey. Exhibitors will include from Iran and Turkey. From the website:

"Eurasia Rail Exhibition which is the 3rd. biggest rolling stock exhibition in the world also has the distinction of being the only exhibition in its field in Eurasia Region. Eurasia Rail which will be organized for the 6th. time in 2016 is the key international platform to bring together the sector giants with professional visitors under one roof. The exhibition not only determines the pulse of the sector in Eurasia Region but also the gateway to the development of existing relationships and new collaborations. The conferences and seminars which take place concurrently with the exhibition shares the industry knowledge and experience at the senior level.

Up until 2023, in our country:

- \$350 billion of investment to be made to the transport sector (45 billion dollars to be allocated to the railways).
- 3,500km high-speed, 8,500km fast rail line and 1,000km conventional line to be achieved totalling 13,000km of railways to reach a total of 25,000km of railways.
- Planning to increase 1% share of rail passenger transport in the transport sector to 10% and 4.4% of freight transport to 15%.
- Achieving 'National Train Project' as the first national train implementation in 2018.
- Liberalization of Turkish State Railways to allow more rapid production mechanism.
- Budget planning of \$500 billion in the next 10 years for rail investment projects in Eurasia region and neighbouring countries.

In 2015 there were: 6,268 visitors from 68 different countries, 274 exhibitors from 26 different countries; 30 professional conference speakers from 12 different countries. More details under www.eurasia.eu.

N. MIDDLE EAST RAIL CONFERENCE 2017.

This conference takes place 7-8th. March 2017 in Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre, UAE. From the Website (www.terrapinn.com/exhibition/middle-east-rail/index.stm): "Over the last eleven years Middle East Rail has worked in sync with the industry to develop the revolutionary ideas, incredible technologies and game changing partnerships needed to fund, design, build, operate and maintain the railway of the future. As the industry has evolved, so have we. Over the past few years we have transformed from a small conference focussing on GCC rail projects to one of the world's biggest railway shows, hosting over 8,000 attendees and covering projects from across the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and South Asia. Highlighting new railway lines in the GCC, upgrades in North Africa, new cross-border corridors in Central Asia and vast railway investments across South Asia – there is more content than ever before at Middle East Rail 2017.

With the effects of low oil prices subsiding, new projects, extensions, upgrades and improvements are back on track. Operators are looking to source the new technologies in partners for 2017 during 20 hours at networking opportunities."

See also: [Middle East Rail](http://www.terrapinn.com/exhibition/middle-east-rail/index.stm)
<marketing@go.terrapinn.com>

Plaque on bridge see article right.....



TURKISH RAILWAYS IN WORLD WAR ONE.

From: "Review of Turkish Asiatic Railways to 1918" by William R. Stanley, published in the 'Journal of Transport History' Vol. VII No. 4, 1966/1970.

The entire article is worth reading but here are some extensive excerpts, which I find interesting for providing military context to the wartime events in the Hedjaz and Palestine:-

"During the First World War the railroads of the Ottoman Empire were inadequate for the tasks demanded of them. No true railway system existed, but rather a series of often fragmented single track lines of several different gauges, The Ottoman Empire was indeed in decline, but no-one dared to give it the coup de grâce. A prevailing belief of many was that if the Empire could itself implement adequate reforms in the cultural, economic and political realms, it could attain the necessary internal strength to provide it with a sufficiently strong voice among the European states.... The Empire was hardly a Turkish state. Non-Turks in the immediate pre-war years at least equalled and likely surpassed in numbers the Turks themselves. Not only were there many Arabs but also considerable numbers of Greeks, Armenians, Macedonians, Kurds, Jews, Circassians and Levantines interspersed throughout both Anatolia and the Empire. Control over this realm was implemented from Constantinople in several ways. First, the Sultan claimed the badge of spiritual leader of Islam. When other appeals to the people of the Empire caused little stir, an appeal to the faith of the majority of its inhabitants would at least evoke some response. Participation of Muslims, including those outside the Ottoman Empire, in contributing the necessary funds for the construction of the Hedjaz Railway points up the strong bond of religion.

The earliest known proposals for building a railway in the Middle East were made in 1831 by an English Army officer, P. R. Chesney. He suggested three possible routes for connecting the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean, all of which visualised the coast of the Levant rather than Constantinople as the western terminus, thus allowing for connections which would utilize the British maritime position. Discussion on the relative merits of these and other schemes led to the organisation of the Euphrates Valley Railway Company in 1856, but the company failed because of its inability to raise the necessary capital for financing of such an ambitious scheme. In 1872 the question was referred to a Parliamentary commission

which approved the construction of a railway, but the idea was dropped in favour of one by which Great Britain purchased shares in the Suez Canal in 1876.

The oldest and for many years the most important railway in western Anatolia, the British-built Smyrna - Aidin line with branch connections, was opened to traffic in 1866; other British companies held the concession for the Mersin - Adana Railway in Cilicia and, for a time, the Haidar Pasha (Constantinople) - Ismid line. French capital built and controlled the paralleling Smyrna - Cassaba railway.

Germany was no less interested in the Ottoman Empire, and had had instructors training the Turkish Army since the 1870s. Although the Sultan had tried to counter-balance German influence by appointing a British admiral to train his navy and French Army officials to train the national police, the dominant European influence upon the Empire increasingly emanated from Berlin. In 1899 Sultan Abdul Hamid awarded the concession for constructing a railway between Bagdad and Konia to the Deutsche Bank. This concession had been eagerly sought by British and French financial interests but objected to by Russia on political grounds. In order to avoid an international incident the Deutsche Bank invited French and British participation in the project. French financiers were already involved in the Ottoman Bank and were eager to enlarge their participation in the Bagdad project. The French government, though, was reluctant to antagonise Russia. At the same time, English capital was waiting for official permission to invest in the project, but British public opinion was manifesting strong anti-German feelings which, in turn, caused the Government to go slowly in this matter. Prevailing official opinion in London was that the railway would eventually be constructed with or without English support.

Russia however, presented a difficult problem. She asked for the exclusive right to build railroads in the Black Sea Basin and its hinterland (to be defined by Russia), as insurance against railroad construction by others in that section of Anatolia. In subsequent negotiations, Russia offered to drop her demands "...if the Turks would cancel the German [Baghdad] concession and promise never to grant another railroad concession in Asia Minor." Finally, in 1900, the Ottoman Government signed a convention with Russia giving her exclusive rights to build railroads in the Black Sea Basin. By 1911 however Russia had abandoned her opposition to the Bagdad scheme and actually planned to undertake railway construction in Persia so that a tie-in could be made with the Bagdad railroad. In April 1914 Turkey granted a concession to the French for the construction of several lines in northern Anatolia and Armenia, with eventual connections contemplated with projected German-financed lines. Trebizond on the Black Sea was to be connected with Erzurum and, by a more roundabout route, Van was also to be connected. Other Black Sea ports to be provided railways in this scheme were Samsun, Ineboli, and Eegli. War, of course, prevented any of these concessions from being consummated.

The Turkish General Staff, constantly aware of the menace of Russia, desired above all else that a railroad be built towards the frontier between the two countries, for a war with Russia was a possibility that always had to be contemplated. Failing to achieve construction of a direct line to the Russian border, the Turkish military subsequently decided that no part of the projected Konia-Baghdad line should be placed less than ten miles from the Mediterranean. Their reasoning was that Turkey would have to insure the protection of the railroad from the guns of potentially hostile ships, since she had no fleet to speak of, and little hope of controlling her Mediterranean coastline in case of war, especially war with a maritime power.

..... Once at war, the Turks were committed to defend the territorial integrity of their empire, and if possible expand it, hopefully at the expense of Russia. This rendered the already poor transport system all the more inadequate. ... Even when track had been laid, differences in gauges among the various lines proved to be nearly as serious a problem as not having railways at all. ... The Turkish Merchant Marine was constantly subject to attack, and not even the Sea of Marmora was immune. During the Dardanelles Campaign British and French submarines engaged in extensive actions in this body of water, and their operations almost entirely severed the sea communications of the Turkish Army and impeded their supply by roads along the Marmora shore.

Lack of fuel for running the railways seriously handicapped the Turkish military effort. Under peacetime conditions the coalfields at Eregli near the Black Sea Coast of Anatolia would have provided an ample supply of this fuel. In time of war with Russia, however, the Black Sea was not necessarily safe for the movement for Turkish ships - an important consideration since there were no rail and only indirect road connections to the coalfields. Except for a brief period of Turkish naval supremacy on the Black Sea when hostilities began, Russia generally was able to place her ships close to the Anatolian coast with minimal regard for the Turkish Navy. The cargoes of the few ships which escaped destruction by the Russian fleet, and the lignite deposits near Constantinople and Rodosto, were hardly sufficient for the coal needs of the city of Constantinople, not to mention the railroads and other sectors of the economy.

The first Russian naval attack against the coal loading port of Zonguldak took place in November 1914. The results of this raid were negligible and in late December of the same year a second, more powerful attack took place, during which an unsuccessful attempt was made to sink blockships at the harbour entrance. In early 1915 a Russian blockade was begun by pickets of fast destroyers patrolling close inshore, while a squadron of larger ships stood by 50 or 60 miles offshore. During the blockade Zonguldak was bombarded more than 25 times; each time the Turks repaired the damage. Transport between the mines and port could be halted or diverted with the approach of Russian ships, while the pitheads, power stations, and other installations, were hidden in valleys invisible from the sea. This

blockade lasted until the Russian revolution in March 1917.

Since Russian naval operations became increasingly successful in cutting Turkey off from her own coalfields, coal, then, had to be obtained from Germany. Direct rail connections to Germany were dependent upon Turco-German relations with Bulgaria, and unhindered railroad shipments of goods were difficult until Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in 1915. Even when railway connections were more firmly established with Germany, Turkey did not receive enough coal, since it had to compete for transportation space with other necessary war materials. Only the northern Anatolian railways could obtain coal for their own use; south of Bozanti wood was used exclusively. Fuel difficulties were serious. At the outbreak of war there were two coal-ships in Haifa which supplied the fuel the Turks used for the military build-up for the first attack against the Suez Canal. When this supply was exhausted, German military advisers urged the Turks to open abandoned coal mines in Lebanon. This coal supply, however, was not only insufficient, but also had a high sulphur content which proved injurious to steam locomotives. The Turks had to fall back upon wood fuel which reportedly diminished their engine power by 40%. General Liman von Sanders, head of the German Army mission to Turkey and commander-in-chief of the army group in Palestine, noted the seriousness of the fuel problem in the following report to Berlin, dated 1. August 1918:

'The procurement of wood for the railroad in Syria and Palestine became more and more difficult, because during the past few years the supplies anywhere near the railroad had been used up, and because the means of transportation for bringing the wood from a distance were scarce. When the Army Group detailed numerous detachments from the depot regiments for the procurement of wood, the greater part of the men deserted within a week, frequently assisted by the rebellious civil population. Toward the last it became necessary to cut down the olive plantations in Palestine and even use the vines to feed the locomotives.'

There is some question whether petroleum had been introduced to the Turkish railways by the time war began. As early as 1911 it was reported that the Anatolian Railway Company had decided to use oil as fuel in its locomotives. The changeover leading to the conversion of 75 locomotives was to have taken three years. One might conclude then, that although oil may have been introduced to the Turkish railways prior to the war, it was used only slightly, and once hostilities began was probably not used at all, because of the difficulties in obtaining and transporting it.

Throughout most of the war the Hedjaz line and the railways in the Levant were never directly connected with the Anatolian railway. Tunnels through the Taurus and Amanus mountains were uncompleted, necessitating the use of mountain roads between rail-heads. Twelve tunnels were required to cross the Taurus; the Amanus chain was no less a problem. It was not until January 1917 that the last tunnel through the Taurus was opened and narrow-gauge track laid, and it was September

1918, one month prior to Turkey's leaving the war, before this track was converted to the standard gauge used on both sides of the mountains.

Thus the Anatolian track south of Konia – the principal supply route for the armies in the Levant and to a lesser degree those in Mesopotamia - was constricted by the lack of a continuous passage through the mountains. The strategic significance of these breaks in rail transport was duly noted by von Sanders in a 1916 report to General Ludendorff:

'Since the beginning of the campaign the proper authorities have not given due weight to the idea that the only communication, the life nerve, for the four armies leads through the Taurus and Amanus Mountains, and that all available labour should be set to work there in the first place.

Had this been properly appreciated, the railroads from Angora to Sivas, the railroad to Diarbekir [Baghdad line], and other great works would not have been begun before the transport ways over the Taurus and Amanus had been securely established for all the requirements of the four armies.'

Had these mountains been pierced prior to the war, and had there been more adequate communication to the Caucasus front, the Turks would have been able to interchange troops and reinforce their several military fronts with greater facility. On the average it required two months for troops to move from Constantinople to Baghdad, forty days to the end of the Baghdad line.

At the outbreak of war the Baghdad line had been constructed as far as Harran. In May 1916 it had been completed as far east as Ras-al-Ain, a town roughly midway between Harran and Nesibin. Before the end of hostilities this line was extended to a point approximately 30 miles east of Nesibin. Simultaneously with construction from the west, work was commenced from Baghdad north to Samarra, a town upstream on the Tigris River. Between Samarra and the railhead east of Nesibin there remained a gap of approximately 280 miles. In this uncompleted stretch, earthworks for the rails were built between the western railhead and Mosul, and the route was completed all the way to Tekrit.

..... At the beginning of hostilities the nearest railway to the city of Erzurum, main Turkish bastion in eastern Anatolia, was at Angora (Ankara) approximately 440 miles to the west. A narrow-gauge line, extended east from Angora to Yozgad during the war, reduced the 'rail-less' distance to 325 miles. A northward railway extension from Nesibin, on the Baghdad line, to Diarbekir, 150 miles south of Erzurum, was completed after the war began. Continuous rail connections by this route could not have reduced supply problems to any appreciable extent until the completion of the Taurus and Amanus tunnels.

Roads in eastern Anatolia were generally in poor condition and their utilization adversely affected by Russian naval control of the Black Sea..... The Russians... predicated their campaign on railways and constructed narrow-gauge military lines from Sarikamish to Erzurum and from Trebizond southward,

once these places had been captured in February and April of 1916, respectively.

The Hedjaz line was the only communication available to the Turks for maintaining their hold in the Medina area once hostilities began, with the British controlling the Red Sea and their allies the desert. Policing of the railway and the retention of their Medina garrison by the Turks deprived the Palestine theatre of badly needed reinforcements. Had military grounds been the only consideration, the Turkish line of defence in the East Jordan sector should have been drawn back abreast of the southern shore of the Dead Sea. That this was not done can be attributed to the political and religious interest of Turkey. The precarious situation of the Turkish troops in Medina was not unnoticed by the Germans nor by the Turks themselves. Defence of the 535 miles of railway south of Maan, exposed as it was to Arab attacks which increased in frequency and effectiveness, must have been heartbreaking..... Liman von Sanders took the position that the protection of the Hedjaz railway under existing conditions was an almost impossible task and in 1918 made several attempts to have the Medina garrison evacuated and the railway south of Maan abandoned. [By now reduced to five or six battalions, the garrison was cut off after January 1918 but held out until three months after the Armistice!]

Anglo-Arab operations confirmed the impracticability of maintaining the railway. Their initial strategy was predicated upon harrassing trains but still permitting the Medina garrison to stay alive as a fighting force. The Turks would then be compelled to devote a significant amount of their energy and meagre resources to keeping the Hedjaz railway in operation. The British wished to leave the railway working, but only just working, so that the Medina garrison might feed itself at less cost to the British than if they were prisoners in Egypt. The surest way to limit the line without killing it was by attacking trains. There were 73 stations between Damascus and Medina including major repair depots at Dera'a, Maan, Tebuk and El Ala. Between Tebuk and El Ala – 210 miles – water for the small posts along the railway had to be supplied by the trains themselves, thus adding to their already heavy burden..... Turkish railway defences were directed from Maan and Tebuk, where 7,000 and 5,000 troops respectively were reportedly stationed. In addition, garrisons were posted in block houses at the smaller stations, but even these troops were unable to prevent periodic interruptions of the line. The final break in the line south of Maan came in May of 1918, when a raid on Maan destroyed the remaining stock of extra rails - a raid which was part of a series of attacks resulting in the destruction of 25 railway bridges.

The Turkish railways south of the Taurus Mountains, while beyond range of naval gunfire, were susceptible to interdiction by a seaborne military force. In December 1914 the British landed shore parties in the Gulf of Iskanderun for the purpose of blowing up bridges and derailing trains, South African General Smuts even suggested 'the landing of three divisions at Haifa and the interception

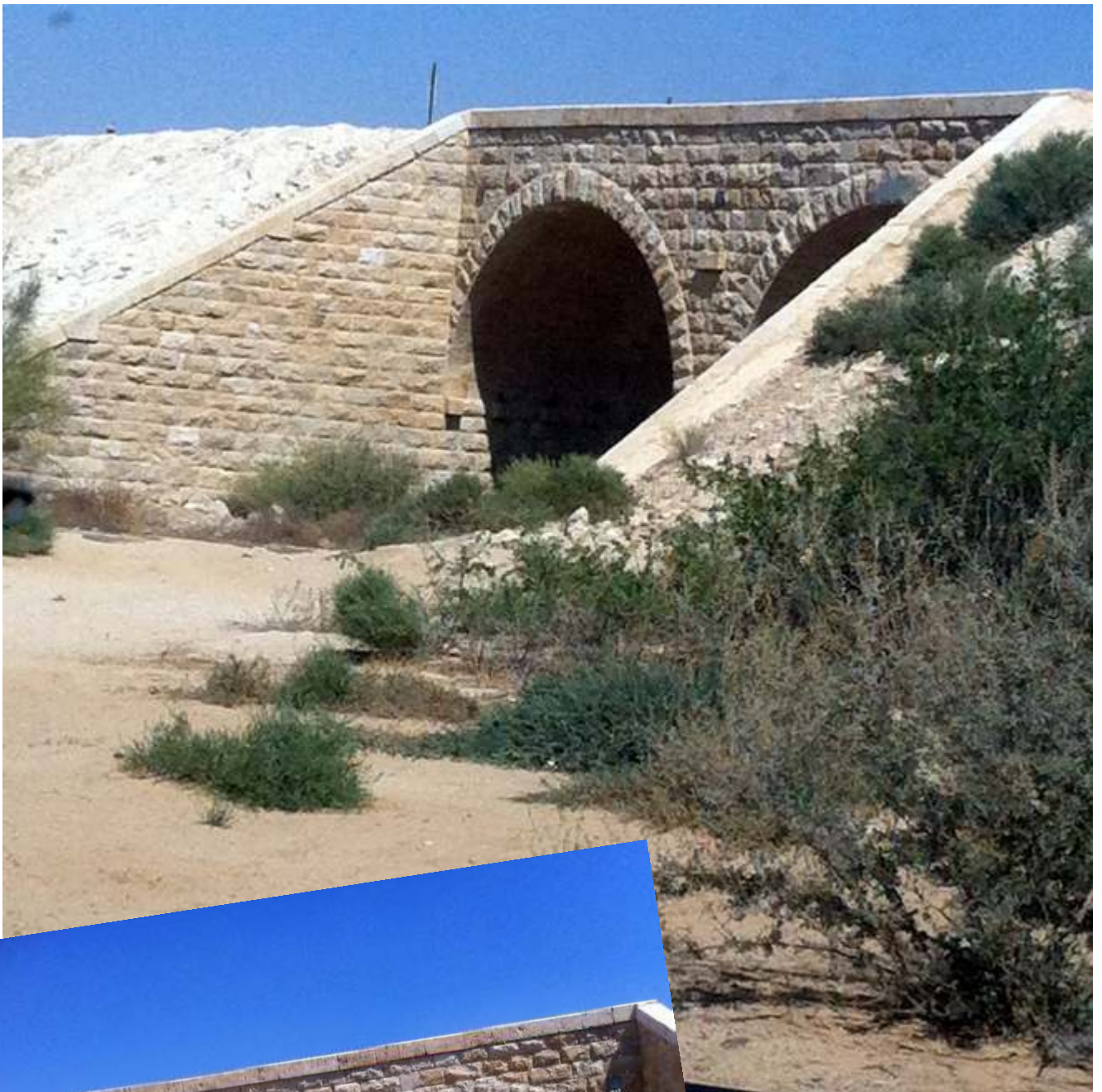
of the railway; if troops were not available on a larger scale for Alexandretta.'

'The lines south of Aleppo to Syria, Palestine and Hedjaz never reached a really effective state during the entire war... Rolling stock was lacking everywhere'. Rayak and Dera'a were the two most important railroad centres south of Aleppo. North of Rayak the lines were standard gauge, while westward to Beirut, and to the south, the gauges were narrower. This difference in gauge limited the interchange of rolling stock and necessitated costly cargo and passenger transfers at Rayak. Dera'a, situated east of the Yarmuk Valley, was the sole connection between the Palestine railways and the Hedjaz, Anatolian and Baghdad lines. Early in the war the Turks began construction of a 1.05m line... from El Affule south to Beersheba and later to the Sinai Peninsula as far as El Auja. Construction of the Beersheba railway was pushed forward by Djemal Pasha who, like many of the Turkish leaders had a fixation on attacking the Suez Canal and Egypt. This line encompassed a portion of the French-built Jaffa-Jerusalem metre-gauge railway from Lydda to Wadi Sarar. Because of the shortage of iron ties, the first 12 miles of the Jaffa-Jerusalem line were dismantled, as well as the entire 65-mile French-built line from Damascus to Mezerib (which closely paralleled the Hedjaz line between Damascus and Dera'a).

The railway situation south of Damascus was becoming desperate. Mining of the roadbed and destruction of locomotives had become so prevalent that 'travelling became an uncertain terror...At Damascus people scrambled for the back seats in trains, even paid extra for them The engine drivers struck.' During the final retreat from Palestine in September 1918, the railroads were hardly able to function. Liman von Sanders wrote: '...I left Dera'a on September 22nd by rail.... about ten kilometres north of Dera'a our journey was interrupted by a foot march, because a stretch of several kilometres had been destroyed by the demolition of rails and bridges.' Two weeks later troop trains were left standing at Hamah (north of Damascus) because of a lack of locomotives and of water for the engines. The railways in Palestine and Syria finally broke down completely during the Turkish withdrawal of September-October 1918....."

This issue of HaRakevet has been produced in England by Steve Waldenberg, CPS Airedale on a new desk top publishing programme following the installation of a new computer running Windows 10. Unfortunately the previous software would not run on Win10, hence the change. We are sorry if the new layout differs from previous issues, but there was no alternative!

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The Turkish Railway Bridge at Ezuz, Western Negev, in 2016. An amazing construction bearing in mind it was built in a hurry in wartime conditions as part of the Ottoman thrust into the Sinai - and it is still standing a hundred years later, with an information plaque adjacent. Photo by Yosef Sa'ar

115:11.

THE JERUSALEM MODEL PROJECT.

Here are two pictures of a massive new model of Jerusalem being constructed by 'Mathov Design Ltd.' in Lod, for display in a new tourist project at Times Square, New York - entitled "Gulliver Gate", a display of the whole world! Six teams from around the world were commissioned to construct models and Gad Mathov's company is responsible for models of Jerusalem, the Kaaba in Mecca and the Pyramids in Egypt. The models were to be shipped to New York in mid-December.

These illustrations show the new station at Jerusalem (at present still under construction) and the Jerusalem tramway - we presume the TRAXX loco and double-deck coach are not intended for regular operation here! For more details contact mathov@mathov.co.il or www.mathov.co.il

