After one month of operations, at the end of August 2012 HKX issued a press release with patronage statistics. It indicated that tickets for many trains had been sold out, and that average seat occupancy on services varied between 70 and 80 % and around 25,000 passengers were carried, this figure averaging around 190 per train. No services were cancelled, and 98 % of trains arrived at their destinations either on time or having accumulated delays of up to 15 minutes. There were no further such press releases, but later announcements indicated that passenger numbers had stabilised at around 25,000 per month, train occupancy has stabilised at between 60 % and over 90 % (depending on day and time of travel), many passengers are people who have not used trains before, and that time passengers have become regular travellers.

The only announcement concern- ing financial issues was the one given when describing the start-up of opera- tions, stating that the 2012 turnover was likely to be between 2 and 3 mil- lion EUR. But at present it is not possible to assess what the commercial success of the service has been so far.

As we reported in R 4/12, pp. 64 - 65, HKX started with one train pair per day on Mondays to Wednesdays, three trains on Thursdays, three pairs on Fridays and Saturdays and five trains on Sundays. Most services were pro- vided using rakes of four Class Amz"" carriages, built in the 1970s and designed for express services, on hire from DB Netz and Ostdeutschland (DB), and another Velia Verkehr subsidiary. The Thursday to Sunday frequency increase was possible thanks to the use of one six-car rake of push-pull Marschbahn stock, hired from Velia Verkehr subsidiary Nord-Ostsee- bahn (NOB). This rake is hauled by another of the Europrinters. It has low floor accommodation interior and multi- purpose areas for large items of lug- gage and bikes, but being designed for local services, it has rather basic seating for a long journey.

HKX’s trains are operated under OLA’s licence. HKX requests its train paths from DB Netz. CLA, in addition to providing the motive power, supplies the drivers, train managers and train maintenance, the latter realised at the Husum EWG (Eisenbahn-Werkstatt), which is owned by NOB. Initially HKX employed a workforce of around 40. Each train is staffed by two or three sta- teurs.

Journey time from Köln Hbf. to Hamburg-Altona is about 4 h 05 min for 450 km, only a few minutes slower than that offered by DB’s InterCity services and slower ICE services. HKX trains are limited to a top speed of 160 km/h, whereas the DB IC services can reach 200 km/h. However these trains are routed via Dortmund and Bremen, a slightly longer route than that followed by HKX trains. HKX originally planned to serve Sägehorn, a suburb of Bremen, but this was not possible at first, since infrastructure upgrades were in progress in that area during the summer and autumn. Hopes were engendered of incorporating a stop at Sägehorn from the December 2012 timetable change, but so far this has not materialised.

There are usually eight intermediate stops on HKX services, and a ninth, Hamburg-Dammtor, was made by some of the Thursday to Sunday extra trains. But Hamburg-Dammtor has now been eliminated from the 2013 HKX timetable altogether.

The operator’s main difficulty would still appear to be centred on rolling stock. There have been some improvements, and some less positive developments. A variety of different car- rage types are used, and it still looks as though the entry into service of the HKX rakes of vehicles formed of ex-CBB Class 4010 trains - the operator’s original hope - is not likely to occur in the near future.

To increase the size of the carriage fleet, HKX envisaged hiring some vehicles from Tobias Richter (a former Regentalbahn director, who is now head of National Express Rail’s German office), these originating from services of the Flex Verkehr Aktiengesellschaft, a privately run venture that operated Padborg - Flensburg - Hamburg services in 2003. Currently, these carriages are still being prepared for HKX at NETINERA Werke Nord in Neustrelitz and it is hoped to have them available soon.

Though being only a provisional measure, the ALEX first class cars in progress, which only have 50 seats and are there- fore very roomy, have been accepted well and helped to give HKX a good image among those passengers using them. But the low seating density of these carriages might also result in passenger numbers and the revenue obtained being probably lower than the envisaged receipts for these short- ened trains. But by around early November 2012 the reliability of this stock declined rapidly and defects started being discovered, too frequently for the various defects have had to be taken out of the rakes for attention, and this results in shorter trains, and reduced seating capacity.

HKX was forced to seek yet more supplementary stock. For a few weekends in November and December 2012, one or two Desiro ML EMUs were hired from Koblenz-based operator trains regio Deutsche Regionalbahn. The latter has a fleet of 17 of these on hire from Alpha Trains for operation on the Mittel- rheinbahn network and some are sur- plus to requirements at weekends. Yet more trains have appeared on 10 November 2012, when just one double deck carriage was hired from Railpool. This was coupled into rakes of ALEX stock and its capacity is the equivalent of that of two ALEX carriages. It was planned to use this vehicle mainly between
Railsonance

Two ex-Class 4010 carriages being moved by low-loader from Poznań to Délitzscht on 8 December 2012, pausing for a rest in a lay-by.

A Huge New Home For FV-Dosto EMUs

A new 123 million CHF depot to house the FV-Dosto EMUs (see R 5/12, p. 32) is currently being built at Zürich-Herdern. The depot hall will be 420 m long, accommodating one kilometer of tracks and a covered floorspace of 13,000 m². Equipment will include cranes, roof-level platforms, high staging, catwalks, WC emptying equipment, warehousing and staff facilities, and sushi-like. The roof will be equipped with 4,000 m² of photovoltaic panels. The depot is in a prominent location, and will be seen by thousands of train passengers each day on a busy main line. Both SBB and the city council were keen to ensure that the huge building is even more cramped than that of the Marschbahn stock. Less important, but also playing a part, is the diversity of the fleet, which would entice rail tourism and camera-toting railway enthusiasts, but it is questionable whether this characteristic is effective to woo the average travelling public, who would generally be looking for a strong corporate image, both in terms of train type and livery, clearly distinguishing HKX trains from those of the incumbent DB and other operators.

While the Desiro ML units were an interim measure, it is hoped to retain the double deck carriage for a longer period of time. Moreover, once Toba luses and Class 4010s are ready, it is hoped to step up service frequency, possibly by February 2013, but no date has yet been officially announced. At present the trains formed of ALB stock are still being topped and tailed by Taurus, this being necessary because at the terminus there is insufficient time between arrival and departure for a locomotive to run round the rake of stock and attach it to the train on its own. While at Hamburg-Altona run-rounds are virtually impossible, at Köln Hbf. it was initially hoped that they should be feasible, but in the end they were not. Things will not improve in this respect when the former Class 4010 stock enters service, because it will not be permitted to use the driving trailers for their designed purpose.

HKX stated initially that it would first attract a regular passenger base and then implement slight fare increases. So far, fares have remained, on average, at the same level as in the summer. The operator’s reservation system shows in December 2012 fares of between 18 and 98 EUR (between 0.05 and 0.15 EUR/km) for the run from Köln to Hamburg - the same as during the summer. A single fare of 23 EUR can be obtained by booking about two days in advance, and choosing a day of the week when passenger numbers are generally lower. Using a DB Sparpreis ticket bought up to two days before departure the fare is 46 EUR, when booked longer in advance it can be obtained for as little as 29 EUR. The standard second class single fare is 88 EUR, so BahnCard 50 holders can obtain a single fare from 43 EUR.

However DB also charges a seat reservation fee of 4 EUR, and on HKX seat reservations are free. HKX tickets can be purchased by Internet, phone, or on board the trains. Negotiations with other potential ticket vending agents (municipal public transport operators were envisaged) bore fruit after 2 January 2013. From that date it became possible to buy tickets via Rheinbahn's vending points in the station and city of Düsseldorf. It was expected that the geographical range of Rheinbahn's points of sale would expand in the future.

Earlier in 2012 HKX confirmed that its agreement with H. Cegielski - FPS Poznań for the refurbishment of the Class 4010 stock has been terminated. A German company is to complete the work, and since November 2012 the carriages have been moved by road from Poznań to Délitzscht. RDC Deutschland has confirmed that it is still the owner of the stock, and still plans to use it for its operations. Initially 43 carriages from the Class 4010s were acquired, and to start the Hamburg to Köln service HKX planned to use some of them to form three six-car rakes.

In spite of all the difficulties, it would appear that patronage of the HKX service is being maintained. Fares are at levels which are very competitive with those offered by DB and the train capacity offered (and thus which has to be filled up) is negligible compared with the total capacity offered on the route by DB, with hourly operated direct services formed by considerably longer rakes.

HKX itself considers its entrance into the market as quite successful, stating that customers were found immediately, and that train occupancy has been very good to extremely good since the very beginning. This would appear to be proof that the fares and the product are right - and therefore have generated a market which makes the service viable. There would appear to be enough travellers who are price-sensitive, but not strictly bound by time constraints, to fill the trains. They play by HKX's rules, in other words. Surveys indicate that many of these passengers are young, and many are women travelling in small groups or alone, considered to be a part of the travel market which in the past did not frequently opt for rail travel. But only time will tell whether HKX is conducting its business in a manner that is economically sustainable.

Petr Kadeřávek, Karl Kauflaug

SPICE For CAF Power & Automation

Over the final four months of 2012, and following an implementation and assessment period which lasted several months, CAF Power & Automation was awarded the ISO/IEC 15504 certificate, based on Maturity Level 2 of the ISO/IEC 12207: 2008 Process Model. This is also known as the SPICE – Software Process Improvement and Capability Determination. It provides an international model for the improvement and evaluation of development and maintenance processes for information systems and software products, and also enables evaluations to be carried out using maturity levels, the manufacturer having initially chosen Level 2, corresponding to Project Management, but aiming to achieve Level 3, Adapted Processes - Standards.

CAF

A new 123 million CHF depot to house the FV-Dosto EMUs (see R 5/12, p. 32) is currently being built at Zürich-Herdern. The depot hall will be 420 m long, accommodating one kilometer of tracks and a covered floorspace of 13,000 m². Equipment will include cranes, roof-level platforms, high staging, catwalks, WC emptying equipment, warehousing and staff facilities, and sushi-like. The roof will be equipped with 4,000 m² of photovoltaic panels. The depot is in a prominent location, and will be seen by thousands of train passengers each day on a busy main line. Both SBB and the city council were keen to ensure that the huge building was pleasing to the eye, and a façade which appears to be three-dimensional was designed.

This facility, on which work started on 16 March 2012 with the boring of the first holes for the foundations of no fewer than 770 supports, will be the largest of its kind on the SBB network. Work on site preparation took place in June, seven months were required for basic construction activities, including the erection of the steel framework of the building. Fitting the cladding will now take around four months, and finally nine months will be required for fitting out and equipping the depot.

But this is no tranquil greenfield site! The new depot is being built on land between an existing depot building and tracks which are in regular use, and the movement of trains has had to continue uninterrupted. At the height of site preparation some 1,000 t of excavated soil and waste had to be cleared from the site, daily, by rail. The building is scheduled for completion by the end of 2013 and it should be ready for work in early 2014, sharing the facilities with other types of train, such as IC 2000 rakes. But this will not be the only new SBB depot. Between now and 2023 the operator is planning to invest over one billion CHF in new maintenance facilities for the trains, at locations such as Basel, Olten, Oberwinterthur and Yverdon.

SBB Personenvervoer

Thursday and Sundays, but in fact it was instead used practically regularly between Mondays and Wednesdays, whereas at weekends the Marschbahn ran push-pull rakes and Desiro ML EMUs were preferred. Dependence on the double deck carriage is so considerable that we have decided to cancel both these services that day.

The result of using the Marschbahn stock was envisaged) bore first fruit on 2 January 2013. From that date it became possible to buy tickets via Rheinbahn's vending points in the station and city of Düsseldorf. It was expected that the geographical range of Rheinbahn's points of sale would expand in the future.

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