

# All change please



Prague's new transport card replaces the old paper tickets

## Maria Hughes outlines some changes to the Czech and Slovak transportation infrastructure

The oldest railway bridge across the Vltava, the Negrelli viaduct in Prague's Karlín district, is to undergo extensive reconstruction from autumn 2017.

The work will allow a faster rail journey time between Prague city centre and the airport of less than half an hour. Work on the bridge is expected to last over three years; during this time trains that terminate at Masaryk station will be diverted to Bubny.

The viaduct is named after its designer, Austrian engineer Alois Negrelli von Moldelbe. Its construction started in 1846, employed about 3,000 workers and was completed in four years. Until 1910 the 1,130 metre viaduct was the longest in Europe. In 1952-3 three of its original 90 arches over Křížiková in Karlín were removed and in 1981 more arches were removed by the Buben embankment.

Today there are plans to convert up to 44 of the remaining 74 arches along Prvního pluku

street (between Sokolovská and Křížiková) into stores, galleries, bistros and workshops.

The contract that Italian firm Grandi Stazioni won in 2001 to renovate Prague's main railway station through a 30-year lease has been revoked. It failed to gain a two-year extension to complete the renovation of the historic Fanta building. The renovated entrance hall to the modern station and new shops were opened in 2011.

The current owner of the station, Railway Infrastructure Administration (SZDC) will launch a new tender for the completion of the Fanta building renovation. Grandi Stazioni also took on the renovation of the railway station in Mariánské Lázně which it completed in 2009. However, the following year the company withdrew from a similar project to renovate the station in Karlovy Vary because of its poor condition.

Prague's new public transport card, Lítačka, was launched in the spring to replace Opencards which were first issued in 2007 to

replace paper coupons. The name, Lítačka, comes from Czech slang and refers to running around; it was chosen through an internet poll.

Slovak State Railways (ZSSK) has reintroduced its InterCity (IC) service between Bratislava and Košice. The journey time is just under five hours with stops in Trnava, Žilina, Poprad and Kysak. All passengers (including students and pensioners) will have to pay the full ticket price. RegioJet no longer operates this route but will continue with its plans to develop a connection from eastern Slovakia via Ostrava to Prague and also establish a line between Bratislava, Brno and Prague.

In October, the construction of a Bratislava ring road consisting of stretches of the D4 motorway and the R7 dual carriageway was officially launched. A consortium led by the Spanish firm Cintra won the tender to design, build and operate the ring road as a public private partnership (PPP) project. Construction

work should begin in March 2017 and the project should be completed in 2020.

After recent reconstruction of its airport, the Slovak capital is on course to get a brand new bus station. While the prospect of a new main railway station remains as distant as ever, the existing bus station at Mlynské Nivy, which dates from the 1970s, is to be replaced with a modern bus terminal and shopping centre.

The investor, H B Reavis, will adapt the nearby former Bottova shopping centre as a temporary bus station. The concept of the new complex, Stanica Nivy, was created by the British architectural studio Benoy and the Slovak studio Siebert + Talaš; it should be completed by about 2020. ©



Plans for arches in the Negrelli viaduct include stores, galleries and bistros