



Study on providing public transport in cross-border regions – mapping of existing services and legal obstacles

Case Study report

Seasonal cross-border tourism bus service 'Mozart-Express'
Reit im Winkl (Germany) – Salzburg (Austria)

Contract: 2019CE160AT093



Thomas Stumm, EureConsult S.A.
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1. Introduction

This case study report presents the business model for the seasonal 'Mozart-Express' cross-border tourism bus service at the border between the Free State of Bavaria (Germany) and the Federal State of Salzburg (Austria).

This report is part of a series of 31 case studies developed under the study 'Providing public transport in cross-border regions – Mapping of existing services and legal obstacles'. Spatial Foresight in cooperation with TCP international, TRT trasporti e territorio and EureConsult completed this study for the European Commission's DG REGIO.

The case studies highlight a variety of business models for cross-border public transport services. This includes governance arrangements and operational provisions to develop the service and address demand in border regions. These aspects will be introduced in section 2, as well as the territorial scope of the service. Section 3 presents key obstacles related to the business model as well as solutions. Section 4 is about lessons learnt from this case.

This case study highlights the:

- very successful operation of an already long-standing seasonal cross-border bus service between municipalities in two Bavarian districts (Traunstein, Berchtesgadener Land) and the city of Salzburg in Austria;
- possibility of operating an economically profitable cross-border bus service without public subsidies;
- positive environmental effects this seasonal cross-border tourism bus service has in particular for the city of Salzburg (i.e. reducing congestion, air pollution and noise);
- advantages from further improvement of the service quality (i.e. joint branding and marketing, new on-board services) with only small investments;
- establishment of lasting cross-border cooperation involving the transport company, tourism offices from both sides and an existing cross-border cooperation structure ('EUREGIO Salzburg-Berchtesgadener Land-Traunstein').

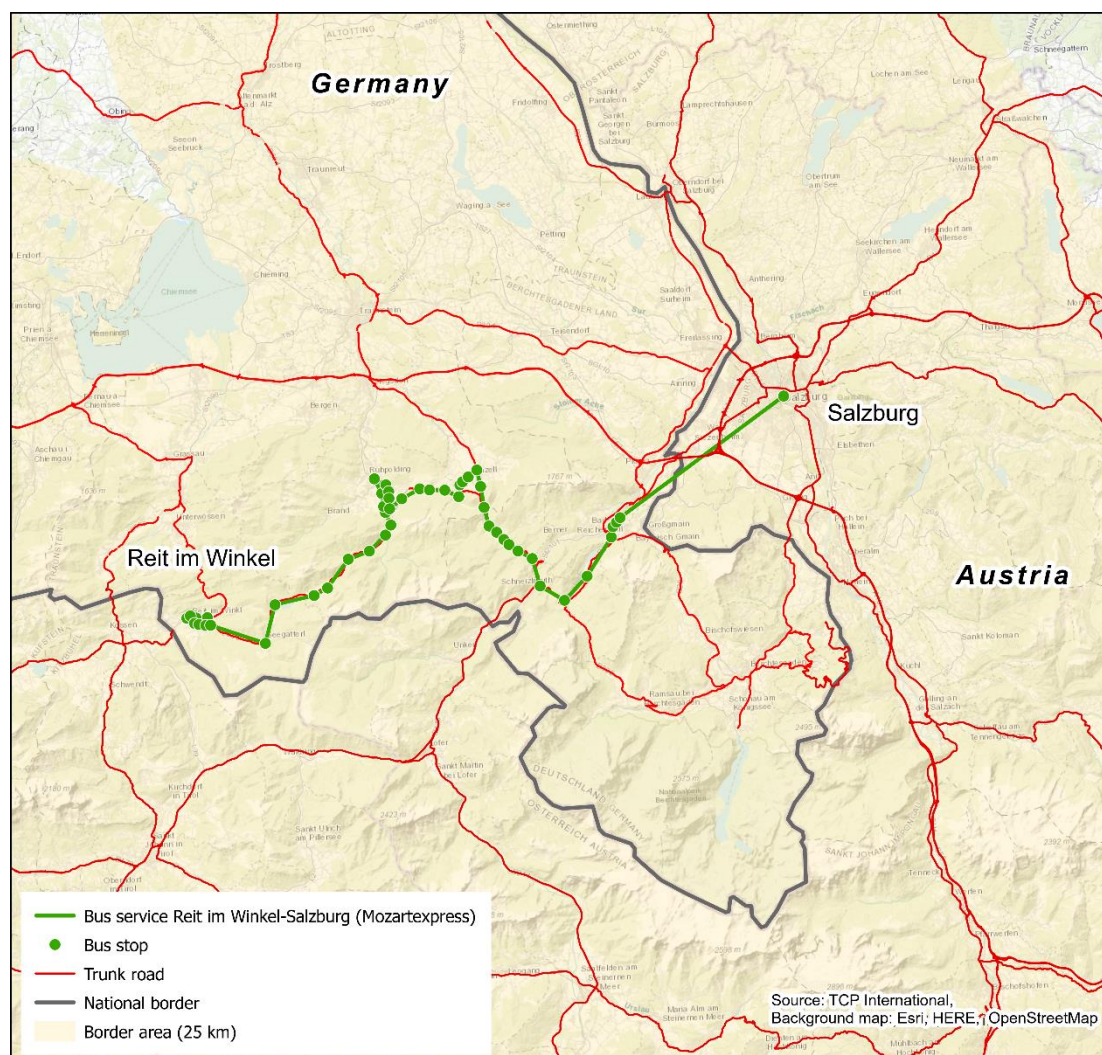
The main sources for this case study were published documents and online sources (websites). Very valuable and complementary information came from an interview with the transport company operating the service (Regionalverkehr Oberbayern). Finally, the information has also been cross-checked by Regionalverkehr Oberbayern and EUREGIO Salzburg-Berchtesgadener Land-Traunstein.

2. Features and benefits of the service

Table 2.1 Characteristics of the business model

Transport service	Seasonal cross-border tourism bus services 'Reit im Winkl - Salzburg' (Mozart-Express)
Mode of transport	Bus
Service provider(s)(operator)	Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH (RVO), operating as 'DB Oberbayernbus'
Location	From Reit im Winkl (Free State of Bavaria), Germany, to Salzburg city (Federal State of Salzburg), Austria
Date when the service started	May 2006

Figure 2.1 Line and stops of the bus service 'Mozart-Express'



Source: TCP International

2.1. Geographic context and scope of the service

The 'Mozart-Express' serves the cross-border line 9535. It starts on the Bavarian side of the border with stops in the districts of Traunstein (Reit im Winkl, Ruhpolding, Inzell) and Berchtesgadener Land (Schneizlreuth & Weißbach, Bad Reichenhall), then crosses the border and continues directly to the city of Salzburg in Austria. 'Mozart-Express' is operated by the Bavarian bus company Regionalverkehr Oberbayern (RVO). The service targets tourists and only operates during the summer tourism season (i.e. from May to October).

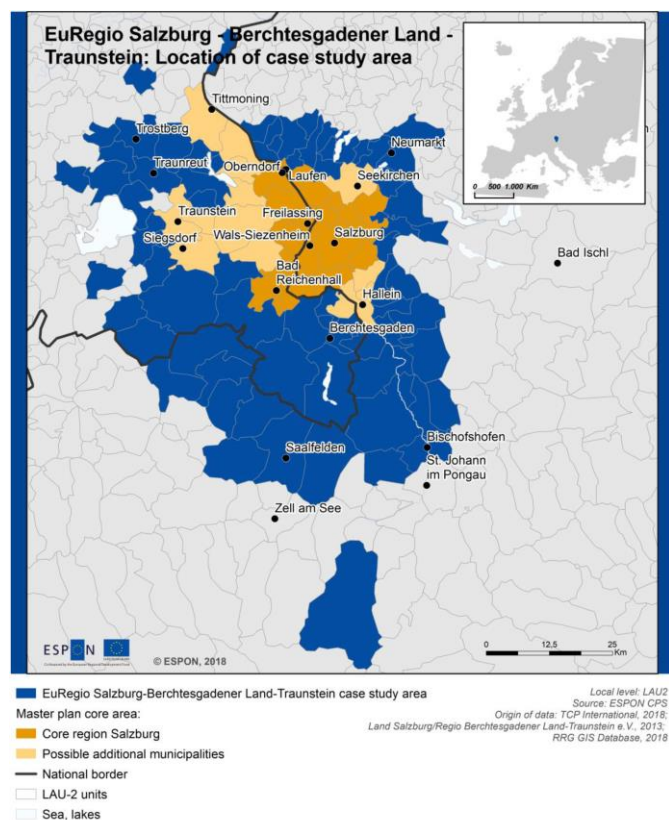
Territorial context

The service operates within the 'EUREGIO Salzburg-Berchtesgadener Land-Traunstein' (EUREGIO). EUREGIO covers 9,530 km² and some 841,658 inhabitants (2020), resulting in an average population density of 88.3 inhabitants per km². The EUREGIO is a voluntary association that includes 117 municipalities from districts in the Austrian Federal States of Salzburg, Upper-Austria and Tyrol as well as three districts in the Free State of Bavaria on the German side (i.e. Berchtesgadener Land, Traunstein and Altötting)¹.

The north-central part of the EUREGIO territory includes a cross-border functional urban area with close to 275,000 inhabitants. This is around the Greater Salzburg area (i.e. Salzburg city and 10 surrounding municipalities) in Austria along with municipalities and cities in the neighbouring Bavarian district of Berchtesgadener Land. This core area sees intense daily commuting, mainly to Salzburg. Most is Austria-internal commuting, but there are cross-border flows from Bavaria to Salzburg (about 1,000 persons) and from Salzburg to Bavaria (about 2,500)².

The other parts of EUREGIO territory cover many rural and mountainous areas. The latter comprise medium mountains and also high mountain ranges with altitudes close to 3,000 meters and mark the southern border between the Federal State of Salzburg and the two Bavarian districts of Berchtesgadener Land and Traunstein.

Figure 2.2 Territory covered by the 'EUREGIO'



Source: ESPON (2018), p. 4

These rural and mountainous areas have a much lower population density than the EUREGIO core area and are very sparsely populated. Moreover, they frequently have low levels of accessibility. Finally, the EUREGIO includes two rivers that define parts of the border between Austria and Germany: the Saalach and the Salzach. Over a long distance within the EUREGIO, both rivers can be crossed only by a few bridges.

¹ ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme (2018), pp. 3-9

² Land Salzburg (2016), p. 59

Due to the predominantly rural and mountainous character of the EUREGIO, larger parts have valuable landscapes and important natural assets. The mountainous border zones are covered by the German national park 'Berchtesgadener Alpen' and the Austrian 'Europe and Nature Reserve Kalkhochalpen'. These rich natural assets make the cross-border region a particularly attractive tourism destination, both during the summer season (i.e. agro- and eco-tourism, nature-related tourism such as hiking, cycling, biking, rafting, mountain climbing etc.) and in winter (i.e. downhill skiing, Nordic skiing etc.).

Connection to other cross-border public transport services

The 'Mozart-Express' forms part of a wider network of cross-border public transport that criss-crosses different parts of the territory. The current service offer consists of 15 cross-border lines (including 'Mozart-Express'), involving different modes of transport and variable areas of operation. These services are operated either individually by different transport companies from Germany and Austria³ or in cooperation between transport companies from both sides:

- 4 regular bus services on longer distances within the EUREGIO. These are 'line 24 Salzburg - Freilassing' (Hogger / Albus), 'line 180 Salzburg - Bad Reichenhall' (ÖBB Postbus), 'line 260 Salzburg - Bad Reichenhall - Zell am See' (ÖBB Postbus) and 'line 840 Salzburg - Berchtesgaden' (RVO/Albus).
- 3 regular bus services between neighbouring municipalities, some of which are dedicated to school transport. These are the general public city bus line 'Stadtbus Laufen - Oberndorf' and school buses on 'line 836 Freilassing - Berchtesgaden' (RVO) and 'line 112 Laufen - Oberndorf' (ÖBB Postbus).
- 2 seasonal bus services for tourists, which only operate in the summer holiday season (i.e. between May and October). These are 'line 9535 Salzburg - Reit im Winkl' (RVO Mozart-Express) and 'line 847 Alm-Erlebnis-Bus'.
- 4 conventional railway lines, namely 'KBS 951 München-Salzburg' (Meridian / BOB), 'KBS 945 Salzburg-Mühldorf-Landshut' (SOB/DB) and the two regional express lines 'REX Freilassing - Braunau/Inn' (ÖBB) and 'REX/S2/R Freilassing-Linz' (ÖBB).
- 2 lines of the suburban railway Salzburg (S-Bahn Salzburg), namely S2 'Freilassing-Salzburg-Straßwalchen' (ÖBB) and two overlapping lines S3/S4 'Berchtesgaden-Freilassing-Salzburg-Schwarzach/St.Veit' (BLB/ÖBB).

Two recent studies examining EUREGIO's current cross-border public transport highlight that these services substantially contribute improving the EUREGIO-internal accessibility of the core area (i.e. Greater Salzburg area; Bavarian district of Berchtesgadener Land). Moreover, some cross-border bus lines also ensure better connectivity with more distant areas in the Bavarian district of Traunstein and the Salzburg district Zell am See, which is outside the official EUREGIO area. Nevertheless, there is some potential for optimisation and further service expansion⁴.

2.2. Demand for and benefits of the service

Tourism is an important part of Austria's economy, with the Federal State of Salzburg and its capital city holding an important position in that context. Salzburg is the fourth biggest Austrian city and birthplace of the world-famous 18th-century composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. The city's many attractions⁵ and famous cultural events⁶

³ The Austrian public-private bus company 'Albus Salzburg Verkehrsbetrieb GmbH', Bavarian private bus company 'Hogger GmbH', public Bavarian bus company 'Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH' (RVO) owned by DB Regio AG, 'Austrian Federal Railways' (ÖBB) and its subsidiary for bus transportation ('ÖBB-Postbus GmbH'), the public 'Südostbayernbahn' (SOB) belonging to the RegioNetz of the German Federal Railway AG (DB), the public-private German-Austrian 'Berchtesgadener Land Bahn GmbH' (BLB) and the Bavarian rail transport company 'Bayerische Oberlandbahn GmbH' (BOB), which operates under the brand name 'Meridian' and belongs to the German subsidiary of the French private railway group Transdev.

⁴ Salzburger Verkehrsverbund (2016), pp. 40-42; ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme (2018), pp. 15-36

⁵ One of the best-preserved historic city centres north of the Alps with its Baroque architecture and 27 churches, which was listed as UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1996.

make Salzburg one of the most important tourism destinations outside the winter season, in both the whole of Austria⁷ and in the EUREGIO.

Focus and target group of the service

As with many other attractive cities in Europe, Salzburg is visited by tourists in two ways. (1) As the main destination of tourists, with this generating variable numbers of overnight stays in hotels and other accommodation. (2) As destination for recreational and leisure-oriented day-tourism (Tagestourismus) from locations close enough for a round-trip within a day but without requiring an overnight stay. While the first way of visiting is usually welcomed as generating significant income for the local economy, day trips recently have become more and more criticised all over Europe in debates about 'overtourism'.

For the Federal State of Salzburg, the tourism year 2018/19 once again brought records. Between November 2018 and October 2019, a total of 8.1 million tourists stayed for an average of 3.7 days and generated 29.8 million overnight stays. Compared to 2017/2018, this was an increase of 2.7% in arrivals and 1.5% in overnight stays. There has been an almost continuous increase in the number of tourists over the last two decades. Nearly one fourth of tourists staying in the Federal State of Salzburg visited the city of Salzburg (i.e. 1.9 million) and spent 3.3 million nights there. As in previous years, in 2018/19 the city was the most important destination in the Federal State of Salzburg⁸.

While day-tourism in the city of Salzburg was still seen in a largely positive light by local political leaders and the economy in 2007/2008, there is now increasing protest from residents and some local political forces. Older estimations quantified the number of day-tourists in Salzburg city at 5.5 to 6.5 million per year, but experts put the number at 9 million per year now.

As in the past, the majority of day-tourists arrive by car. On bad weather days in summer many tourists staying in the surrounding areas drive to Salzburg for a day-visit. To manage the related traffic congestion and lack of inner-city parking space, Salzburg has for many years applied a 'bad weather regulation' (Schlechtwetter-Regelung) during summer months. This ad-hoc regulation allows only cars with licence plates from Austria or the neighbouring Bavarian districts of Berchtesgadener Land and Traunstein (BGL and TS) to enter the city, which is controlled at the entry roads. Day visitors with other licence plates must park in dedicated Park & Ride areas on the outskirts and take shuttle buses to the town centre⁹.

Especially the day-tourism by coach is increasingly attracting the anger of the local population. More than 50,000 coaches head for Salzburg every year and bring almost a third of the day-tourists to the city-centre. These tourists walk through the city in large groups and consume little to nothing, while the coaches make four local trips per vehicle per group on average and have become a major generator of inner-city traffic problems. As bus parking is prohibited in the city, coaches go to the two inner-city bus terminals (east and south of the old town) to unload day-tourists. This has created increasing protests by residents, so the city obliged bus companies to register via the internet to redistribute bus flows. However, this new regulation tends to increase the practice of 'wild' unloading and loading of coaches in private areas, with coaches parking in and out repeatedly causing massive traffic jams¹⁰.

The main target group of the 'Mozart-Express' are tourists staying in the Bavarian districts of Traunstein and Berchtesgadener Land who want to take a day-trip to the

⁶ The Salzburg Festival is a music and theatre festival that attracts visitors during July and August and a smaller Salzburg Easter Festival is held around Easter each year.

⁷ Although the city of Vienna attracts most tourists in Austria, both in summer and winter, the city of Salzburg is 2nd for overnight stays in the summer season. In the winter season, there are more overnight stays in winter sport resorts in the Federal State of Salzburg (e.g. Saalbach-Hinterglemm, Obertauern) and the Federal State of Tirol (e.g. Sölden, Ischgl, Sankt Anton am Arlberg).

⁸ Stadt Salzburg (2020); Land Salzburg (2020), pp. 1, 2

⁹ Salzburger Nachrichten (2013); Salzburg24 (2015); Salzburger Nachrichten (2016); Der Standard (2018b)

¹⁰ Salzburg24 (2008); Salzburger Nachrichten (2018); Der Standard (2018a); Der Standard (2018b); Der Standard (2019)

city of Salzburg. The main purpose of this bus service is thus to achieve a shift from private car use to public transport.

Demand potential and impact of the service

The cross-border bus service tends to be more interesting for tourists staying in the district of Traunstein, since the 'Mozart-Express' is the only cross-border public transport reaching that district. For tourists staying in the district of Berchtesgadener Land (especially in Bad Reichenhall or close-by municipalities), however other and more frequent cross-border public transport services are also available for day trips to Salzburg (e.g. bus lines 180 and 260; suburban railway Salzburg lines S4-S2).

Local residents of both Bavarian districts could also use the 'Mozart-Express', however, they prefer quicker options (e.g. individual car, other cross-border bus, train or S-Bahn lines) rather than spending some two hours on the seasonal tourism bus¹¹.

The current service seems to meet the demand of tourists in the districts of Berchtesgadener Land and Traunstein, although the number of passengers continues to increase. Prior to 2016, around 15,000 tourists used the 'Mozart-Express' each season and half of these travelled across the border to Salzburg¹². The other half used the bus service between tourist locations on the Bavarian side. Since 2016, however, the number of cross-border tourists has increased further: the seasonal volume was 11,365 passengers in 2017, 10,557 in 2018 and 12,304 in 2019¹³.

The main impact of the 'Mozart-Express' is that it helps reduce congestion and environmental pollution from private car use by tourists on the Bavarian side and for day-trips to Salzburg city. Especially on the Austrian side, this has a positive effect on the difficult traffic situation in and around the city of Salzburg. For 2016-2019, the 'Mozart-Express' helped avoid more than 34,200 car trips to Salzburg by tourists who spent their holidays in the two neighbouring Bavarian districts¹⁴. In addition, the Mozart-Express also makes a small contribution to alleviating the serious problem of limited inner-city parking spaces, especially during bad weather in summer.

Another positive impact of the 'Mozart-Express' is that it recently enabled intensified cooperation between local / regional tourism actors from both sides of the border (see section 2.4 below), helping to establish a more organised cross-border tourism market in the EUREGIO¹⁵.

2.3. Governance

The bus line 9535 has operated since 1977, but it ran only within Bavaria until the seasonal 'Mozart-Express' service started in 2006. The initiative to extending this line across the border to Salzburg and operating a cross-border tourism bus service was jointly developed by the local office of the 'Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH' (RVO) bus company and several Bavarian municipality tourism offices in the area¹⁶.

Since May 2006, the 'Mozart-Express' has become a stable part of the cross-border public transport offer in the EUREGIO (see section 2.1 above). The service is operated by RVO entirely on its own account and without receiving any public operating subsidies (eigenwirtschaftlicher Betrieb)¹⁷.

Basic governance structures

Cross-border passenger transport with the 'Mozart-Express' is based on a unilateral management and service delivery model. This means that all main management

¹¹ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

¹² Interreg Programm 'Österreich-Bayern' 2014-2020 (2016); Interreg Programm 'Österreich-Bayern' 2014-2020 (2017)

¹³ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

¹⁴ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

¹⁵ Interreg Programm 'Österreich-Bayern' 2014-2020 (2016); Interreg Programm 'Österreich-Bayern' 2014-2020 (2017)

¹⁶ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

¹⁷ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

structures are on the German side, with these structures also in charge of providing the cross-border transportation service to Salzburg on a day-to-day basis.

'Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH' (RVO) operates the 'Mozart-Express' and has its headquarters in Munich. Since 1 February 2009, RVO has run public bus transport under the brand name 'DB Oberbayernbus' and serves large parts of Upper Bavaria¹⁸.

DB Oberbayernbus is very experienced in operating cross-border bus lines to various neighbouring areas in Austria. This includes regular and seasonal cross-border services to destinations in the Federal State of Salzburg (as part of the 'Salzburg Transport Association', see below) as well as in the Federal States of Tyrol and Vorarlberg (see: Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Examples for cross-border bus lines to Austria operated by 'DB Oberbayernbus'

Federal States	Cross-border bus lines (regular & seasonal)
Salzburg	Regular bus lines: 836 'Berchtesgaden – Grödig – Freilassing'. 840 'Berchtesgaden – Marktschellenberg – Salzburg' (<i>WatzmannExpress</i>), in cooperation with Albus (AT). Seasonal tourism bus line: 847 'Hintersee – Hirschbichl – Weißbach bei Lofer – Saalfelden' (<i>AlmErlebnisBus</i>), in cooperation with ÖBB Postbus (AT).
Tyrol	Regular bus lines: 74 'Füssen – Reutte' 9509 'Reit im Winkl – Traunstein (includes Kössen in AT)'. 9550 'Tegernsee – Pertisau'. 9577 'Rosenheim – Kufstein', in cooperation with the bus company Margreiter. Seasonal bus lines: 847 'Hintersee – Weißbach', in cooperation with ÖBB Postbus (AT). 4186 'Mittenwald – Seefeld', in cooperation with ÖBB Postbus (AT). 9502 'Oberaudorf – Niederndorf – Ebbs – Sachrang – Aschau (Chiemgau) – Bernau – Felden, in cooperation with the bus company Reiter. 9569 'Lenggries – Eng'. 9588 'Schliersee – Bayrischzell – Landl – Thiersee'.
Vorarlberg	Operated by Regionalverkehr Allgäu GmbH, which is a 70% subsidiary of Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH: Regular bus line in the Bregenzerwald area: 9746 'Oberstdorf – Hittisau'. Regular bus lines to the Austrian enclave¹⁹ 'Kleinwalsertal': 9742/1 'Oberstdorf – Baad'. 9761/5 'Unterwestegg – Riezlern – Ifen'. 9772/2 'Egg – Riezlern – Innerschwande – Schwende'. 9773/3 'Wäldele – Breitachbrücke – Hirschegg'. 9774/4 'Mittelberg – Höfle'.

Source: Regio Bus Bayern (2020); Wikipedia (2021b)

¹⁸ Wikipedia (2021b)

¹⁹ An area that is not completely surrounded by another country but can, in practice, be reached only by passing through the neighbouring country (e.g. roads in the neighbouring country).

Today, DB Oberbayernbus is one of the eight regional bus companies that are part of the Bavaria-wide bus company owned by the German Federal Railways (Deutsche Bahn, DB), which operates public bus transport services in Bavaria ('DB Regio Bus in Bayern' or 'Regio Bus Bayern'). These eight bus companies serve more than 80% of Bavaria's territory with 2,875 buses carrying around 100 million passengers every year. The regional management of Regio Bus Bayern is based in Ingolstadt²⁰.

At a more strategic level, Regio Bus Bayern is one of six DB Regio bus companies (DB Regio Bus) that German Federal Railways established for larger regions covering the entire territory of the Federal Republic of Germany (i.e. 'North', 'East', 'Middle', 'Baden-Württemberg', 'North-Rhine Westphalia' and 'Bavaria' regions). DB Regio Bus and DB Regio Rail (DB Regio Schiene) are the two divisions of the country-wide DB Regio Group (DB Regio AG), which is responsible for local passenger transport of Deutsche Bahn AG in Germany²¹.

Cross-border tariff integration

The Bavarian transport company Regionalverkehr Oberbayern (DB Oberbayernbus) has joined the 'Salzburg Transport Association' (Salzburger Verkehrsverbund GmbH, SVV) as a formal association partner (Verbundpartner). The SVV is a company wholly owned by the Federal State of Salzburg and was established in 1995. Today, its main legal basis is the Austrian Local and Regional Public Transport Act of 1999 (esp. §§ 17 and 18 of the ÖPNRV-G). Since June 2015, the SVV operates under the brand name 'Salzburg Verkehr' and assumes a variety of tasks²².

For better understanding the particular status of 'Mozart-Express' within the SVV, it is essential to review some basic provisions governing the SVV, defined in the SVV tariff regulations (Tarifbestimmungen)²³:

- The SVV-area (Verbundraum) covers the territory of the Federal State of Salzburg, including the corridor traffic of cross-border bus line 260 'Salzburg - Bad Reichenhall - Zell am See' as well as the entire route of the inner-Austrian local train (i.e. Salzburg - Ostermiething).
- In addition to the geographical scope of the SVV-area, the SVV-tariff area (Tarifgebiet) also covers parts of neighbouring Austrian Federal States (i.e. Upper Austria, Styria and Tyrol) and the Bavarian district of Berchtesgadener Land. The SVV-tariff area is sub-divided into smaller honeycomb-based tariff zones (Tarifzonen), which are used for defining and calculating the fare.
- The SVV-line network (Verbundliniennetz) comprises the sum of all lines and parts of lines that are operated by SVV-partner companies in the SVV-tariff area.
- The association tariff (Verbundtarif) is the regular fare applied to passengers travelling in the SVV-tariff area, if either the stop for boarding or getting off is located in the SVV-tariff area. If neither stop is in the SVV-area but is in the SVV-tariff area, then the association tariff only applies if both stops (i.e. boarding and de-boarding) are in different Austrian Federal States or in different countries (i.e. Austria and Germany).

The 'Mozart-Express' line 9535 belongs to the SVV-line network, since it is listed as a bus line with cross-border traffic between Salzburg and Bavaria in Annex 6 of the SVV tariff regulations. However, except for the final stop at Salzburg-Mirabellenplatz, all other stops in Bavaria are either outside the SVV-area (i.e. Bad Reichenhall,

²⁰ Regio Bus Bayern (2021a)

²¹ DB Regio (2021a), DB Regio (2021b)

²² (1) Planning and further development of local and regional transport lines and networks, (2) coordination of ordering transport services, (3) control of quality criteria compliance, (4) network-specific (cross-company) marketing and sales as well as network-specific customer information, (5) arbitration and clearing house for billing and allocation of proceeds, (6) preparation of proposals for local and regional government transport planning, (7) planning for the conclusion of transport service contracts (orders) including cost and revenue estimates, (8) handling transport service contracts, ordering transport services in motorised transport and tender procedures on behalf of local authorities and other third parties and (9) consultation on concession awards (distance concessions). See: Salzburg Verkehr (2021); ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme (2018), pp. 32, 33

²³ Salzburg Verkehr (2020), pp. 9-14

Weißbach) or not part of the SVV-tariff area (i.e. Inzell, Ruhpolding, Reit im Winkl)²⁴. Since tariff rules consider the whole line, this results in the SVV-association tariff not being applied for the 'Mozart-Express'.

As a consequence of this, DB Oberbayernbus applies an in-house fare that covers the trip to the final stop at Salzburg-Mirabellenplatz. From that point, however, tourists wishing to use public transport in Salzburg city have to pay the minimum tariff for the SVV core zone ('Region Salzburg Stadt')²⁵.

Passenger information

Information for potential users of the cross-border tourism bus is available either in a 24-pages brochure entitled 'With Mozart-Express to Salzburg' (see: section 2.4 below)²⁶, or online at the web-portals of DB Oberbayernbus²⁷ and other organisations within the service area including:

- local tourist information offices of Bavarian municipalities on the line²⁸,
- Salzburg airport (<https://www.salzburg-airport.com/fluege-anreise/anreise/oeffentliche-verkehrsmittel/>),
- 'Salzburg Transport Association' with a link to 'DB Oberbayernbus' (<https://salzburg-verkehr.at/downloads/regionalbus-9535-mozart-express-reit-im-winkl-bad-reichenhall-salzburg-sommersaison/>).

On-board information during the ride with the "Mozart-Express" has also been improved recently with the help of a small-scale Interreg project (see section 2.4 below).

2.4. Operational provisions

This section examines operation-related aspects that are essential for the 'Mozart-Express' service. This covers legal and financial provisions, but also other aspects such as ticketing and the quality improvement of the bus service.

Legal provisions²⁹

The legal basis of the 'Mozart-Express' is a typical line concession ('Community license') for cross-border passenger transport by bus, requested from the Bavarian Ministry of Transport and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Transport as the competent approval authorities.

When the concession was requested by Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH (i.e. 2005 / 2006), administrative approval procedures on both sides lasted about 6 months.

Financing the 'Mozart-Express' service³⁰

Since the start, the service has been operated by RVO / DB Oberbayernbus entirely on its own account and without receiving any public operating subsidies (eigenwirtschaftlicher Betrieb). Thus, tickets revenues finance the whole service.

As the cross-border tourism bus service is not integrated into the Salzburg Transport Association's tariff system, fare incomes do not have to be shared with other bus operators as do integrated lines. Therefore, revenue from ticket sales is fully dedicated to covering the operating costs of the 'Mozart-Express' tourism bus.

For integrated lines, fare revenues are distributed between transport companies whose services operate in the same 'honeycomb'. SVV ensures this sharing of fare revenue.

²⁴ Salzburg Verkehr 2020), p. 52

²⁵ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

²⁶ Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH (2017)

²⁷ <https://www.dbregiobus-bayern.de/regiobusbayern/view/rvo/angebot/buslinien/mozartexpress.shtml>

²⁸ For example Reit im Winkl (<https://www.reitimwinkl.de/mobilitaet/>), Inzell / Ruhpolding (<https://www.ruhpolding.de/service/mobil-vor-ort.html>; <https://www.ruhpolding-inzell.de/chiemgau-karte#170459>) and Schneizlreuth (<https://www.schneizlreuth.de/mobil-vor-ort/>),

²⁹ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

³⁰ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

Tickets and fares³¹

Since the cross-border bus line 'Mozart-Express' is not subject to tariff integration at the level of the Salzburg Transport Association (see section 2.3 above), DB Oberbayernbus sells specific tickets based on in-house fares valid until the final stop at Salzburg-Mirabellenplatz.

- With the 'day ticket' (RVO-Tagesticket), tourists travel cheaply from Reit im Winkl, Ruhpolding, Inzell or Bad Reichenhall directly across the border to Salzburg (adults for EUR 10.40, as of 01 January 2021).
- The 'Bus-Pass' (RVO-Buspass) also applies on the 'Mozart-Express' and can be used on any 5 days within one month of the day of issue.
- A particularly attractive price exists for tourists with overnight stays in Ruhpolding or Inzell, who have a valid spa and guest card ('Chiemgau Karte'³²). In 2017, they paid only EUR 5 for a cross-border round trip to Salzburg and currently have to pay EUR 6 (season 2021).

Severely disabled persons travel for free on the 'Mozart-Express' up to the German border but have to pay a small charge for the journey on the Austrian side.

Improvement of service quality and joint branding

A substantial improvement of the bus service was achieved in 2016/2017 through a small-scale project, which received support from the Interreg V-A programme Austria-Bavaria 2014-2020.

The project 'Marketing Mozart Express' established innovative and durable cooperation between the service operator (Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH, Lead Partner), the tourism marketing company of the city of Salzburg (Tourismus Salzburg GmbH³³), the district administrations of Traunstein and Berchtesgadener Land (Landratsämter Traunstein und Berchtesgadener Land) and the EUREGIO Salzburg – Berchtesgadener Land – Traunstein. Moreover, it also associated other Bavarian municipality tourism organisations along the bus route (i.e. Reit im Winkl, Ruhpolding, Inzell, Schneizlreuth, Bad Reichenhall)³⁴.

The wider aim of this project was to improve the attractiveness of the seasonal cross-border bus service to reduce individual car traffic by tourists to the city of Salzburg.

At the end of the project, the service has become more visible and passengers using the 'Mozart-Express' are now offered better on-board services through³⁵:

- A logo for the Mozart-Express and the outside decoration of two buses in the eye-catching 'Mozart Express design' with key destinations along the route (see: Figure 2.3 below).
- A 24 page-long brochure with 25,000 copies printed. This includes a timetable, information about excursion destinations and hiking tips along the route, a city map of Salzburg along with contact addresses and tariff information. The brochure was distributed via project participants and all tourist information offices in the region.
- Buses were equipped with free WLAN and a content portal with information about the region, excursion destinations, news and weather as well as music and audio books. The content is in German and English for iPhone and Android. A separate 'app' was not followed up, since the already existing content portal

³¹ Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH (2017); Regio Bus Bayern (2021b); Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH (2021); Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

³² When tourists stay overnight in Ruhpolding or Inzell, they receive the Chiemgau Card free of charge from their host upon arrival. The Chiemgau Card is valid all year round and offers free access to numerous attractions during the holiday as well as Regionalverkehr Oberbayern buses to explore the area.

³³ The purpose of 'Tourismus Salzburg' covers tourism marketing and promotion, congresses and operation of Salzburg spa facilities (Kurhaus, Paracelsusbad). Tourismus Salzburg offers services for accommodation, events and congresses around the four main tourist themes in Salzburg: Mozart, Salzburg Festival, World Cultural Heritage and Sound of Music.

³⁴ Interreg Programm 'Österreich-Bayern' 2014-2020 (2016); Interreg Programm 'Österreich-Bayern' 2014-2020 (2017)

³⁵ Interreg Programm 'Österreich-Bayern' 2014-2020 (2017); Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH (2017); ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme (2018), p. 29

proved to be a suitable solution. This portal can be used in a web browser or as an app, so no costs for graphics and app development were incurred.

- The total cost for producing these project outputs was EUR 17,000 and only covered expenditure for external expertise and services. Running costs for WLAN and one-off costs for the hardware were not supported under the project.

Figure 2.3 'Mozart-Express' logo and exterior branding of buses



Source: Regionalverkehr Oberbayern GmbH ('DB Oberbayernbus')

At the end of the small-scale project, there was a presentation on 10 August 2017. In addition to the project partners, tourism experts from Reit im Winkl, Inzell, Ruhpolding and Bad Reichenhall as well as representatives of the public transport departments of the districts of Traunstein and Berchtesgadener Land took part.

Finally, it is also worth mentioning that even after the end of funding the former project partnership still actively works together (e.g. annual meetings). This work focuses on updating previous project outputs (i.e. brochure), as well as the assessment of new service options that could potentially make the 'Mozart-Express' even more attractive³⁶.

3. Obstacles and solutions

The cross-border 'Mozart-Express' tourism bus has never encountered major obstacles or difficulties hampering its initial set up or its ongoing operation³⁷. Therefore, this case study does not include an analysis under chapter 3. Any approaches to continuously improve the service addressing the demand most effectively are explained above (Chapter 2), since they are not obstacles.

4. Conclusions and lessons learnt

The cross-border tourism bus line 'Mozart-Express' has already operated for 15 years and has never encountered major obstacles or difficulties hampering its set up or operation. It is a good example that the establishment and provision of cross-border public transport services does not have to be complex and cumbersome.

In addition, the bus service also shows that steadily increasing demand by tourists makes a durable and economically self-sustaining operation possible. This was

³⁶ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

³⁷ Interview with Regionalverkehr Oberbayern

supported by further improvement of marketing and the service quality of the 'Mozart-Express', implemented jointly by the bus operator and tourism organisations from both sides of the border.

The main impact of the 'Mozart-Express' is not an improvement of cross-border accessibility since it is a seasonal service addressing a specific target group (i.e. tourists staying in Bavaria who envisage a day-trip to Salzburg city). This is mainly ensured by other regular cross-border transport services (i.e. by bus, rail or the rapid transit railway Salzburg) that are operating in parallel within the EUREGIO.

However, the 'Mozart-Express' bus service helps avoid car trips by tourists to the city of Salzburg and thus reduces traffic-related air pollution and noise disturbance. This is particularly important since Salzburg is suffering from the adverse consequences of 'overtourism', mainly the many day-tourists coming to the city using individual cars or day-tour coaches.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the success of the 'Mozart-Express':

- The absence of a linguistic barrier since German is spoken on both sides of the border. This facilitates a shared understanding of legal provisions and technical terms, helping especially with the set-up and ongoing operation of the cross-border bus service.
- Cultural closeness and a positive joint perception of a common long-term historical legacy. This is an important basis for mutual trust and facilitates cross-border cooperation among the transport and tourism actors who jointly promote this service.
- The 'EUREGIO Salzburg-Berchtesgadener Land-Traunstein' also plays an active part in this process, mobilising and coordinating to ensure the long-term durability of the cooperation established around the 'Mozart-Express'.

Finally, a more specific success factor is certainly that the bus transport company providing the 'Mozart-Express' service (Regionalverkehr Oberbayern / DB Oberbayernbus) has considerable experience with operating other regular or seasonal cross-border bus services to Austria.

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Interviews

Organisation	Interview date
Regionalverkehr Oberbayern RVO, brand name 'DB Oberbayernbus'	26 May 2021

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