

1.11 Bus Alpin (CH)

Fixed routes & on-demand transport services serving 19 rural areas with small villages under 100 inhabitants in Switzerland. The services are operated with a various kind of schemes and vehicles.

Good territorial coverage



Established brand



Long-term durability



1.11.1 About the Bus Alpin service areas, Swiss

<u>Country</u>	<u>Region</u>	<u>Target Area</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Population density</u>
Switzerland	N. 19 regions	About 29.000 Km ²	About 2 million inh.	100 – 30 inh./Km ²

The service is operated in 19 areas (2023) in Switzerland, all consisting of rural mountain areas where mobility demand is not financially viable for conventional transport offer. In fact, in some of these areas there is a dispersed and variable demand especially generated by tourism and leisure activities. The involved regions are: Alp Flix, Bergün Albula Pass, Beverin, Binntal, Chasseral, Engstlenalp, Gantsch Greina, Habkern-Lompachalp, Huttwil, Ibergereg, Jura vaudois, Lenk-Simmental, Moosalpregon, Pany-St. Antönien, Schaffhausen, Thal, Val-de-Charmey and Züri Oberland.

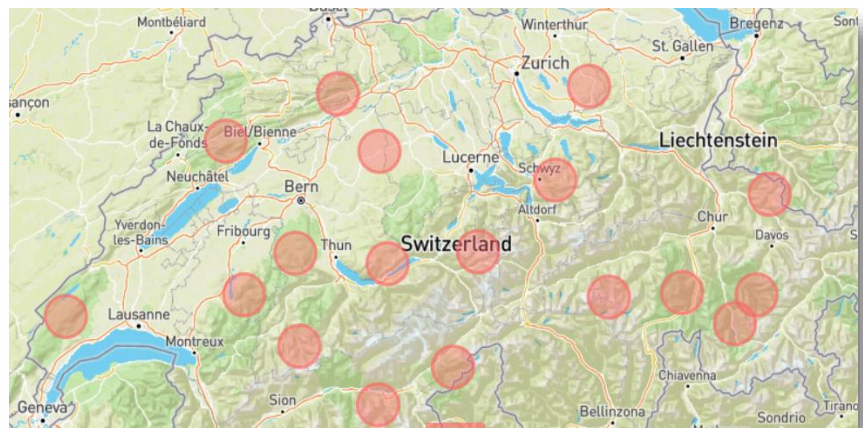


Figure 29 – Rural areas served by Bus Alpin service

1.11.2 Description of the Mobility Solution

The Bus Alpin service offers Public Transport where there is no public offer available, as it is subsidised by national regulation based on the number of inhabitants. The objective of the Bus Alpin association is to promote the regional tourist destinations offering a sustainable way to visit them: where people used to take their private car, they now have the possibility to use collective transport instead.

This strengthens nature-oriented tourism in the mountain areas and creates alternatives for guests to do without their own car when arriving. Guest surveys have shown that Bus Alpin creates millions of euros in added value by addressing new guest segments. Every year, more than 100.000 passengers are transported

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in the Bus Alpine regions. Since a considerable proportion of these new customers switch from cars to public transport when they arrive, they can even benefit the environment and the climate, as well as support the local economy.

Target user groups and needs

Bus Alpin service is targeted to the needs of flexible demand mostly represented by tourists but also by residents located in the dispersed villages (less than 100 inhabitants per settlement) of the mountain areas.

Even if primarily targeted to tourists, the service is open to all. Indeed, the public transport regulation in Switzerland funds the Public Transport based on the number of inhabitants and sets the performances indicators (i.e. the number of hourly transits) accordingly. As a result, even if the Public Transport offer is

good in most of the country, there are gaps in some mountain regions where the number of inhabitants is under the minimum threshold set for funding conventional transport (100 inhabitants).



Figure 30 -- Bus operating the Bus Alpin service

Involved Bodies

Bus Alpin is organized as an association combining public Authorities and Private Companies with a national Managing Board and several regional partnerships (networked under the same “umbrella”). The service is organized locally for each region by the local partnership and it is operated by CarPostal Suisse SA bus and taxi Operators. On behalf of the local sponsors, buses of all sizes operate – in fixed scheduled service or on a dial-a-ride bus basis. Contractors for the bus services are PostBus, other larger bus companies and smaller taxi companies.

Bus Alpin consists of a national level which coordinates/networks the local/regional partnership. The National Association is joined by the following bodies: SAB – National Association of Mountain Regions, ATE – National Association for Transport and Environment, UTP – National Association of Public Transport Operators, CAS – Swiss Alpine Club and CarPostal Suisse S.A., national postal operator. The national association is chaired by a Managing Committee supported by a Technical Secretariat.

The composition of the regional partnership is variable: it always includes Local Authorities. Other local partners can be tourism offices and agencies, regional parks, local enterprises (e.g. restaurants, hotels) can be included as local sponsors. All the partners (both at national and regional level as well) are considered members of the association: they have one vote in the General Assembly where the decisions regarding the whole association are taken. New local partnership can enter in the Bus Alpin contacting the National Secretariat and following the rules for the establishment of new local partnership defined by the association.

Mobility services provided/addressed

Bus Alpin services serve rural areas with small villages under 100 inhabitants (where the conventional Public Transport services is not provided) connecting them to the main tourist destinations. The services are

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operated with a various kind of schemes and vehicles: bus, taxis, and post carriers. The services are operating in 19 Alpine regions with 27 lines (2023). The service can change depending on the season according to the seasonality of tourist flows. The routes and timetables for Bus Alpin vehicles are specified and available on the Bus Alpin website and usually also on the official timetables.

The regions Jura Vaudois and Schaffhausen have bus connections that run all year round. In the other regions, the buses run in the summer and/or winter season.

In 11 regions, the individual scheduled courses cannot be reserved. In the remaining regions, the bus only runs if there are reservations. A wide variety of dial-a-bus models are used, such as reservation by online form, reservation by phone or by e-mail.

The vehicles are not equipped with child seats. Therefore, children under 6 years of age may only be transported by prior appointment by telephone.

Prices of the tickets may vary from region to region. In some of the regions, trips can be reserved with the help of the app, pre-registration possible up to 1 hour or 24 hours before departure. Public transport subscriptions are usually not valid. The trip reserved via the app is paid for in cash with a credit card or on the bus. The trips booked by telephone are paid for on the bus.

Ticket Prices information for some regions ⁶

- Alp Flix: Single ticket: CHF 10., children from 6-16 years CHF 5.
- Bergün-Albula Pass: Simply CHF 10.
- Chasseral: A return ticket costs CHF 7.
- Ganntrisch One-way: CHF 8. / 6. (children), Return: CHF 12. / 8. (children).
- Habkern-Lombachalp Adults: CHF 11. (one-way) and CHF 17. (return); children up to 16 years: CHF 7. (one-way) and CHF 10. (return); Dogs: CHF 5.
- Jura vaudois Normal public transport fare.
- Moosalp region Adults: Easy CHF 20. / Return CHF 24. Adults GK: Easy CHF 18. / Return CHF 22., children: Easy CHF 15. / Return CHF 18 - children GK: Easy CHF 13. / Return CHF 16. Dog: Easy CHF 5. / Return CHF 10.
- Schaffhausen: The use of the bus is free of charge for passengers thanks to the partners involved.
- Val-de-Charmey Charmey – La Valsainte (1 zone): CHF 2.90, with Half-Fare travelcard CHF 2. La Valsainte – Bulle (3 zones): CHF 7.60, with Half-Fare travelcard CHF 3.80.

Ridership and other key metrics/results

A total of around 132.000 passengers used the Bus Alpin offers in winter 2021/22 or summer 2022, which corresponds to an increase of 16.3 % compared to the previous year and but 5.9 % less compared to the pre Covid-19 record result (2019). The Covid-19 effects are now less noticeable, the preCovid-19 level of demand has almost been reached again. The best results were achieved in the regions of Chasseral, Lenk-Simmental, Thal, Valde-Charmey and Züri Oberland (each in summer – Val-de-Charmey also in winter).

⁶ available on Bus Alpin [website](#)

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Supporting technologies

The Bus Alpin app refers to a mobile application (Android and iOS) called “Bus Alpin”, which allows users to order Bus Alpin transport services for selected regions. The Bus Alpin online app was introduced in the three pilot regions in the 2022 summer season and is operated by PostBus Ltd.

Only in the regions of Greina and Gantrisch can the trips be reserved via the app - reservations in other regions are made by phone. The Bus Alpin app can be downloaded free of charge from all app stores. The regions where the App is available are all based on dial-a-ride services. The bus only runs if a ride has been ordered. In order to use the Bus Alpin app, the user must register. The user receives a code via SMS, which they enter in the app to confirm. After registration, a user account will be created for the user.

The obligation to pay for ordered services arises when the user confirms the order. If the user does not start an ordered trip (no-show), Bus Alpin might charge a fee. In case of incorrectly ordered trips, the payment will not be refunded. Bus Alpin refunds the amount if the order process by the user was error-free, but the provision of the ordered service fails for reasons for which the user is not responsible.

The booking code provided in the app serves as confirmation or ticket and must be presented or communicated to the driver before boarding. The ticket is valid until the specified destination. If a user orders a ride for another person, they must be able to communicate the booking code of the Bus Alpin app to the driver.

Engagement aspects

The Bus Alpin association supports the initiation of new services in new regions. The National level of the association provides the “brand” and also methodological support:

- Advise and support to local partnership (technical expertise for design and operation of the services, support for the marketing);
- Networking, exchange of experiences, good practices, etc.;
- Recruit new members/regions to enlarge the existing network;
- Operate as a contact point and information platform for involved/interested parties.

This support is provided remotely and through 1-3 on-site visits each year to assess the performance of existing lines (in order to improve them) and at least 3 meetings to design new services.

The local partnership is in charge to operate the services and to design the new ones and to carry out local marketing campaigns including the publication of service info in the national railway information system.

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1.11.3 Timelines and Milestones

Milestone no. 1 2006 -2007 - Pilot initiative

A pilot initiative was carried out in 2006-2007 in 4 areas (Binntal and Moosalp in the Valais Canton, Gantrisch in the Region of Berna, Greina in the Canton of Grisons). Following the positive results, the experience was continued and was developed in other areas.



Milestone no. 2: 2011 – Foundation of the Association Bus Alpin

The Association Bus Alpin was founded on 8 April 2011 in Bern. Bus Alpin aims to promote public transport services to touristic attractive excursion destinations in the Swiss mountain region, which have not yet been or only poorly accessible by public transport.



Milestone no. 3: 2012 Development of the services and the covered areas

In 2012, there were 10 areas involved and then there was a continuous increase of new local partnership networked to operate new services in new areas. The design process to operate a new bus line takes about one year and a half from the identification of the needs until the line is running.



Milestone no. 4: 2013 – onwards

Since then, the association has been self-supporting and financed exclusively by its members. The membership has currently grown around 19 regions. Today, the Bus Alpin is on the road in all parts of the Jura, in the foothills of the Alps and in the Alps.



Milestone no. 5: 2022 Introduction of the Bus Alpin App

The Bus Alpin app was introduced in the three pilot regions in the 2022 summer season.

1.11.4 Long-term assessment

Success, Durability and Expansion

The Bus Alpin service is still working and the membership has currently grown to around 19 regions. Today, the Bus Alpin is on the road in all parts of the Jura, in the foothills of the Alps and the Alps. The Bus Alpin has

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won several awards and is regarded at home and abroad as a model example of sustainable tourism development, which strengthens local resources and at the same time protects the environment.

The Bus Alpin app was introduced in the three pilot regions in the 2022 summer season and it is expected that the use of the App will be extended to further regions.

Funding and Financing

Concerning the business model, the biggest challenge is and remains the financing of local bus companies. In contrast to conventional public transport services, Bus Alpin services generally do not benefit from public compensation. For this reason, ticket prices in some regions are significantly higher than normal ticket prices and season tickets (GA travelcard, Half-Fare travelcard, etc.) are not accepted.

About financial data, the annual budget for the office is currently around CHF 60.000. The services are financed exclusively by membership fees. The bus companies in the regions are financed separately. They cost over CHF 1.000.000 per year. In each region, the costs to run the buses depend on the areas (number of lines, length of the lines, frequency). They are comprised between 20.000 CHF and 70.000 CHF. These costs are borne by ticket revenues, regional sponsors, sponsors and, in individual cases, by the cantons.

The fare covers between 30 to 95% of the costs (depending on the service/area).

The financial liability for the bus companies lies in any case with the regional carriers. Bus Alpin association is exclusively responsible for advising the regions.

Why is it considered a Good Practice?

The “brand” of the national initiative networking different local services is a key factor for making them recognizable by the users. The role of the National Association (Secretariat + Managing Body) supporting the local partnerships can foster the proper start up of the new services and the extension of the initiatives. Thanks to this networking role, the local partners can learn from each other and the sharing of good practice contributes to improve the service operation and to adapt the design to the evolving needs.

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1.11.5 Transferability considerations

CONTEXT PECULIARITIES	TRANSFERABILITY CONDITIONS
<p>Almost all the regions in which the service has been activated are highly frequented by tourists in both the winter and summer periods.</p> <p>Residents and tourists are interested in not using their cars both for convenience and for environmental reasons.</p>	<p>The “brand” logo, which encompasses different local initiatives, allows to give a national perspective to the initiative making it more recognizable to the users.</p> <p>This is an important success factor considering that the target group of the services is tourists, who are likely to experience different regions/areas during their visits. Moreover, for implementing this mobility solution it is necessary to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the low demand and underserved areas where to operate the new service • Assess the needs of the residents and the potential to take advantage of the tourist demand to co-finance the service • Analyse the framework conditions and the national level to orchestrate the service, ensuring the presence of the organisational and communication links between the national and regional level • Identify/call for a specific transport operator which could be the main responsible for the service
DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED/WEAKNESS	LESSONS LEARNT
<p>The Local Members find difficulties in engaging local sponsors, in particular when a new local partnership is established and a new service operated.</p> <p>Some of the regions involved in the initiative face a poor level of private funding also several years after the launch of the partnership.</p>	<p>The “umbrella” role of the national initiative facilitates the growing of new services, providing support and networking. The partnership among public bodies and private companies can be a transferable model even the experience of Bus Alpin demonstrates that it is difficult to get a good level of private contribution to operate the service.</p>

References for further details

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