

WORKING PAPER

Austrian Local and Regional Public Transport



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CIRIEC N° 2009/08

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ISSN 2070-8289

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Working paper CIRIEC No. 2009/08

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Local public transport satisfies the demand for transport services within an urban area or between an urban area and its hinterland by means of transport such as buses, trams, subways and trains, whereas, *regional* public transport serves regions or rural areas. The concept of local and regional public transport has to be distinguished from the concept of long distance service. Local and regional public transport usually covers short and medium distances, not extending beyond a given geographical area or region. In local and regional public transport, a distinction is made between local and regional road transport (normally referring to bus transport) and local and regional rail transport.

In Austria about 5.5 million bus and railway journeys are taken every working day. With an annual total of 25 billion passenger kilometres, public means of transport attain 37% of the transport performance achieved by (private) passenger vehicles. Each year every Austrian citizen covers on average 3 010 kilometres by bus and railway. The Austrian public transport performance is the highest within the European Union. Bus and railways ensure the mobility of the majority of the Austrian people. Around 4.4 million people - 54% of the Austrian population - are dependent on public transport to reach their destinations as they do not have unlimited access to a car.²

1. Legal framework

Constitutional law

Local and regional public transport is not declared a public task in Austrian constitutional law. The Austrian federal constitution (*Bundesverfassungsgesetz* [B-VG]) does not contain any public task catalogue.³ The numerous public tasks are carried out by the State or under its supervision in the absence of a general or special constitutional mandate. Services of general interest (including local and regional public transport) are one example of those public tasks undertaken without a constitutional mandate.⁴ The constitutional competence assignments

² VCÖ p. 9.

³ Funk, p. 196.

⁴ In Austria the term ‘services of general interest’ refers especially to traffic (road, railway, air, ship), educational and cultural facilities (schools, universities, museums, theatres, libraries), hospitals, supply and disposal systems (water and energy supply, effluent and waste management) and communication systems (postal services, broadcasting). The term ‘services of general interest’ is therefore

(Art 10 ff B-VG) in different fields (e.g., transport and health sector, educational system) do not oblige the State to fulfil public tasks, nor to ensure their provision. They merely justify the competence of legislation and execution in these fields.⁵

Several constitutional provisions are relevant for the distribution of competences regarding local and regional public transport. A uniform and comprehensive competence assignment does not exist.⁶ As mentioned earlier, a distinction must be made between local and regional road and railway transport. The competence in local and regional (passenger) rail transport is assigned to the federal State (*Bund*) in Art. 10 section 1, number 9 B-VG (“Verkehrswesen bezüglich der Eisenbahnen”). This provision assigns all legislative and executive powers relating to rail transport to the federal State. The concept of rail transport as used in Art. 10, section 1, number 9 B-VG, is comprehensive. It goes beyond the classic form of this means of transport and includes all rail-bound vehicles: Besides rail-bound railway systems including subway and trams, trolley buses and cablecars are also included.⁷

Several competence assignments exist in local and regional road (passenger) transport. On the one hand, Art. 10, section 1, number 8, B-VG (“Angelegenheiten des Gewerbes”) assigns the legislative and executive powers relating to matters of trade and industry to the federal State. Regulations pertaining to commercial enterprises transporting passengers (and goods) by road with public traffic are based on this provision. However, Art. 10, section 1, number 9 B-VG (“Kraftfahrwesen”) attributes the competence of legislation and execution in vehicular traffic to the federal State. Based on this provision regulations can be enacted establishing the rules for the regime and safety of motor vehicles.⁸

primarily associated with the State’s responsibility for infrastructure (cf. Holoubek/Segalla, p. 200).

⁵ Although for example, according to Art. 10, section 1, number 9 B-VG, the competence of legislation and execution of legal provisions regarding the planning, construction and operation of railways is attributed to the federal State, it has no obligation to legislate. Neither is the federal State obliged to become active in an entrepreneurial way in railway traffic nor to provide for entrepreneurial activities.

⁶ Funk, p. 197.

⁷ Funk, p. 198.

⁸ Funk, p. 198 f. Moreover, Art. 11 section 1 number 4 B-VG bears relevance to local and regional public transport. This provision declares the highway police a matter of federal law. However, the execution of highway police matters is assigned to the *Länder*.

Federal law and regional law

The federal Local and Regional Transport Act (*Öffentliches Personennah- und Regional-verkehrsgesetz* [ÖPNRV-G]) governing the organization and funding of local and regional public transport plays a pivotal role in public transport regulation.⁹ Road passenger transport is primarily regulated in the Passenger Transport Routes Act (*Kraftfahrliniengesetz* [KflG]),¹⁰ rail passenger transport is mainly regulated in the Railways Act (*Eisenbahngesetz* [EisbG]).¹¹ Since the federal State is constitutionally enabled to enact the practically most important regulations pertaining to road and rail passenger transport, there are no special *Länder* laws governing local and regional public transport.

Responsibility

The territorial corporate bodies (*Gebietskörperschaften*), i.e., the federal State, *Länder* and municipalities, are responsible for the provision of local and regional public transport. According to § 7 ÖPNRV-G the federal State is responsible for local and regional public rail passenger transport. It has to ensure a basic public transport supply as provided in the timetable year 1999/2000. *Länder* and municipalities have responsibility for the provision of local and regional road passenger transport. However, no legal distribution of responsibility between the *Länder* and municipalities exist.

2. Provision and regulation of LPT services

a) Prevailing organizational forms

Local and regional public transport in Austria is organized nationwide into transport associations (*Verkehrsverbände*).¹² A transport association is a contractual, supralocal cooperation of territorial corporate bodies and

⁹ Bundesgesetz über die Ordnung des öffentlichen Personennah- und Regionalverkehrs, BGBl I 1999/204 idgF

¹⁰ Bundesgesetz über die linienmäßige Beförderung von Personen mit Kraftfahrzeugen, BGBl I 1999/203 idgF

¹¹ Bundesgesetz über Eisenbahnen, Schienenfahrzeuge auf Eisenbahnen und den Verkehr auf Eisenbahnen, BGBl I 1957/60 idgF

¹² Austria is the world's only state having a nationwide coverage of transport associations.

transport companies. Territorial corporate bodies on the one hand negotiate founding and funding contracts among themselves and on the other hand enter into transport service contracts with transport companies operating in the respective area. Transport associations aim above all at the integration of existing transport companies into associations, at standardized fares (*Verbundregelbeförderungspreis*) and at the free choice of the means of transport within every association (true to the slogan “*Mit dem Bus hin, mit der Bahn zurück*” [“Go there by bus, come back by train”]).

The federal Local and Regional Public Transport Act reflects the central role of the transport associations in Austrian local and regional public transport, dedicating a whole section - section II (§§ 14 ÖPNRV-G) - to them. A transport association usually covers an entire *Land*, but may also extend beyond the borders of a *Land*. According to § 14 ÖPNRV-G the spatial extent of a transport association has to be geared towards passenger flows.

The federal Local and Regional Public Transport Act envisions cooperation between the transport companies within a particular transport association.¹³ An exemplary list of tasks assigned to the transport companies is given in § 16 ÖPNRV-G. According to this article, the transport companies are first and foremost supposed to set fares jointly and establish integrated timetables.

In order for the territorial corporate bodies to be able to perform their tasks and those tasks that transport companies cannot effectively cope with, § 17 ÖPNRV-G stipulates the setting up of a steering committee (*Verkehrsverbundorganisationsgesellschaft*) within every transport association. Associates of a steering committee can only be territorial corporate bodies; transport companies are excluded. § 18 ÖPNRV-G lists, by way of example, a steering committee’s tasks. The steering committee is, *inter alia*, responsible for laying down the fundamental guidelines concerning setting fares, for an integrated information system, marketing activities, quality management (according to § 31 ÖPNRV-G), local and regional public transport planning suggestions to the territorial corporate bodies, tendering¹⁴ on behalf of the territorial corporate bodies and

¹³ A cooperation decreed by law appears problematic, for it can be misused for a concerted action of the transport companies within a particular transport association.

¹⁴ Tendering by the steering committees is problematic, as the territorial corporate bodies are usually the owners of both the steering committee and the transport companies. Conflicts between the owner and principal function are therefore likely to arise.

conclusion of transport service contracts. Moreover, the steering committee calculates the income and allocates it to the transport companies within the respective transport association. Hence, it performs the functions of a regulator (e.g., quality management) as well as coordinating and advisory functions (e.g., local and regional public transport planning suggestions).

Austrian local and regional public transport has been organized along the German model of the *Hamburger Verkehrsverbund* founded in 1965 (which was advertised by the slogan “*Nur eine Fahrkarte und ein Fahrplan für ganz Hamburg!*” [“Only one single ticket and timetable for the whole of Hamburg!”]). The first Austrian transport association was set up in 1984 (*Verkehrsverbund Ost-Region*). Today, there are eight transport associations: *Verkehrsverbund Ost-Region* (VOR), *Verkehrsverbund Vorarlberg* (VVV, 1991), *Verkehrsverbund Kärnten* (VVK, 1994), *Verkehrsverbund Tirol* (VVT, 1995), *Salzburger Verkehrsverbund* (SVV, 1995), *Oberösterreichischer Verkehrsverbund* (OÖVV, 1996), *Verkehrsverbund Niederösterreich-Burgenland* (VVNB, 1991 or 1997)¹⁵ and *Verkehrsverbund Steiermark* (VVST, 1997). With the exception of Wien, Niederösterreich and Burgenland, every province disposes of its own transport association. The three provinces mentioned are divided into two transport associations.

Table 1: Austrian transport associations

transport association	transport companies	network length in km (2004)	number of lines (2004)
VOR	14	8 000	351
OÖVV	44	9 200	280
VVV	26	1 250	100
VVST	64	10 000	500
SVV	17	3 089	123
VVT	32	4 000	227
VVNB	28	19 154	397
VVK	13	3 000	181

¹⁵ The *Verkehrsverbund Niederösterreich-Burgenland* itself is again divided into five subunits: *Waldviertel* (WVV, 1991), *nördliches Weinviertel* (NWV, 1991), *Niederösterreich Zentral und Mostviertel* (ZMV, 1991), *Niederösterreich Süd und Mittelburgenland* (NBV, 1991) and *Südburgenland* (SBV, 1997).

It should be pointed out that the *Salzburger Verkehrsverbund* entered into cooperation with the German administrative district of Berchtesgaden (*Landkreis Berchtesgaden*) in 1997, thereby creating Europe's first cross-border transport association.

Market access in local and regional public passenger road transport

As a matter of principle, all companies regardless of their (private or public) ownership are able to engage in local and regional public transport in compliance with national legislation. Although the territorial corporate bodies bear responsibility for the provision of local and regional public transport, they do not have to render services themselves, but may entrust such provision to third parties. However, if a territorial corporate body wants to impose economically unprofitable (*gemeinwirtschaftlich*) services in public interest on a transport company, according to EEC regulation Nr 1191/69, this has to be done by means of a contract instead of a mandatory obligation. However, the regulation contains an exemption to this rule, as far as city, suburb and regional traffic is concerned. What remains uncertain is the way in which these contracts should be awarded. The aforementioned regulation does not specify whether or not (and in which way) these contracts have to be tendered.¹⁶

The most important regulation governing market access in passenger road transport is the Passenger Transport Routes Act (KfllG). A passenger transport route is defined as the regular transport of passengers carried out by a transport company by means of motor vehicles¹⁷ on a defined route, where passengers are picked up and dropped off at defined stops. Intrastate (and cross-border) passenger transport requires a concession for a particular route; area concessions do not exist.

The Passenger Transport Routes Act regulates access to the market in reference to the ÖPNRV-G differently. According to EU requirements, it distinguishes between economically profitable (*eigenwirtschaftlich*) and economically unprofitable (*gemeinwirtschaftlich*) transport services in

¹⁶ This is the reason why regulation EEC Nr 1191/69 will be replaced by a new one (EC No. 1370/2007, coming into force in December 2009). The new regulation allows the member states' authorities to choose between tendering economically unprofitable services in public interest and rendering these services themselves or entrusting an in-house operator with them, respectively.

¹⁷ Meaning motor vehicles designed and equipped for the transport of more than nine people including the driver.

public interest. § 3 section 2 ÖPNRV-G states that services whose costs can be covered by fare revenues are considered to be economically profitable. Financing contributions of territorial bodies or third parties to cover the transport companies' losses (see 3) or tariff subsidies for special fares for certain groups of passengers (e.g., pupils and apprentices) are deemed to be fare revenues, too. Services whose costs cannot be covered by fare revenues and therefore require subsidies by the territorial corporate bodies or by third parties for their sustainment are considered to be economically unprofitable (§ 3, section 3 ÖPNRV-G).

The Passenger Transport Routes Act does not orient itself by the principle of the orderer, as far as economically profitable services are concerned. According to the KfIG, the initiative for the provision of a transport service usually does not originate from the orderer or responsible territorial corporate body, but from the transport entrepreneur. The application for the concession has to be filed with the authority concerned (usually the governor [*Landeshauptmann*]).¹⁸

If the concession requirements are met, the concession has to be granted. The necessary requirements can be classified into two categories: occupational and market access criteria. Occupational access criteria are reliability, aptitude and financial capability. Market access criteria are usefulness and efficiency in the satisfaction of transport needs. Moreover, the transport route applied for must not run counter to the public's interest. This will be the case if public transport services rendered by established transport operators are jeopardized once a (new) concession is granted (§ 7 section 1 Z 4 KfIG).¹⁹ It is highly debatable whether it can be deduced from the law that a certain transport service might only be awarded to one single transport operator. The Supreme Administrative Court (*Verwaltungsgerichtshof*) adopts a strict interpretation of this provision.²⁰

In contrast to economically profitable services, economically unprofitable passenger road transport services in public interest must also be tendered. The relevant provision is § 23 KfIG. If routes are to be operated which have not been operated due to their unprofitability or which are going to be

¹⁸ Appeals against rulings of a governor are to be decided by the Independent Administrative Tribunals in the respective *Länder* (§ 21 KfIG).

¹⁹ Clearly this provision grants protection against competition. In the light of EC law it is questionable.

²⁰ Hermann, p. 9.

unprofitable in the future, the orderer has to tender them according to public procurement law.²¹

In pertinent literature the insufficient competitive approach of the Passenger Transport Routes Act is often criticized.²² The distinction between economically profitable and economically unprofitable services in public interest serves as an incentive to declare routes as profitable, so they do not have to be tendered. As most allocations of the territorial corporate bodies are considered fare revenues establishing profitability, it is therefore rather easy in reality to avoid the tender procedure. Hence, only additional routes are tendered in practice.²³

Market access in passenger rail transport

As far as passenger railway transport is concerned, the most important regulation governing market access is the Railways Act (EisbG). In order to be able to provide transport services, a license (*Verkehrsgenehmigung*) is needed. If passenger transport services are operated only within cities or suburbs, a concession (*Verkehrskonzession*) is awarded.²⁴ License and concession requirements are, amongst others, financial capacity and expertise. The license and concession are granted by the federal minister for transport, innovation and technology on application. According to § 56 EisbG, railway infrastructure companies are obliged to grant access to their railway network to all railway companies upon confirmation of the respective company's admission to the market. As far as economically unprofitable services in general interest are concerned, the Railways Act simply refers to pertinent federal provisions (e.g., ÖPNRV-G).

b) Production efficiency under different ownership and organizational forms

No studies regarding production efficiency under different ownership could be found.

²¹ However, not all economically unprofitable services have to be tendered. There are exemptions for city, suburb and regional traffic.

²² instead of many, Kahl *passim*.

²³ Wieser, p. 176.

²⁴ A *Verkehrsgenehmigung* is more comprehensive than a *Verkehrskonzession*. A *Verkehrsgenehmigung* grants Austrian companies access to the railway infrastructure in other EC/EEA member states (principle of single license).

c) Wage bargaining

A distinction has to be drawn between private and public employment and within public employment. Within public employment it has to be distinguished between public appointees (*Beamte*) and *Vertragsbedienstete*. While public appointees are appointed by notice (*Bescheid*), *Vertragsbedienstete* are employed under private law (private law contracts) by the State.²⁵

The legal status of the public employee is codified in several (public) laws. In the field of federal administration mention should be made of the Federal Public Appointees Act (*Beamten-Dienstrechtsgesetz* [BDG]). The federal public appointees' payment scheme is regulated by the Federal Salary Act (*Gehaltsgesetz* [GehG]). As far as the public appointees of the *Länder* and municipalities are concerned, similar *Länder* laws exist. Employment as *Vertragsbediensteter* in federal administration is regulated by the federal *Vertragsbedienstetengesetz* (VBG). Again, similar *Länder* laws for the *Vertragsbedienstete* of the *Länder* and municipalities exist.

Private employment is governed by civil law (especially the Salaried Employees Act [*Angestelltengesetz* {AngG}]) where collective agreements (*Kollektivverträge*) - written contracts negotiated between representatives of the employees and employers - play a vital role.²⁶ Collective agreements are legally based on the Labour Relations Constitutional Act (*Arbeitsverfassungsgesetz* [ArbVG]). They are concluded by corporations entitled to the conclusion of these collective agreements by law. Legally able to conclude collective agreements are the chamber of labour (*Arbeiterkammer*) [on behalf of the employees] and the chamber of commerce (*Wirtschaftskammer*) [on behalf of the employers]. However, certain other associations (e.g., the Industrialists' Association [*Industriellenvereinigung*] and the federation of trade unions [*Gewerkschaftsbund*]) are also legally enabled to conclude collective agreements. For example, the chamber of labour has never exerted its legal right; in its stead the federation of trade unions concludes collective agreements on behalf of the employees.

²⁵ For the distinction between public appointees and *Vertragsbedienstete* only their employment status is relevant. Whether they perform sovereign functions or private economic administration tasks (*Privatwirtschafts-verwaltung*) is not decisive.

²⁶ Public employment may also be regulated by collective agreements, provided that certain *Vertragsbedienstete* are exempt from the application of the respective federal and *Länder* laws.

Employees in the field of local and regional public transport are represented by three different unions: the union *vida* (consortium of the previously separate unions for railroad, trade, transport and traffic employees), the postal workers' union and the municipal workers' union. Union density is about 80% in public companies and 40% in private companies. The rate of unionization on the employers' side is 100% (municipalities, chamber of commerce and *Postbus AG*).²⁷ Because of the high union density wage bargaining (still) plays the most important role, whereas plant bargaining is the exception.

A problem concerning public employment, liberalization and privatization shall be mentioned here. In the course of liberalization and privatization beginning in the late 1980s, territorial corporate bodies have been spinning off their public companies (under public law) into legal entities under private law (which are however still publicly owned) [*Ausgliederung*]. In this context the "privatization" of public employment poses a serious problem. As far as public employees are concerned, these spin-offs normally entail dissolving their employment with the territorial corporate body and at the same time taking up employment with the newly created (private) entity. However, the dissolution of public appointees' employment is highly problematic, as their (form of) employment is protected by the constitution. The solution in Austrian practice is the maintenance of public appointees' employment and their "reassignment" (*Zuweisung*) to the newly created (private) entity by law. As far as *Vertragsbedienstete* are concerned, a similar problem arises. According to the Supreme Constitutional Court, there are limits to the "privatization" of their employment as well, as the change of employer (from the territorial corporate body to the new legal entity under private law) constitutes an infringement of basic property rights: Spin-off claims resulting from employment would formerly be satisfied by the territorial corporate bodies and their virtually infinite funds.²⁸

Several publicly owned companies (under private law) now have employees under different forms of employment. There are public appointees and *Vertragsbedienstete* on the one hand, and there are employees under private law on the other hand. In view of the competition between private and publicly owned companies, this is an unsatisfactory situation. Competition in local and regional public transport is more or less limited to labour cost reduction. As publicly owned companies dispose of public appointees and *Vertragsbedienstete* whose payment scheme and

²⁷ Brandt/Schulten, p. 44.

²⁸ Potacs, p. 412.

work-related benefits have always been perceived as more favourable in comparison with employees under private law, the downward flexibility of wages is hindered. As a result, publicly owned companies incur 30% to 50% higher labour costs than private companies.²⁹

d) Structure of the offer and e) output

In 2003 there were 667 companies in Austrian local and regional public transport.³⁰ The largest of these companies are owned by territorial corporate bodies (in particular municipalities).

In the past territorial corporate bodies used to run their businesses as part of the administration (*Regiebetriebe*). These businesses did not constitute legal persons and were governed by public law. For example, the *Wiener Stadtwerke-Verkehrsbetriebe* was previously incorporated into the Viennese municipal administration (*Magistrat*³¹). However, since the end of the 1980s territorial corporate bodies have increasingly been spinning off these businesses into (separate) legal entities under private law. The *Wiener Stadtwerke-Verkehrsbetriebe* for instance was spun off in 1999. Various reasons have been enumerated to explain this development. Spin-offs shall make financing outside of the budget possible and therefore avoid the restrictions of budget laws. Moreover, specialization, flexibility, debureaucratization and depoliticization are expected from spin-offs. Above all, adherence to the rigid Maastricht convergence criteria has led to numerous spin-offs.

As mentioned above, public tasks previously undertaken by (public) companies incorporated into the municipal administration have been devolved upon (newly established) entities under private law on a large scale. These entities under private law are usually organized as incorporated companies in the manner of stock corporations (*Aktiengesellschaft* [AG]) and limited liability corporations (*Gesellschaft*

²⁹ Unfried, p. 151.

³⁰ Hermann, p. 2.

³¹ The Viennese *Magistrat* is an institution to which the task of municipal administration is assigned. It is organized into Administrative City Groups (*Geschäftsgruppen*) and, within these, into municipal departments (*Abteilungen*) or *Unternehmungen*. *Unternehmungen* are commercial institutions which are granted this status by the City Council (*Gemeinderat*). They have no legal personality; however their assets are managed separately. Until 1998 the *Wiener Stadtwerke* (comprising electricity, gas, transport and funeral services) used to be such an *Unternehmung*.

mit beschränkter Haftung [GmbH]). Yet, although the corporate organization has changed, territorial corporate bodies usually remain owners of the companies. What has changed is the form of enterprise.

The biggest company in Austrian local and regional public transport is the *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG*. The *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* is a 100% subsidiary of the *Wiener Stadtwerke Holding AG* which itself belongs entirely to the municipality of Vienna. The *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* carries some 793 million passengers annually. It employed 7 772 employees in 2007. The company operates five underground, 32 trams and 83 bus routes and owns 1 226 rail cars, 360 trailers and 478 buses.³² Municipal transport companies also occupy a dominant position in other *Länder* capitals. For example, the *Linz Linien GmbH* carries some 95 million passengers every year. Like the *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* the *Linz Linien GmbH* is a 100% subsidiary of the *Linz AG*, which itself is owned by the municipality of Linz.³³ The *Grazer Verkehrsbetriebe* serves some 93 million passengers per year. It is part of the *Grazer Stadtwerke AG* which belongs to the municipality of Graz (99.46%) and the *Grazer Bau- und Grünlandsicherung GmbH* (0.54%). The *Grazer Bau- und Grünlandsicherung GmbH* again is owned by the municipality of Graz.³⁴ The passenger count of the *Innsbrucker Verkehrsbetriebe und Stubaitalbahnen GmbH* touches some 47 million passengers every year. 51% of the company's shares are held by the *Innsbrucker Kommunalbetriebe AG*, 45% by the municipality of Innsbruck and 4% by the province of Tirol. Shareholders of the *Innsbrucker Kommunalbetriebe AG* are the municipality of Innsbruck (50% plus one share) and the *Tiroler Wasserkraft AG* (50% minus one share).³⁵ The *Salzburger Stadtbus* and the *Salzburger Lokalbahnen* as part of the *Salzburg AG* carry some 44 million passengers annually. 42.56% of the *Salzburg AG* is owned by the province of Salzburg, 31.31% by the municipality of Salzburg and 26.13% by the *Energie Oberösterreich Service- und Beteiligungsverwaltung GmbH*.³⁶ The *Stadtwerke Klagenfurt AG* which is entirely owned by the municipality of Klagenfurt serves with its 64 buses some 21 million passengers every year.³⁷ The *Bregenzer Stadtbus* as part of the *Stadtwerke Bregenz GmbH* carries some 3.5 million passengers per year. Sole shareholder of the *Stadtwerke Bregenz GmbH* is the municipality of Bregenz.³⁸

³² <http://www.wienerlinien.at>, 18.06.2008.

³³ <http://www.linzag.at>, 18.06.2008.

³⁴ <http://www.gvb.at>, 18.06.2008.

³⁵ <http://www.ivb.at>, 18.06.2008.

³⁶ <http://www.salzburg-ag.at>, 18.06.2008.

³⁷ <http://www.stw.at>, 19.06.2008.

³⁸ <http://www.stadtwerke-bregenz.at>, 19.06.2008.

Outside the urban centres the *ÖBB Postbus GmbH* dominates local and regional public (road) transport. The *Postbus GmbH* resulted from a merger of *Postbus* and *Bahnbus*. The company is a 100% subsidiary of the *ÖBB Personenverkehr AG*, which itself is wholly owned by the *ÖBB Holding AG*. The *ÖBB Holding AG* belongs to the federal State. The *Postbus GmbH* serves some 238 million passengers annually. It owns 2 100 buses and its turnover amounts to 351 million euro. According to the company's estimate, its market share in Austrian local and regional public transport touches 20%; its market share in (total Austrian) bus transport stands at 50% and in regional bus transport at 70%.³⁹ According to another estimate, the *Postbus GmbH*'s market share in regional bus transport is even higher (85%).⁴⁰

Another 5% market share in regional bus transport is held by big and medium-size companies such as *Dr Richard Linien GmbH & Co KG*. As opposed to the *Postbus GmbH*, *Dr Richard Linien GmbH & Co KG* is a private - the biggest private - company. It owns more than 800 buses and employs 1 200 employees.⁴¹ *Dr Richard Linien GmbH & Co KG* serves the provinces of Burgenland, Carinthia, Lower Austria, Salzburg, Styria and Vienna. Other big (private) companies are *Blaguss*, operating some 245 buses, and *Sabtours* operating some 100 buses. The remaining market share is divided among small operators with less than ten buses.⁴²

In rail passenger transport the *ÖBB Personenverkehr AG* has a dominant position (similar to the *ÖBB Postbus GmbH* in regional bus transport). The *ÖBB Personenverkehr AG* is the second largest company in Austrian local and regional public transport after the *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG*. Its market share in rail passenger transport touches 98%.⁴³ Every year the company carries some 196 million passengers. It operates 3 600 short-distance trains daily and employs 3.559 employees.⁴⁴ The remaining market share of 2% is divided among several small operators which, for the most part, are publicly or semipublicly owned. These small railway companies operate a railway system with a total length of 563 km (around a tenth of the total length of the *ÖBB* railway system).⁴⁵

³⁹ <http://www.postbus.at>, 18.06..2008.

⁴⁰ Hermann, p. 3.

⁴¹ <http://www.richard.at>, 19.06.2008.

⁴² Hermann, p. 3.

⁴³ Kammer für Arbeiter und Angestellte für Wien, p. 121.

⁴⁴ <http://www.oebb.at>, 19.06.2008.

⁴⁵ Hemmer/Hollos, p. 25.

Table 2: Austrian railway companies 2002

company	market share in rail passenger transport
ÖBB	98.02%
Steiermärkische Landesbahnen	0.28%
Graz Köflacher Eisenbahn	n/a
Raab-Ödenburg-Ebenfurter Eisenbahn	0.21%
Linzer Lokalbahn	0.66%
Salzburger Lokalbahn	n/a
Zillertalbahn	0.33%
Stubaitalbahn	0.11%
Other railway companies	0.40%

It is interesting to note that multinational companies have thus far not involved themselves in Austrian local and regional public transport.⁴⁶

f) **Regulation** (see legal framework)

3. Financing

The local and regional public transport services are basically financed by fare revenues. According to § 18 ÖPNRV-G, the steering committee is usually responsible for the calculation of the income and its allocation to the transport companies within the respective transport association (see 2a). However, full cost recovery is not achieved through fare revenues. Fare revenues merely cover 33% of total costs of local and regional public transport.⁴⁷ Hence, transport companies are dependent on additional financing by the territorial corporate bodies.

⁴⁶ Hermann, p. 4.

⁴⁷ The degree of cost recovery differs from region to region: The *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* for example achieve 50% cost recovery, whereas ÖBB only attains 30% to 40% (cf. Wieser, p. 174).

For the most part the insufficient fare revenues are due to the comparatively low (standardized) fares (*Verbundregelbeförderungspreis*). Since transport associations seek to promote local and regional public transport and try to modify the modal split⁴⁸ in favour of it, ticket prices are lower than they would be if set by transport companies alone. As transport companies lose revenue due to the reduced ticket prices, they incur a loss (*Abtarifizierungsverlust*) that has to be covered by the territorial corporate bodies.

In addition, transport companies lose money because of the degressive ticket price. A transport association offers free choice of the means of transport with one single ticket. Because of the degressive tariff design the first kilometres covered are always more expensive. In order to charge the passenger using several means of transport only once the higher price of the initial kilometres, a constant ticket price is calculated for the entire journey under the assumption that the passenger does not change the means of transport. The degressive ticket price thus further increases the loss (*Durchtarifizierungsverlust*) of the transport companies. To entice their participation in the transport associations the territorial corporate bodies have to guarantee them loss coverage (*Alteinnahmengarantie*⁴⁹).

As mentioned above, the ticket price is set by the respective transport association's companies in cooperation with the respective steering committee (see 2a). In Austria there are two different tariff models to be found in the transport associations. The *Haltestellen-gruppenmodell* on the one hand integrates several stops into a single tariff (stop) group. The price for transportation within a tariff group does not depend on the distance whereas the price for transportation between tariff groups is calculated according to the distance covered between the groups. The *Haltestellengruppenmodell* is used by the *Verkehrsverbände Niederösterreich-Burgendland* and *Kärnten*. The *Zonenmodell* on the other hand integrates several stops into a zone (or a "comb"). A "comb" usually stretches over 6, a zone over 10 kilometres on average. As with the *Haltestellengruppenmodell*, the price of transportation within a zone does not depend on the distance. The price of transportation between different zones is calculated according to the number of zones passed through. The

⁴⁸ Modal split refers to the distribution of transport volume between different modes of transport in traffic statistics.

⁴⁹ The system of *Alteinnahmengarantie* obviously conflicts with EU funding guidelines. It should therefore be abandoned. The funds gained as a result of the phase-out of the *Alteinnahmengarantie* system will be used for ordering new routes and tariff subsidies (see 2a).

Zonenmodell is used by all transport associations except the *Verkehrsverbände Niederösterreich-Burgenland* and *Kärnten*.

Transport associations offer different types of tickets. Single, daily, weekly, monthly and annual tickets can be purchased. Discounts for children, schoolchildren, apprentices, students, senior citizens and the disabled are available. Some transport associations additionally offer special tickets (e.g., for families).

The low cost recovery through fare revenues has already been mentioned above. Besides fare revenues and other proceeds (e.g., rent, advertising revenue), the expenses of the transport companies and other costs of local and regional public transport are primarily covered by payments from the territorial corporate bodies. In 1999 for example, the federal State, *Länder* and municipalities financed 1.3 billion out of the 1.9 billion euro total cost of the local and regional public transport. The bulk of the financial burden - 836 million euro - was shouldered by the federal State. The provinces raised 49 million and the municipalities 429 million euro.⁵⁰

§§ 24 ff ÖPNRV-G contain provisions pertaining to the financing of the local and regional public transport. The financing sources themselves are diverse. The basic offer of local and regional public railway transport has to be financed (directly) by the federal State. Local and regional public road transport is funded by the *Länder* and municipalities, partly using funds obtained from the federal State as equalization payments (*Finanzausgleich*). In addition, local and regional public road transport is financed directly by the federal State which pays, *inter alia*, for tickets of schoolchildren and apprentices.

Since the 1993 Financial Compensation Act (*Finanzausgleichsgesetz* [FAG]) the federal State disburses money to the municipalities intended for the promotion of local and regional public transport. According to § 20 section 1 FAG 2008 the federal State grants 15.6 million euro plus 0.034% of the net yield of certain taxes⁵¹ (*Abgaben mit einheitlichem Schlüssel*) [*Finanzzuweisung*] to the municipalities every year. 55% of these funds are allocated to the municipality of Vienna. The remaining 45% are distributed

⁵⁰ Wieser, p. 174.

⁵¹ According to § 9, section 1, FAG 2008 these taxes and fees are: income tax, corporate income tax, value-added tax, tobacco tax, capital transfer tax, electricity fee, natural gas fee, coal fee, beer tax, sparkling wine tax, intermediate product tax, alcohol tax, mineral oil tax, motor vehicle tax, insurance tax, engine power based vehicle insurance tax, norm consumption fee, concession fee and promotion of the arts contribution.

between Vienna (because it owns the *Wiener Lokalbahnen AG*) and those municipalities that operate one or more bus, trolley bus or tram lines. The (remaining) funds are allotted based on the ratio between the length of the lines and the number of passengers carried.

Moreover, the federal State grants to municipalities 16.5 million euro plus 0.034% of taxes and fees mentioned above (*Finanzzuweisung*) intended for capital investment. These funds are apportioned as follows: 500 000 euro plus 3% of 0.034% of the abovementioned taxes and fees are intended for stationary facilities located at the intersection of public transport routes (bus terminals). The remaining funds are intended for the promotion of investments in trolley bus and tram lines. They are allotted to the provincial capitals with more than 100 000 inhabitants. 64.7% of funds are granted to Vienna, 11.1% to Graz, 8.7% to Innsbruck, 8.1% to Linz and 7.4% to Salzburg.

In addition to the abovementioned *Finanzzuweisungen*, the federal State may make additional money available if *Länder* or municipalities are intent on expanding public transportation (*Bestellerförderung*). Depending on the budget situation, up to 50% of the costs of expanding public transportation may be covered by the federal State on condition that *Länder* or the municipalities pay the rest themselves. The federal state grants around 11 million euro in *Bestellerförderung* every year.

Table 3: federal State funding in million euro in 2005

payments according to the Local and Regional Public Transport Act (e.g., <i>Bestellerförderung</i>)	70.1
economically unprofitable railway services	471.8
schoolchildren's and apprentices' tickets	360.0
payments in accordance with the FAG	180.3
Total	1 082.2

4. Monitoring and regulation of provision, quality and development of accessibility

a) Attractiveness of services

Indicators could not be found. As far as Vienna is concerned, opinion polls on the attractiveness of local and regional public transport exist, showing high citizen satisfaction with the provided transport services (see 4e).

b) Development of prices and affordability indexes

c) Social accessibility

As mentioned earlier, there are special discount fares available for children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities (see 3). In addition, discount tickets are offered to schoolchildren, apprentices and students.

The inclusion of schoolchildren and apprentices in transport associations was achieved only through protracted negotiations in 2004/2005. According to § 29 ÖPNRV-G, the costs of schoolchildren's and apprentices' discount tickets are borne by the federal State; in 2005 they amounted to 360 million euro (see table 3).

Students whose parents receive child benefit payments (*Familienbeihilfe*) are entitled to a ticket discount every semester. The price of a (semester) ticket is usually 30% to 40% lower than the price of a conventional ticket. The difference is paid for by the federal State and the respective territorial corporate bodies (depending on where the university is located).⁵²

Besides issuing discount tickets to the abovementioned groups of people in order to alleviate income restrictions, measures are taken to facilitate access of the disabled to local and regional public transport. According to § 31 ÖPNRV-G, accessibility of public transport is a quality criterion to be evaluated (see 4e). In recent years transport companies have started operating ultra low floor vehicles. In contrast to regular low floor trains, trams and buses, the floor in the interior of an ultra low floor vehicle is low enough to be at the same height as the pavement, which makes access to

⁵² <http://www.bmvit.gv.at>, 23.06.2008.

trains, trams and buses particularly easy for passengers in wheelchairs or with pushchairs.

d) Development of territorial accessibility

Indicators could not be found. Based on the conclusion drawn in 2a (nationwide transport associations) it can be said that the provision of transport services is (still) satisfactory. However, it should be noted that considerations concerning the rate of return of certain routes are becoming increasingly important, making a reduction of transport services in the future more likely.

e) Development of quality of services

§ 31 ÖPNRV-G contains various quality criteria. These criteria need to be evaluated separately for each transport service. Government funding is tied to their fulfilment. A wide range of criteria exist. On the one hand the accessibility of the systems of local and regional public transport (e.g., provision for the needs of persons with disabilities, user-friendly vehicle and ticket machine design, easy accessibility of stops, optimal coordination of transport services by means of integrated timetables, among others) has to be assessed. On the other hand personal and operational security (e.g., correct quantity and quality of light in the stations) need to be assured. Travel comfort constitutes another criterion. Travel comfort shall be achieved through the minimization of travel and transfer time, the reliability and frequency of transport services and the cleanliness of vehicles. Moreover, criteria such as standard information systems nationwide and reduction of pollution are mentioned. All these criteria have to be controlled by the respective transport association steering committee.

Every year the project BEST (Benchmarking in European Service of Public Transport) gauges citizen satisfaction with local and regional public transport in different participating cities.⁵³ Participants are Vienna, Barcelona, Berlin, Geneva, Helsinki, Copenhagen, Manchester, Oslo, Prague and Stockholm. Every year in March 1 000 citizens are interviewed by telephone in each of the participating cities on their overall satisfaction with local and regional public transport, personal security and safety, reliability, traffic supply, comfort, staff behaviour, information, value for money, social image and loyalty. In 2007 Vienna ranked first in the

⁵³ <http://best2005.net>, 23.06.2008.

categories overall satisfaction with local and regional public transport, personal security and safety, value for money and loyalty. Since the first report was published in 2002, Vienna's ranking has constantly improved. In 2002 the city ranked first only in the category personal security and safety. The survey suggests the high quality of Viennese local and regional public transport.

5. Case studies

Vienna

As mentioned earlier, the organization of public transport services is primarily the task of *Länder* and municipalities (see 1). As far as the administrative organization is concerned, Vienna enjoys a special status, inasmuch as it is both a *Land* and municipality. Vienna's organs are the mayor (who is at the same time the governor), the city council (at the same time the *Landtag*), the city senate (at the same time the *Land* government) and the city administration (*Magistrat*). The city senate is elected by the city council. It consists of the mayor (who is elected by the city council as well) and at least nine city senators. One of the executive⁵⁴ city senators is responsible for urban development and traffic matters. He is the head of an administrative city group (*Geschäftsgruppe*), that is the administrative city group for urban development and traffic matters (*Geschäftsgruppe Stadtentwicklung und Verkehr*). The *Magistrat* serves as Vienna's administrative authority and is directed by the city council, the executive city senators and the mayor. The *Magistrat* is divided into administrative city groups. The administrative city group for urban development and traffic matters is responsible, *inter alia*, for traffic planning, traffic coordination and legal matters arising in connection with traffic issues (e.g., award of concessions).

As far as fares do not cover the costs of local and regional public transport, the territorial corporate bodies share the financing (see 3). The administrative city group for finances, economic policy and *Wiener Stadtwerke* (*Geschäftsgruppe Finanzen, Wirtschaftspolitik und Wiener Stadtwerke*) deals with the financing of Viennese local and regional public transport.

⁵⁴ The executive city senators are elected from the ranks of the city senators based on nominations by the city council. They manage administrative city groups in subordination to the mayor and are responsible to the city council.

Local and regional public transport in Vienna is primarily provided by two companies: *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* and *ÖBB Personenverkehr AG*. Both companies (under private law) are fully owned by territorial corporate bodies. The provision of services is based on transport service contracts between the municipality of Vienna and the respective transport companies (see 2a).

Originally, the *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* was part of the municipal administration under the name of *Wiener Stadtwerke-Verkehrsbetriebe*. The *Wiener Stadtwerke* has a long tradition: between 1899 and 1907 Vienna municipalized the existing electric power stations, gas plants and transport companies. On January 1st 1999 the *Wiener Stadtwerke* were spun off into the *Wiener Stadtwerke Holding AG* which holds all the shares of the *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG*. The *Wiener Stadtwerke Holding AG* itself is entirely owned by the municipality of Vienna.

The *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* is the biggest company in Austrian local and regional public transport. In 2007 it employed 7 772 employees and achieved a turnover of 391.9 million euro.⁵⁵ While annual turnovers have been rising in recent years,⁵⁶ employment has declined: In 1996 8 963 employees worked for the *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG*, whereas their number had decreased to 8 279 by 2003. In 2007 only 7 772 employees worked for the company.⁵⁷ The staff has thus been reduced by 13% since 1996. The heterogeneity of employment due to liberalization and privatization has already been mentioned (see 2c). New employees who are no longer employed under public law have to accept wages which are about 13% lower than those of their co-workers hired before the spin-off.⁵⁸

In 2007 about 793 million passengers were transported. Passenger numbers have been rising constantly: In 2005 747 million and in 2006 772 million passengers were carried.⁵⁹ According to a poll regarding the choice of the means of transport (modal split), local and regional public transport's share is 35% (car 34%, bike 4% and walking 27%). Since 2002 the share of local and regional public transport has increased by 2%.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ <http://www.wienerstadtwerke.at>, 24.06.2008.

⁵⁶ In 2005 the turnover amounted to 354.1 million euro and in 2006 to 367.3 million euro. Between 2006 and 2007 the turnover rose by 6.7% (*ibid*).

⁵⁷ Unfried, p. 153.

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 150.

⁵⁹ <http://www.wienerstadtwerke.at>, 24.06.2008.

⁶⁰ <http://www.wienerlinien.at>, 18.06.2008.

The *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* operates five underground, 32 trams and 83 bus routes. It owns 1 226 rail cars, 360 trailers and 478 buses with a total sum of 237 388 passenger seats. The total length of the track network reaches 244.7, the total length of routes 961.5 km.⁶¹ The length of the track network consists of 65.7 km of subway (27%) and 179 km of tram (73%) rails. The total length of routes is made up by 65.1 km of subway (7%), 227.3 km of tram (24%) and 669.1 km of bus lines (69%). In 2007 443.7 million euro were invested, of which 330.2 million were allotted to subways, 76.6 million to trams and 21.7 million to buses. In recent years, especially the subway and bus network at the periphery have been expanded considerably.

While the *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* itself operates all subway and tram lines, it does not run all existing bus lines. Some of them are operated by subcontractors like (above all) the *Dr Richard Linien GmbH & Co KG*.⁶² In addition, the *Dr Richard Linien GmbH & Co KG* runs bus lines in and around Vienna independently.⁶³

The majority of (daytime) bus lines operate between five a.m. and half past midnight. During rush hour many lines run at three to five minutes intervals. In the evening hours, intervals vary between eight minutes in the case of subways and ten to fifteen minutes in the case of trams and buses. Between half past midnight and five a.m. night buses operate at 15 to 30 minutes intervals.

Besides the *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* running subway, tram and (together with private companies) bus lines, the *ÖBB Personenverkehr AG* provides local and regional public transport services as well. The *ÖBB Personenverkehr AG* operates municipal and regional railways. The Viennese municipal railways connect the federal capital with its hinterland (parts of *Niederösterreich* and *Burgenland*). Ten lines with 137 stops in a network of a total length of 382 km exist.⁶⁴

⁶¹ The total length of routes refers to the length resulting from adding up the lengths of the individual transport routes. If, for example, several trams use the same track section, the lengths of the (different) transport routes are still added up. By contrast, the total length of the rail network refers to the total length of the track network, avoiding double count.

⁶² In Vienna about a third of all inner-city bus lines are operated by private companies (cf. Hermann, p. 3).

⁶³ The buses run independently by the *Dr Richard Linien GmbH & Co KG* are marked by the letter B, whereas buses operated by the *Wiener Linien GmbH & Co KG* (or its subcontractors) bear the letter A.

⁶⁴ <http://www.schnellbahn-wien.at>, 08.07.2008.

Mention might also be made here of the *Wiener Lokalbahnen AG* and the *City Airport Train*. The *Wiener Lokalbahnen AG* is a 100% subsidiary of the *Wiener Stadtwerke Holding AG* whose sole shareholder is the municipality of Vienna. The *Lokalbahn* is a combination of tram and railway. It connects Vienna to Baden. The total length of the network is 30.4 km.⁶⁵ A 100% subsidiary of the *Wiener Lokalbahnen AG*, the *Wiener Lokalbahnen Verkehrsdienste AG* transports disabled people in Vienna. The *City Airport Train* is operated by the *City Air Terminal Betrieb GmbH* which is jointly owned by the *ÖBB Personenverkehr AG* (49.9%) and the *Flughafen Wien AG* (50.1%). It connects Vienna to its international airport, using the tracks of the municipal railway.

Innsbruck

Innsbruck's organs are the city council, the city senate, the mayor and the city administration (*Magistrat*). The *Magistrat* has to perform all the administrative tasks necessary for the fulfillment of the duties assigned to the respective organs. It is divided into five departments and 29 offices. The office for traffic planning, environment (*Amt für Verkehrsplanung, Umwelt*) within the department of planning, building law and technical infrastructure management (*Abteilung Planung, Baurecht und technische Infrastrukturverwaltung*) is responsible for the organization of local and regional public transport. The department of financial, economic and investment management (*Abteilung Finanz-, Wirtschafts- und Beteiligungsverwaltung*) deals with the financing.

Local and regional public transport is mainly provided by the *Innsbrucker Verkehrsbetriebe und Stubaitalbahn GmbH* whose shareholders are the *Innsbrucker Kommunalbetriebe AG* (51%), the municipality of Innsbruck (45%) and the *Land Tirol* (4%). The shares of the *Innsbrucker Kommunalbetriebe AG* are held by the municipality of Innsbruck (50% plus one share) and the *Tiroler Wasserkraft AG* (50% minus one share). The *Tiroler Wasserkraft AG* itself is entirely owned by the *Land Tirol*. The *Innsbrucker Verkehrsbetriebe und Stubaitalbahn GmbH* transports about 47 million passengers on 27 routes every year. In 2006 the company's turnover reached 19 million euro. It employed 369 employees in 2007. The total length of tram routes is 18.2 km, the total length of bus routes 230.2 km.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ <http://www.wlb.at>, 08.07.2008.

⁶⁶ <http://www.ivb.at>, 09.07.2008.

Besides the *Innsbrucker Verkehrsbetriebe und Stubaitalbahn GmbH*, the *Innbus GmbH* is active in local and regional public transport too. The *Innbus GmbH* is owned by the municipality of Innsbruck (45%) and the *Innsbrucker Kommunalbetriebe AG* (55%). By order of the *Innsbrucker Verkehrsbetriebe und Stubaitalbahn GmbH* it operates 21 bus lines in the area of Innsbruck (and Stubaital), using 140 buses. Over 40 million passengers are carried every year. The total length of lines is 600 km.⁶⁷

6. Conclusions

The territorial corporate bodies are responsible for the provision of local and regional public transport in Austria. Local and regional public rail passenger transport is provided by the federal State, whereas *Länder* and municipalities have responsibility for the provision of local and regional road passenger transport.

Transport associations are the main characteristic of Austrian local and regional public transport. A transport association is a contractual, supralocal cooperation of territorial corporate bodies and transport companies. Austria has a nationwide coverage of transport associations.

The biggest companies in Austrian local and regional public transport are owned by territorial corporate bodies (in particular municipalities). In the past territorial corporate bodies used to run their businesses as part of the administration. These businesses did not constitute legal persons and were governed by public law. However, since the end of the 1980s territorial corporate bodies have increasingly been spinning off these businesses into (separate) legal entities under private law.

The performance of Austrian local and regional public transport is (still) quite satisfactory. However, certain risks cannot be dismissed. Although the territorial corporate bodies still have responsibility for local and regional public transport, their role of service provider is limited by institutional changes (liberalization), resulting in a growing loss of public control. Moreover, formal targets (profit) are becoming increasingly important. This consequence of liberalization is not surprising (cf Art 86 EG-V). The pervasive profit orientation has also led to a deterioration of the employment situation in local and regional public transport.

⁶⁷ <http://www.innbus.at>, 09.07.2008.

Competition between public and private transport companies is more or less limited to labour cost reduction. It is possible therefore that the quality of services might be negatively affected. With respect to competition it should be noted that a strong concentration and oligopolization process can also be observed throughout Europe.

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