Call for research proposals (Form 2 and project description)

Project No	**MB4_25_02H**
Title	**Acceptance of automated on-demand mobility services and their potential to promote the attractiveness of rural areas**
Publication date	05.12.2025
Submission date	**30.01.2026** at the latest
Funding request	CHF 250'000.- (incl. VAT)
Underlying documents	• Handbook – Research on Roads • Instructions for completing Form 2 These documents are available in German, French and Italian on the FEDRO website at guides, forms, factsheets.
Related projects	• MB4_20_01A_01 "Pooling and its behavioural foundations" • MB4_20_01D_01 "Preferences and traffic development with automated vehicles" • MB4_20_00A_01 "Spatially differentiated effects of automated driving"
Questions	Questions in relation to this call for proposals must be formulated in writing in one of Switzerland's national languages or in English. The answers will be made available to all interested parties on the FEDRO website at current calls for proposals. • Deadline for submitting written questions: 07.01.2026. Questions received after this date will not be answered. • Questions should be submitted to: Office of the Working Group Mobility 4.0 (MB4@bss-basel.ch) • Questions submitted before the deadline will be answered no later than: 14.01.2026
Submission	Interested research teams are invited to submit their research proposal to the office of the Working Group Mobility 4.0 (WG MB4*)* at MB4@bss-basel.ch with the reference 'Forschungsgesuch MB4_25_02H' The proposal should contain: • The completed Form 2 (as an Excel file): 'MB4_25_02H (Form 2) Acceptance of automated on-demand mobility services and their potential to promote the attractiveness of rural areas.xlsx'. This form must be downloaded from the FEDRO website at Current calls for proposals; • The project description (as a PDF and Word file). Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered. For instructions on completing Form 2 and preparing the project description, please see the Instructions for completing Form 2. Language: Form 2 and the project description must be submitted in one of Switzerland's national languages or in English.

Correspondence	All correspondence in relation to this call for proposals should be sent by email to the office of the Working Group MB4 (MB4@bss-basel.ch).
Composition of the Advisory Committee	The members of the Advisory Committee (MC) (cf. Form 2) are only selected and appointed by the Research Centre once the research application has been successfully selected. The working group provides feedback and recommendations when determining the BK. Furthermore, the rules formulated by FEDRO must be taken into account. The costs of an Advisory Committee are to be included in the application at a flat rate of CHF 5,000.
Evaluation of research proposals	**Formal check:** The office of the Working Group MB4 will check compliance with the following formal requirements: • Form 2 is completed correctly and in full. • The project description contains all sections with the required content. • The project description does not contain more than the maximum number of words permitted. Proposals not meeting the formal requirements will be excluded from the rest of the procedure, with appropriate justification. **Content evaluation and weighting:** The Working Group MB4 will evaluate the research proposals submitted on the basis of the following criteria and their weighting: • Amount of the funding request: 25% • Form 2: 25% • Project description: 50% The **amount of the funding request** is evaluated using the following formula (this creates a symmetrical treatment of the percentage difference): $Z_i = 3 + 4 * \text{Sign}(Y - X_i) * [\text{Abs}(Y - X_i) / Y]$ where: $Z_{i,Max} = 5$ $Z_{i,Min} = 1$ with: Z_i= Evaluation of the amount of the funding request in proposal *i* Y = Average funding request of all proposals X_i= Amount of the funding request in proposal *i* The **other criteria** are assessed on a scale from 0 to 5: 0 Cannot be assessed; no data available 1 Very poorly addresses the criterion; insufficient, incomplete information 2 Poorly addresses the criterion; does not adequately refer to the project 3 Addresses the criterion; broadly meets the requirements of the call for proposals 4 Addresses the criterion well; good quality 5 Addresses the criterion very well; excellent quality

Selection of the research proposal	The research proposal that optimally fulfils the specified criteria will be forwarded by the Working Group MB4 to FEDRO for further processing/evaluation by the Commission for Research on Roads. Based on the recommendation of the Commission for Research on Roads, FEDRO will make the final decision on how to proceed with the selected research proposal. In both the Working Group MB4 and the Commission for Research on Roads, recusal rules apply to members who work in the same company or institution as the applicant.
Reservation	Both the Working Group MB4 and FEDRO may decide not to award a research contract if they consider all the research proposals to be unsatisfactory. The decision on the funding of research is taken exclusively by FEDRO in the form of a ruling.

Information on the research project

1 Background

In the project" AmiGo", PostBus is developing a new automated on-demand mobility service in Eastern Switzerland. The service will use electric, automated vehicles that operate without a driver and are specially designed for scalable on-demand use. The vehicles will be bookable via an app and will accommodate up to four passengers.

The project will start in December 2025 with mapping trips. A trial operation with a selected user group is planned for the first half of 2026. During this phase, the vehicles will continue to be accompanied by a safety driver. The first trips without safety drivers are then scheduled to take place in the course of 2026. Regular operation with up to 25 automated vehicles is scheduled to begin in the first quarter of 2027 at the latest.

As part of FEDRO's road research, four research projects are being carried out to provide scientific support for the introduction of the service:

1. Mobility use and demand: Effects of an automated on-demand mobility service in peri-urban and rural areas on mobility behaviour from the user's perspective

2. Acceptance of automated on-demand mobility services and their potential to promote the attractiveness of rural areas

3. Data potential of automated vehicles for road infrastructure, traffic management, public transport integration, and vehicle interaction

4. Deployment of operators to monitor and support driverless vehicles

The research is managed by a higher-level project management team at FEDRO ("overall project management") and supervised by an advisory committee.

This call for tenders relates to the research project "Acceptance of automated on-demand mobility services and their potential to promote the attractiveness of rural areas".

Automated on-demand mobility services have the potential to fundamentally change mobility in rural and peri-urban areas. They can complement existing public transport services and attract new user groups to public transport by improving access to workplaces, educational institutions, health facilities, administrative offices and tourist destinations.

In order for such systems to close gaps in access and improve the attractiveness of a region, particularly for skilled workers, students and visitors, automated on-demand mobility services must not only be technically viable, but also widely used. This requires acceptance of these services by users, other road users and the general population.

There is a lack of empirical evidence from real-world operations in Switzerland regarding a) the factors which influence the acceptance of automated on-demand mobility services and b) how automated on-demand mobility services impact accessibility and attractiveness of rural and peri-urban areas. The "AmiGo" project offers the opportunity to investigate the acceptance of on-demand mobility services and their impact on accessibility and attractiveness of a region in real-world operation.

2 Research needs and objectives

The aim of the research is to identify the factors that promote or hinder trust and acceptance of automated on-demand mobility services. Additionally, the research will also examine the impact of automated on-demand mobility services on accessibility and attractiveness of rural and peri-urban areas.

3 Expected content and deliverables

The research institution is expected to work on the following content and provide the following deliverables:

The analysis of social acceptance should be conducted from three perspectives:

1) Users: The study should determine how factors such as perceived sense of safety (both the risk associated with using automated vehicles and risks posed by other individuals in automated vehicles), comfort, price-performance ratio and reliability influence users' confidence in automated on-demand mobility services. The relationship between the subjective sense of safety and the actual observed and documented (objective) conflicts and accidents must also be considered.
2) Other road users: The study should investigate how other road users perceive automated vehicles used in road traffic (e.g. in terms of interaction, consideration and predictability). In particular, the interaction of the automated vehicles with other road users must also be considered. The subjective perceptions of other road users should, where possible, be contrasted with the observed and documented (objective) interactions between the automated vehicles and the other road users.
3) The general public: It is to examine which social attitudes and narratives (e.g. regarding environmental impacts or job concerns) shape public opinion on automated vehicles in the context of public transport.

The analyses should, where possible, account for differences between groups (such as users and non-users, differentiation according to socio-demographic variables) and usage profiles, as well as any dynamics over time.

An investigation of the impact on accessibility and attractiveness of a region should clarify

1) what changes the automated on-demand mobility service will bring about in terms of public transport use, travel times to key locations and connections to regional hubs,
2) what effect the automated on-demand mobility service has on the perception of the region among various target groups (such as skilled workers, students and tourists),
3) what role automated on-demand mobility services play in the location decisions of companies and institutions.

The research should focus on the pilot project and initially address the research questions based on this specific case. The results are then to be situated within the current state of knowledge in the national and international literature. Results from completed and ongoing national and international research projects (such as MB4_20_01A_01 "Pooling and its behavioural foundations", MB4_20_01D_01 "Preferences and traffic development with automated vehicles", MB4_20_00A_01 "Spatially differentiated effects of automated driving") are to be considered for this purpose. Any differences in relation to other research projects are to be identified and explained. To this end, it is necessary to contextualise both the pilot project and the objects of investigation of the studies used for comparison (e.g. about the vehicles deployed, the study area, the population / users, existing public transport services, etc.).

It is expected that various data will be used and various collection and analysis methods will be applied. The project description should indicate which data and methods are to be used. Data from the pilot project will be made available for research purposes. Data collection and management will be carried out centrally by the overall project management. The actual availability of data cannot be determined at this stage. Once the project has started, the specific data requirements (e.g., usage, operating, and booking data) for the research must be compared with the actual availability of data in consultation with the overall project management. The overall project management will also coordinate any primary surveys conducted by the research institutions as part of the research projects.

Expected project start: End of 2026/Start of 2027

Expected project duration: 24 months