

# Intercity Buses



Intercity bus terminal.  
Source: Greyhound Lines, Inc.

Intercity buses bridge critical transportation gaps in rural areas, between urban centers, and during high traffic periods, by offering sustainable, accessible, and convenient travel options.

## BEST SUITED FOR:

Large-Scale, Small-Scale / All  
Long-Term, Short-Term / All  
Urban / Suburban / Rural / All



Intercity buses, also known as motorcoaches, are a key component of the transportation system, providing sustainable and convenient travel options for a diverse range of journeys. From connecting urban metropolises, to bridging service gaps in rural communities, intercity service plays a multifaceted role in enhancing mobility and connectivity. The intercity bus network is extensive, with over 1,800 carriers operating nearly 28,000 motorcoaches in the United States alone. The intercity network has seen significant growth over the last two decades, with scheduled trips reaching nearly 5,000 every weekday—a 35% increase since 2006. This translates to an annual ridership of 62 million passengers, which can be compared to the 31 million passengers served by Amtrak and the 650 million served by commercial airlines each year.

Intercity buses offer several advantages to travelers, including competitive pricing, flexible schedules, and a viable alternative for those seeking to reduce their environmental impact. On a per-passenger basis, particularly for journeys between 200 and 500 miles, bus travel boasts a significantly lower carbon footprint compared to single-occupancy vehicles and air travel. For example, travelling from St. Louis to Chicago (approximately 300 miles) by motorcoach results in over five times fewer CO<sub>2</sub> emissions compared with driving a single-occupancy vehicle.

Intercity buses play a particularly crucial role in ensuring transportation equity. In 2018, 79% of rural residents had access to intercity bus services, a nearly 10% increase from 2006. Targeted investments in stations and stops, growing from 1,718 in 2006 to 2,632 in 2018, have helped to strengthen the network and grow ridership. These services connect rural residents to major urban centers, offering connections to essential services and economic opportunities. Looking ahead, State and local efforts to improve user experience and accessibility—such as comprehensive trip planners and connected statewide networks—can further bolster the appeal of intercity bus services and ensure they remain a sustainable mode of transportation for diverse populations.



## GHG Reduction



## Co Benefits



## What to Read Next and Case Studies



## Cost Considerations and Funding



## Resources



## References

Intercity buses cater to a diverse range of travel needs. Different use cases are detailed below:

### Urban to Urban Areas

Express routes linking major cities provide convenient and sustainable travel for commuters and leisure travelers in high-demand corridors.

### Rural Feeder Service

This specialized service utilizes small vehicles, offering demand-responsive rather than fixed-schedule transportation to connect rural areas with rail or air passenger services where feasible. By providing flexible and tailored transportation solutions, rural feeder services enhance connectivity and accessibility for residents in remote regions.

### Rural to Urban Areas

Intercity buses linking small towns in rural regions to larger urban hubs and activity centers provide vital transportation links for residents in areas with limited transit options. Operating at lower frequencies, typically offering a single roundtrip per day, these services ensure rural communities remain connected.

### Special Event/Seasonal Services

Intercity buses can offer dedicated routes for special events and seasonal activities, catering to increased demand during specific times of the year. For instance, Bustang in Colorado provides special event routes like Snowstang, offering weekend service from Denver to ski resorts during the winter season, and Bustang to Broncos, facilitating transportation to professional football games in Denver.

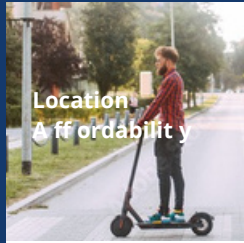
### Student Tourism

Intercity buses serve as a convenient mode of transportation for students traveling between educational institutions and urban centers. Routes like the Ramsroute, which provides weekend service between Colorado State University in Fort Collins and Denver, offer students affordable and accessible travel options.

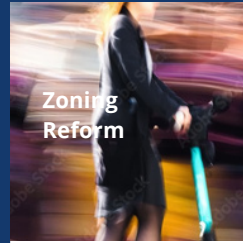




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