



## *News Update on the U.S. Intercity Bus Industry Spring 2022 E-News*

### Editor's Commentary

What a difference a couple of months makes. Mask-free travel signals to consumers that, to use Southwest Airlines' marketing slogan, "you are free to move around the country." Public health risks continue, but most operators feel a **sense of relief**. Mask-optional travel simplifies the jobs of drivers and station agents.



At the same time, **crude oil is a whopping \$114 per barrel**, after being just \$65 last year. Fueling a full-size motor coach can cost upwards of \$500, which makes running with light loads and deadheading, well, draining. Thankfully, coaches are at least three times as fuel efficient as cars and planes, per passenger carried, and above that of diesel trains. This bodes well for the long term, but for now, the pain is acute.



This brings me to an important question I will attempt to answer: *what is the outlook for scheduled long-distance bus travel this summer?* On one hand, the demand for domestic travel is strong. Major airlines are predicted to post their first quarterly profits in early July. **Amtrak expects**

its ridership in 2023 to be around 89% of 2019 levels and to hit 106% in

2024. Bus ridership on some public transit routes has hit 70% of pre-pandemic levels. Intercity bus lines, including RedCoach, Flixbus and Megabus, have recently made notable strategic moves, as described below.

Several factors are nonetheless putting a drag on demand:

- *Schedule options are still less attractive* than before the pandemic. [This Pew Research](#) article describes how the demise of scheduled service has left some customers behind. For example, recently Fullington Trailways announced it needed to cut five routes due to constraints on public financial support.
- *Driver shortages* are necessitating that companies “play it safe” when rolling out summer schedules.
- *The condition of coaches and stations has declined* accentuated by the relatively tepid federal response to the industry’s woes during most of the pandemic. Many carriers are on precarious financial footing, so equipment upgrades may have to wait.
- *Safety concerns in downtown districts persist*, leaving some customers reluctant to head to bus stations.
- *Many “customers of choice”*, i.e., those with other options, have yet to reacquaint themselves with bus travel.

All things considered, we expect scheduled intercity bus traffic to be about 70% of its pre-pandemic level by late summer, with a less robust recovery on the West Coast and in the Northeast than in other regions. Based on our conversations with industry leaders, though, **revenues will lag**, and the recovery will vary sharply by the type of service, with commuter and metropolitan-focused bus operators in particularly tough spots. Still, the latest trends show that **intercity buses are pivotal to mobility**. After several excruciating years, we can be hopeful that the recovery will continue.

Joe Schwieterman, Ph.D.  
*Director, Chaddick Institute, DePaul University*  
*President, Transportation Research Forum*

Photo Captions: Top: Megabus in Midtown Manhattan, January 2022, Center: Greyhound at Champaign, IL April 2022.

---

## New Departures, More Options



**Red Coach**, after expanding outside Florida and the Southeast by adding first- and business-class service between Austin, Dallas, and Houston, TX late last year, [added San Antonio](#) in late April. First-class service is available from both Dallas and Houston



**Megabus** has been awakened from its apparent pandemic slumber, adding numerous routes in the Northeast, including [several from Boston](#) and the restoration of service to Buffalo, NY. Although it has not returned to destinations west of Texas, it is [redoubling its commitment to the Eastern states](#) and the Southern United States.



**FlixBus** has added intra-Canada service and began [cross-border service](#) to the U.S. starting May 10, including [Toronto to New York City](#) service running five days a week. Flix is also adding new stops to its existing routes, operating from Milwaukee International Airport and Boston's South Station.



**Landline** has entered a partnership with **American Airlines** to provide service from its Philadelphia hub to airports in Allentown-Bethlehem, PA, and Atlantic City, NY. This service, which commences on June 3, features buses painted in the airline's livery as well as [through-ticketing and baggage service](#). See [Routes to Recovery Report](#) for a discussion a similar service with United Airlines in Colorado.



**The Jet**, a first-class bus service between New York and Washington, DC, operating custom designed coaches with [spacious 1x1 seating](#) and equipped with computer-aided "hoverseats" that allow for a smoother ride than conventional offerings, has expanded from four to five days a week. Fares are typically around \$99 each way.



**OurBus's** has a variety of new routes, including Pittsburgh- New York via Philadelphia; Quincy, MA - New York via Providence, RI and New London, CT, and a pair of [routes to Atlantic City](#), one from State College, PA and another from Washington DC, both

running via Philadelphia. OurBus is also launching North Philadelphia service and continuing to invest in its Jersey Shore shuttle program.

**NAPAWAY** [Napaway](#), [a new premium carrier](#), is proposing to launch a variety of routes with overnight schedules from Washington, DC, with Buffalo, NY and Charlotte, NC possible destinations. Its "[private suites and lie-flat beds](#) offer the perfect alternative to the stress and discomfort of air travel." We'll be watching this carrier's moves closely.

**Trailways** [Trailways](#) will operate a new Amtrak Thruway bus service [between Philadelphia and Reading](#) via Pottstown in July. Bus/train connections will take place at Philadelphia's 30th Street Station. This service may be a [prelude to the rail](#) service between the above points.

Photo Caption: Top: Passengers prepare for a RedCoach departure in Austin ,TX (RedCoach photo)

---

## Greyhound and Adirondack Trailways end longstanding "Operating Pool"

Greyhound Line's [schedule bulletin issued](#) on May 23 notes that "Greyhound is discontinuing the Operating Pool with New York Trailways and Adirondack Trailways." The pool included [joint ticketing](#) and [revenue-sharing](#) arrangements on routes linking New York City to Upstate New York, southern Canada, and other points. The Pool was designed to reduce schedule duplication and allow ticketed passengers to freely switch between carriers as their plans change. In the same bulletin, [Greyhound](#) announced it was [expanding service between New York and Albany, Buffalo, Montreal](#), and other points. "Trailways and Greyhound appear to be nearly matching schedules on the main corridor routes," notes Joe Schwieterman. A similar operating pool between Greyhound and Peter Pan ended in 2017.



Photo Caption: Greyhound at Springfield, IL in April 2022.

---

## ABA and other Trade Groups Push for Federal Action to Support Bus Industry Recovery



Due to the hard work of the American Bus Association and other industry trade groups, an omnibus appropriations bill that was signed into

([P.L. 117-103](#)), has several provisions beneficial to the intercity bus industry, including:

- \$2 million in funding for the FY 2022 [Intercity Bus Security Grant Program](#).
- Increased [funding for the National Park Service](#) (which relies heavily on bus service) and transportation improvements on park land.
- Directives for the Federal Highway Administration to designate future [“alternative fuel corridors”](#) in a way that supports travel and tourism traffic patterns and aligns with the national strategic plan proposed by the National Advisory Committee on Travel and Tourism Infrastructure (ABA participated on this Committee). This action could facilitate the future use of electric buses on routes linking cities.

The ABA and The United Motorcoach Association continue their push for additional financial support for [cash-strapped motorcoach operators](#) in seeking to replenish the Coronavirus Economic Relief for Transportation Services Grant Program (CERTS), recognizing that the pandemic’s impact on all motorcoach operators remains particularly severe and is still being felt, through decreased ridership. They also are working to make those CERTS grants non-taxable and to forgive previously awarded grant amounts that were taxed as income.

Federal action to prevent public transit services from being cut as a result of the pandemic hasn’t been accompanied by equal consideration of intercity bus routes and other bus services operated without public subsidy, despite the similar demographic segments served. The [Bipartisan Infrastructure Law \(P.L. 117-58\)](#) is a source of optimism, but it remains to be seen how its implementation will affect the intercity bus industry. There is hope that it will stimulate and improve Amtrak-intercity bus coordination and intermodal station planning. By autumn, we’ll have a clearer picture of the bill’s long-term effects.

---

## Testing out Greyhound’s Cash Payments at 7-Eleven Stores

We tested Greyhound’s enhanced arrangements for paying for [tickets with cash](#) at thousands of retail locations, including Cash Express, Casey’s, CVS, 7-Eleven, and Walmart stores. Greyhound [uses the PayNearMe service](#) to allow for payments at

**Thanks for your reservation. Your tickets are on hold until your cash payment is complete.**

You must make your payment at a participating location by  
May 26 at 3:43 AM.

[FIND PAYMENT LOCATIONS](#)

participating locations. After making a reservation online, we received a barcode that we later presented to a 7-Eleven cashier for scanning. Then, after paying the required cash, we received a paper receipt, which serves as a ticket.

Some stores appear to be more familiar with the process than others, so the process can take a little time, but such arrangements allow "unbanked" households and for **travelers lacking debit or credit cards** to use cash. They also give households without printers the ability to get a hard copy of their trip plan. "These arrangements not only help those without cards but can be **crucial if your card is suddenly declined**," notes Joe Schwieterman. Greyhound has long had 7-Eleven fulfillment but now offers many more options.



Artwork Credit: [Public Domain Files](#)

---

## Enhanced 2022 Outlook Report now available



We invite you to review an updated version of our [Routes to Recovery: 2022 Outlook for Intercity Bus Travel](#) that incorporates recent feedback we received. The report is organized by region of the country for **easy browsing**. Check out the nine custom maps showing new routes in 2021. This is our 14th annual review!

---

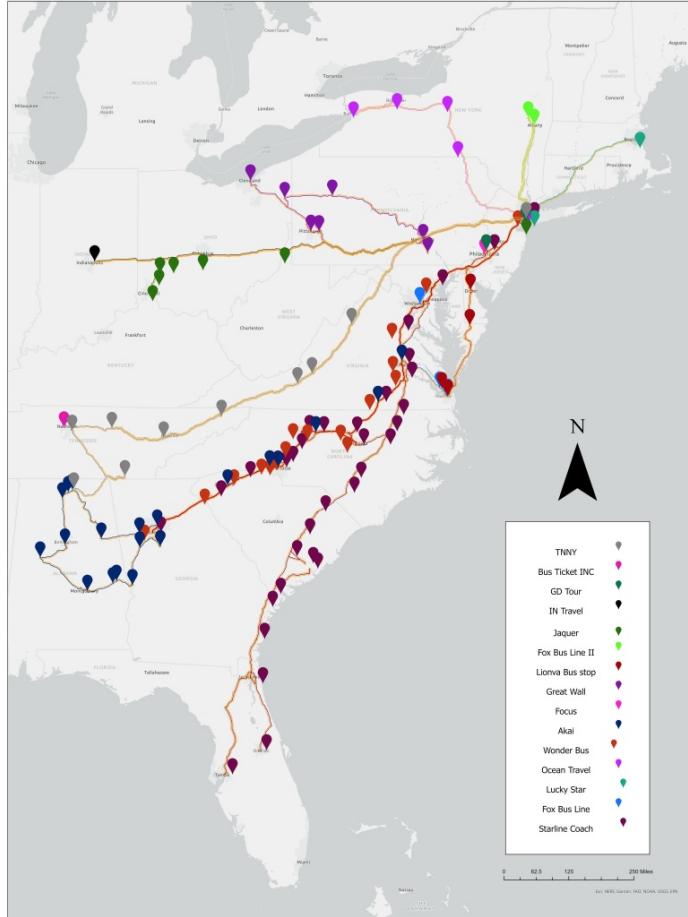
## Services from NYC's Chinatown Area Bouncing Back

The scale of the bus system emanating from the vicinity of Canal Street within or near New York's Chinatown neighborhood has been poorly understood due to **constantly changing schedules** and the absence of route maps and printed timetables. What is widely known is that this system provides vigorous competition to carriers operating from Midtown Manhattan. Many lines departing from the Canal Street area now have **well-developed websites and sell tickets** on third-party reservation platforms, such as [gotobus.com](#), [ilikebus.com](#), or [busbuster.com](#).



In recent months, we mapped and measured key aspects of services operating from this ethnically rich part of New York. Our review of the attributes of the services and stops shows that:

- **The network from the**



vicinity of Canal Street (Chinatown) encompasses 14 carriers and 8,222 miles of routes, with a total of 93 stop locations.

- Routes extend north to Buffalo, NY, west to Indianapolis, IN, and south to Tampa, FL. Service to our home city of Chicago has been discontinued.
- Only 5% of stops are traditional bus terminals. More than 60% are either at retail stores or restaurants.
- Fares from New York tend to be lower than on conventional bus lines, with a median price difference of 38.7%
- More than a third of the

bus stops are farther than a quarter-line mile from a transit stop, suggesting limited connectivity for those who do not reach the stop in private vehicles.



Collecting this information proved to be complex. Some carriers do not make available lists or maps of the cities they serve, and almost none show the sequence of their stops. We therefore had to review service one "city pair" at a time using the above booking sites. The sequence of stops was determined through hundreds of online searches.

Although the network appears to be somewhat smaller than a

decade ago, this system is growing as the pandemic effect's ease. There are no reliable estimates of the annual ridership of these carriers. For more details, [check out the poster](#) we prepared for presentation at a Transportation Research Forum conference. We are also happy to answer questions about our research.

Allison Woodward  
DePaul University

in April 2023



We welcome expressions of interest for presentations on intercity bus topics at the [Transportation Research Forum International Conference April 20-21, 2023 in downtown Chicago](#). "TRF" boasts a compact day-and-a-half format, optional tours, and [affordable registration fees](#). Regular rates are less than \$300, and even less for students, and cover our Awards Luncheon,

coffee breaks, and mixers. We welcome [case studies, pilot programs](#), and service experiments. There will be both lectern and poster presentations. Interested? Respond to this email. The conference typically attracts about 120 people.

---

## On the Road with MCI's new "CHARGE" Electric Bus



Our Abby Mader and Allison Woodward traveled to Des Plaines, IL earlier this month to see a [zero-emissions MCI J4500 Charge](#) electric bus on tour and experience a test drive. The luxury coach stretches 45 feet and seats up to 56. The vehicle is on a 2,800-mile bi-coastal trip and is charging using publicly available grid

stations powered by Electrify America, [traveling 200–240 miles between charges](#). "The smooth acceleration and quietness of the coach are impressive—we are at an exciting moment in motorcoach technology," noted Woodward. Earlier this month, [FlixBus conducted a two-week pilot](#) of MCI electric buses between Los Angeles and San Diego. As we reported in [Routes to Recovery](#), FlixBus tested an electric bus in the Pacific Northwest last year. Look for additional reports about electric-bus rollouts in upcoming *Intercity Bus E-News*.

---

## National RTAP GTFS Builder Training Series

National Rural Transit Assistance Program continues to help public agencies and rural operators develop [digital \(GTFS\) schedules](#). RTAP is holding a [GTFS: Three Steps to Online Trip Planning](#) Training Series





on May 26 and June 9, from 1-2 pm ET. This training walks you through its free GTFS Builder application. Attendees learn how to get on-demand service published. Also, RTAP will host its fourth **Rural Transit Day** Twitter Chat on July 15 from 2 - 3 pm ET. You can [RSVP here](#) for

the [#RuralTransitDay](#) chat.

---

## Invite others to join Intercity Bus Listserv. Check out [our reports!](#)

Invite your colleagues to join our Intercity Bus Listserv.

Send Abby an email at [chaddick@depaul.edu](mailto:chaddick@depaul.edu) to receive 8 – 10 emails per year. No spam. Free.

Also, check out our recent studies and briefs and conference posters:

- [Routes to Recovery 2022: Outlook for the Intercity Bus Industry](#) (February 2022).
- [Measuring the Evolving Status of Bus Lines Operating from Asian Neighborhoods in U.S. Cities](#) (research poster)

This independently produced e-newsletter brief has been shared with both our Intercity Bus (IB) and Transportation listservs. If you want to be sure you are on the IB and not miss our industry coverage, please email us. Chaddick does not receive funds from transportation companies or affiliated industries.

CHADDICK INSTITUTE FOR  
METROPOLITAN DEVELOPMENT



DePaul University School of Public Service | 14 E. Jackson Boulevard, Suite 1600, Chicago, IL 60604

[Unsubscribe \[pubserv@mailing.depaul.edu\]\(mailto:pubserv@mailing.depaul.edu\)](mailto:unsubscribe_pubserv@mailing.depaul.edu)

[Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)

Sent by [chaddick@depaul.edu](mailto:chaddick@depaul.edu) in collaboration  
with



Try email marketing for free today!