

**MARCH 2021**

*Created in partnership with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Transportation Research Board's (TRB's) AP055 Rural, Intercity Bus, and Specialized Transportation Committee.*



## 2021 Intercity Bus Survey Results

As a first step in updating its resources and training materials regarding the Section 5311(f) Intercity Bus Program, the National Rural Transit Assistance Program, (National RTAP), conducted a survey to assess the needs of rural and tribal public and private intercity bus operators, state programs, and other parties essential to the development of a connected bus network.

Developed in conjunction with partners at the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and with input from members of the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) AP055 Rural, Intercity Bus, and Specialized Transportation Committee, the survey was designed to collect information that would enable National RTAP to inventory the informational, training, technical assistance, and research needs of the industry. The result of the survey will be used to develop training resources and to provide technical assistance.

The survey was launched on January 8, 2021 at the 100th TRB Annual Meeting's Intercity Bus Transit Subcommittee Meeting and remained open until February 21, 2021. The survey was electronically disseminated through AP055 Committee meetings and sessions at the 2021 Transportation Research Board's Annual Meeting, via National RTAP's and other partners' electronic newsletters, through national and regional transit associations, through the National Bus Traffic Association, emails, social media posts, and through an online flyer.

A total of 59 completed responses from 29 states were received. Major themes from the survey are outlined below and will serve as discussion topics at a follow-up Intercity Bus Roundtable, to be held on March 9, 2021, from 2 p.m.-3 p.m. ET and followed by a brief AP055 Committee session.

# Survey Topics

The seven major topics listed below were presented in the survey. Data related to other training formats was also collected.

## 1. State Program Development and Management

- a. Program purpose
- b. Requirements
  - i. Consultation process/determining unmet rural intercity needs
  - ii. Eligibility of service
  - iii. Eligibility of providers
  - iv. Potential funding methods
  - v. ADA
- c. In-kind match
- d. Vehicle purchase

## 2. Overview of the Intercity Network—Subsidized and Unsubsidized

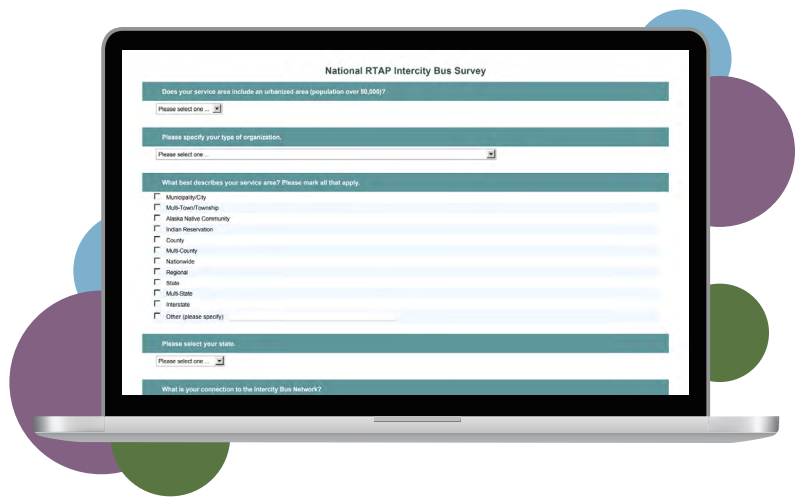
- a. USDOT/BTS Intercity Bus Atlas—route structure
- b. GTFS data
- c. Ticketing
- d. Ridership
- e. Connectivity with public transit
- f. Connected network

## 3. Overview/Walk-Through of the FTA Circular Guidance for Intercity Bus Program

- a. Inventory
- b. Needs analysis
- c. Outreach
- d. Surveys
- e. Alternatives
- f. Plan
- g. Funding
- h. Relation to state transit plans, coordination plans
- i. Approaches and elements of a successful consultation
- j. Meaningful connection: what does that mean for service coordination and in-kind/private match?
- k. Grants vs. contracts
- l. FTA compliance for intercity bus projects

## 4. Service Attributes for Rural Public Transit Operators Providing Intercity Service

- a. Interline ticketing
- b. Insurance
- c. FMCSA requirements
- d. Terminal access
- e. Schedule coordination
- f. Examples of 5311 operators providing intercity service



## Topic Areas and Subtopics

Survey respondents were asked to consider the following topic areas and subtopics throughout the survey.

## 5. Tribal Transit and the Needs of Intercity Bus Services

- a. Needs of tribal intercity transit
- b. Coordination with tribal governments
- c. Case studies of tribal approaches

## 6. Information about Programs in the Other States (Intercity Bus Research Topics Identified by AP055)

- a. State approaches to the overall intercity bus network
- b. Providing grants for rural intercity bus service with or without specifying routes and schedules
- c. State approaches to funding operating services (grants vs. RFPs)
- d. State's use of in-kind match
- e. States approach to funding capital grants (buses, facilities, etc.)
- f. Examples of grant solicitations/ RFPs
- g. Section 5311(f) consultation process
- h. Types of intercity service supported (feeder service, line haul connections, etc.)

## 7. Who Uses Intercity Bus Services and What Are Their Needs?

- a. Demographics
- b. Trip purpose
- c. Alternatives available
- d. Differences/similarities with users of other modes—rural public transit? All rural travelers?
- e. Different coordination relationships

## Attributes of Survey Respondents

The tables in this section provide attributes of the 59 participating organizations of which 25 identified themselves as providing direct services (transit agency/private provider) and 15 identified as from a state Department of Transportation.

The 25 agencies and providers who deliver transportation do so in several service area types. In some cases, providers operated in more than one service area (as evidenced in the “Provider Service Areas” table).

18 of the 25 providers operate in an urbanized area with a population over 50,000.

Provider Type	Responses
Private For-Profit	11
Joint Powers Board/Authority	3
County Government	2
Municipal/City/Town/Local Government	2
Non-Profit	2
Regional Transit Authority/Council	2
Transit Authority	2
Federally-Recognized Indian tribe	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>

Provider Service Areas	Responses
Multi-County	11
County	9
Multi-State	8
Interstate	8
Multi-Town/Township	7
Municipality/City	5
Regional	5
Indian Reservation	2
Nationwide	2
State	2
Other (please specify)	2
Alaska Native Community	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>

Type of Organization	Responses
State DOT/RTAP	15
Transit Agency	14
Private Provider	11
Other	11
Consultant	5
Transit Industry Organization	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>59</b>

## Most Appropriate Audience by Topic

State Program Development and Management	Overview of the Intercity Bus Network (Subsidized and Unsubsidized)	Overview/Walk Through of the FTA Circular on Guidance for the Intercity Bus Program	Service Attributes for Rural Public Transit Operators Providing Intercity Service	Tribal Transit and The Needs of Intercity Bus Services	Information about Programs in the Other States (Intercity Bus Research Topics Identified by AP055)	Who Uses Intercity Bus Services and What are Their Needs?
Rural Transit Providers		State Program Managers		Priv. Intercity Bus Companies		FTA Program Managers
State Program Managers (43)	Rural Transit Providers (41)	State Program Managers (35)	Rural Transit Providers (49)	Rural Transit Providers (34)	State Program Managers (38)	Rural Transit Providers (43)
Rural Transit Providers (30)	State Program Managers (35)	Rural Transit Providers (31)	State Program Managers (34)	State Program Managers (32)	Rural Transit Providers (32)	Priv. Intercity Bus Companies (40)
Priv. Intercity Bus Companies (19)	Priv. Intercity Bus Companies (32)	Priv. Intercity Bus Companies (31)	Priv. Intercity Bus Companies (32)	FTA Program Managers (32)	Priv. Intercity Bus Companies (30)	State Program Managers (39)
FTA Program Managers (18)	FTA Program Managers (23)	FTA Program Managers (21)	FTA Program Managers (20)	Priv. Intercity Bus Companies (24)	FTA Program Managers (24)	FTA Program Managers (29)



## Other Topics for Webinar/ Roundtable/Trainings

### a. Customer Service

- i. How to work with customers with disabilities
- ii. Policies & procedures for individual w/ sensory and cognitive needs
- iii. Title VI guidance and program development
- iv. Better rider experience
- v. Gaining the confidence of the general public
- vi. Transporting children to and from military bases
- vii. Parcel/package delivery

### b. Crime Prevention

- i. Identifying signs of labor and sex trafficking in the transit system
- ii. Crime prevention/safety & security

### c. Planning

- i. How to start new services
- ii. Setting priorities for underserved or unserved rural communities
- iii. Developing intercity fixed route service for rural areas
- iv. Corridor planning
- v. Building regional connectivity
- vi. First and last mile travel
- vii. Ridership trends

### d. Forming Connections

- i. Networking opportunities
- ii. Coordinating with transit or micro transit
- iii. Coordination between communities and intercity operators
- iv. Partnering with rural service providers
- v. Public-private partnerships
- vi. Developing external stakeholder relationships with intercity operators
- vii. Underserved rural communities in need of intercity fixed route service
- viii. How can brokers/trip purchasers/coordinators better utilize intercity services
- ix. How to advertise service to rural communities

### e. Operations

- i. Running an efficient program
- ii. Optimizing routes for fuel efficiency
- iii. Developing schedules
- iv. Intercity bus ticketing at a national level with tickets that is non-biased
- v. Developing intercity bus facilities
- vi. Alternative fuels

### f. Funding

- i. Funding sources for for-profit intercity services

## Training Format

The survey asked respondents to rank the best training format individually for each of the seven topics.

### Webinars and Roundtables

In almost all cases, Webinars/Roundtables and Information Briefs were the top two requested formats. The other training formats most requested included Workshops at Conferences, Training Courses and Toolkits. Very few respondents had sufficient materials currently.

## Topics Rankings for a Roundtable or Webinar

- 1<sup>st</sup> Overview of the Intercity Bus Network (Subsidized and Unsubsidized)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> State Program Development and Management
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Who Uses Intercity Bus Services and What are Their Needs?
- 4<sup>th</sup> Service Attributes for Rural Public Transit Operators Providing Intercity Service
- 5<sup>th</sup> Overview of the FTA Circular on Guidance for the Intercity Bus Program
- 6<sup>th</sup> Information About Programs in Other States
- 7<sup>th</sup> Tribal Transit and the Needs of Intercity Bus Services

*Note: For a webinar, the 3rd place topic above “Who uses Intercity Bus Services and What are Their Needs” was reversed with the 4th place topic above “Service Attributes for Rural Public Transit Operators Providing Intercity Service”.*



## Specific Training Topics

For each of the seven general training topics, more focused topics were listed and respondents were asked to check all of the subtopics that they were interested in.

The tables below are depicted in order of general topic rankings. The topics within each table are listed from most preferred to least preferred.

Overview of the Intercity Bus Network (Subsidized and Unsubsidized)	
Connectivity with Public Transit	49
Ridership	35
Connected Network	33
Ticketing	31
USDOT/BTS Intercity Bus Atlas—Route Structure	26
GTFS Data	22
Other	5

### Other Responses

- Regulation of motor carriers and their brokers.
- Integrating our ICB service with our other local services.
- Stop, transfer station and park-n-ride requirements.
- Marketing.
- Funding sources and priorities for areas not served.

State Program Development and Management	
Needs Analysis	34
Meaningful Connection: What Does That Mean for Service Coordination and In-Kind/Private Match?	33
FTA Compliance for Intercity Bus Projects	32
Relation to State Transit Plans/Coordination Plans	30
Funding	29
General Planning	27
Outreach	19
Surveys	15
Alternative Development	15
Approaches and Elements of a Successful Consultation	15
Grants vs. Contracts	15
Inventory	7
Other	2

### Other Responses

- Would combine FTA circular in with this topic.
- How to start new services when your state DOT does not provide support.

## Rank Interest

Survey respondents were asked to rank their level of interest for each as a webinar and as a roundtable.

Who Uses Intercity Bus Services and What are Their Needs?	
Demographics	45
Trip Purpose	45
Differences/Similarities With Users of Other Modes—Rural Public Transit? All Rural Travelers?	40
Different Coordination Relationships	32
Alternatives Available	28
Other	2

### Other Responses

- Intentional engagement, marketing, survey.
- Crime records on these systems and how to decrease crime.

Service Attributes for Rural Public Transit Operators Providing Intercity	
Schedule Coordination	42
Interline Ticketing	39
Examples of 5311 Operators Providing Intercity Service	38
Terminal Access	27
FMCSA Requirements	18
Insurance	13
Other	1

### Other Responses

- Crime prevention.

Overview of the FTA Circular on Guidance for the Intercity Bus Program	
Requirements: Potential Funding Methods	41
Requirements: Consultation Process/Determining Unmet Rural Intercity Needs	35
Requirements: Eligibility of Services—Meaningful Connection	33
Requirements: Eligibility of Providers	31
In-Kind Match	23
Requirements: ADA	22
Program Purpose	19
Vehicle Purchases	18
Other	1

### Other Responses

- Vehicle maintenance programs.

## Specific Training Topics CONTINUED

<b>Information About Programs in Other States</b> (Intercity Bus Research Topics Identified by AP055)	
<i>States Approach the Overall Intercity Network</i>	42
<i>States Approach to Funding Operating Services (Grants vs. RFPs)</i>	35
<i>States Use of In-Kind Match</i>	29
<i>Types of Intercity Service Supported (Feeder Service, Line Haul Connections, etc.)</i>	29
<i>States Approach to Funding Capital Grants (Buses, Facilities, etc.)</i>	28
<i>Section 5311(f) Consultation Process</i>	28
<i>Examples of Grant Solicitations/RFP</i>	24
<i>Providing Grants for Rural Intercity Bus Service Without Specifying Routes and Schedules</i>	23
<i>Other</i>	1

### Other Responses

- a. Operator training with regards to recognizing criminal activities.

<b>Tribal Transit and The Needs of Intercity Bus Services</b>	
<i>Needs of Tribal Intercity Transit</i>	29
<i>Coordination with Tribal Governments</i>	25
<i>Case Studies of Tribal Approaches</i>	21
<i>Other</i>	2

### Other Responses

- a. Contracting with tribal governments - BIA/FTA and state rules/regulations.
- b. Crime prevention, especially human trafficking.

### For Intercity Bus Service Questions

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### National Rural Transit Assistance Program

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