

**Peter J. Pantuso, President & CEO, American Bus Association**

*Testimony*

**Surface Transportation Policy & Revenue Commission  
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My name is Peter Pantuso and I am President & CEO of the American Bus Association. ABA is the trade association of the national over-the-road motorcoach industry representing over 3,800 members, 1,000 of which are bus or tour operators. Private sector bus transportation services include commuter, airport, intercity, charter, tour and sightseeing.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify today. We also commend this Commission on its efforts to tackle the serious challenges facing our nation in sustaining and growing our surface transportation capabilities in support of personal mobility and national economic growth.

I'd like to briefly tell you about the industry I represent and then lay out for you specific short range and long-term solutions our industry can bring to the table to help you meet your charge.

Motorcoaches move Nearly as many passengers each year than planes and more than trains. We move more people in two weeks than Amtrak moves in one year. Coaches reduce congestion and pollution by taking more than 425 million cars off the road each year. Coaches provide the same congestion mitigation benefits as transit buses in that we have the capacity to take up to 55 cars, per coach, off the road at one time.

Coaches are the most fuel efficient and least energy intensive mode of commercial passenger transportation. Motorcoach passenger miles per gallon of fuel is highest with 148 passenger miles per gallon, more than four times greater than air carrier and passenger car fuel efficiency – and increasing. And we are flexible – coaches can go anywhere – and continue to be the most affordable form of commercial passenger transportation.

These valuable contributions come at virtually no cost to taxpayers. From 1960 through 2001, the motorcoach industry received just .01 cent per passenger mile in net federal subsidy; air received 15 times more, mass transit received 137 times more and Amtrak received more than 200 times more.

We see the 3 challenges for the Commission that rise above any other:

- The need to address growing congestion that is crippling our nation's mobility and commerce and creating hazardous road conditions;

- The need to promote environmental and ecological stewardship while meeting growing mobility demands;
- The need to extend the surface transportation network while reducing the relative burden on the federal checkbook.

Unlike any other mode of transportation, we offer solutions in each one of these critical challenge areas.

### **Congestion Solutions**

DOT is well aware of the important role that private sector transportation services can, and do, play in reducing urban congestion. For example, commuter buses operated by private bus operators are an increasingly important part of the solution to congestion in our major urban areas. Unfortunately, some states and local jurisdictions do not share that awareness. Thus, we believe it's important that the Department build into its implementation of its National Strategy to Reduce Congestion, a provision that all privately owned bus transportation providers receive equal treatment with public sector bus transportation providers by the local project sponsors. For example, public sector bus transportation services have special access to express bus lanes, private sector bus transportation services should have the same access.

### **Environmental and Ecological Solutions**

Not only does the private motorcoach industry provide the same or better congestion mitigation benefits as transit buses, coaches are also the most fuel efficient and least energy intensive mode of commercial passenger transportation. Energy intensity is lowest – 938 Btu per passenger mile which is one fourth the energy intensity of air carriers and passenger cars. Fuel consumption and energy intensity rates of motorcoaches are half the rates of intercity passenger trains. As a fuel efficient mass transportation mode, we should be considered a part of the transportation solution and taxed in a pattern consistent with public transit.

### **Solutions for Extending the Network**

And at a time when this Commission is faced with rising costs for transportation programs and infrastructure and limited funding, motorcoaches provide an excellent low-cost opportunity to extend the reach of the transportation network between urban and rural centers. The private over-the-road bus industry offers a public transportation option to nearly 73 million rural Americans more than any other mode with service to more than 3,000 communities. Unlike trains and planes, coaches are flexible and can go anywhere with limited investment needed in facilities to support that service. Motorcoaches can do even more than we do today to provide solutions by creating seamless intermodal connections, expanding service to rural America and increasing commuter service.

### **Short Term and Long Term**

In the short term the industry acknowledges the important strides DOT has made in working with Congress to add funds to the 5311(f) rural bus service program and to

include eligibility of intercity bus facilities in the recent joint development guidance for transit capital programs. We also are encouraged by the recent announcement of the pilot program that will allow private operators to use existing feeder network capital investments as part of the required program match for the 5311(f) rural bus service program. While the administration and Congress have had the foresight to create these programs the key moving forward will be ensuring their successful implementation.

In the long term, looking towards the future the motorcoach industry promotes intermodal planning and the creation of facilities that support the entire network and do not disenfranchise one mode over another. While we help to bind this nation together we are often not included in the planning of many facilities to create intermodal linkages. Motorcoach, rail and air passengers should be able to transfer from one mode to the next without the need of intermediary steps. Facilities should be constructed to incorporate connectivity to reduce congestion and increase efficiency.

Shifting from a disparate transportation structure to one that promotes efficiency of movement is in the interest of all travelers and in particular commuters. In helping to achieve a more streamlined system, transportation plans should encourage the expansion of commuter service. In taking as many 55 cars off the road with a single motorcoach the industry can provide commuters with shorter commuting times and help to conserve fuel.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify today and to working with the Commission in the future.