

THE BUS INSIDER

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BY COACH BUILDERS INDIA

RIDING THE ROUGH ROAD

The Hidden Struggles of India's Intercity Bus Operators



Passenger Vehicle Expo 2.0
India's Largest Passenger Mobility Showcase
Returns to Chennai

IRA Travels CEO
Exposes the Hidden Cracks in
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Dear everyone,

It was great meeting many of you at MG's RE:BORN event. The conversations, the candour, and the sense of shared purpose reminded me of why we do what we do - tell real stories of real people building the future of bus travel in India.

Also, with this issue, we close one chapter and begin preparing for the next. This is the final digital issue of The Bus Insider. From our next edition, we step confidently into print, with a new title, The Bus Wire, officially registered with the Press Registrar General of India.

It's more than a name change. It's a sign of growth.
Of commitment.
Of staying the course.

What began as a digital magazine built on belief and late nights now moves into print because of the support and trust of readers like you. And we carry that trust forward, with more rigour, more reach, and the same relentless focus on ground realities.

In this issue, we hold a mirror up to the sector.

While headlines in our industry are often dominated by technology and the electric transition, this issue's cover story brings the focus back to those who live the business every single day - bus operators.

Through candid conversations with some of the most respected names in the field, we uncover the deeper, more persistent challenges that rarely make the news. A necessary, unvarnished look at the real engine behind India's intercity mobility and the resilience it demands.

Thank you again for being part of this journey, whether you joined us from the first issue or found us along the way.

And yes, PASSENGER VEHICLE EXPO 2.0 is just around the corner. We'll be in Chennai on July 31, and I look forward to meeting many of you there once again.

Here's to storytelling that moves, and to the road ahead, now in print.

Cheers!

Shivam Gautom
Shivam Gautom

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FlixBus Deploys LNG Coaches on Prague-Kraków Route, Expands Alternative Fuel Strategy



Ashok Leyland to Begin Electric Bus Production in Lucknow within Two Months

Ashok Leyland is set to start commercial production at its electric bus manufacturing facility in Lucknow within two months, the company informed Uttar Pradesh officials on July 17, 2025. Construction of the plant was completed in a rapid 18 months, marking a significant milestone in the region's clean mobility expansion.

The facility, located in Sarojini Nagar, is the company's first major EV plant in Uttar Pradesh and forms part of a broader ₹1,000 crore investment, with an initial output capacity of 2,500 buses per year, scalable up to 5,000 units in the coming decade. It will serve as a centre of excellence for electric bus production, chassis assembly, and multi-fuel bus assembly, with plans to create around 500 direct and indirect jobs initially.

During a strategic meeting with state Chief Secretary Manoj Kumar Singh, Hinduja Group executives, including Dr S.K. Chaddha and Vynsley Fernandes, discussed



additional land allotment and potential partnerships across EV infrastructure mobility, renewable energy, digital media, insurance, and finance. The company also outlined its renewable energy ambitions for Uttar Pradesh, targeting 3–4 GW of capacity, including a 600 MW project in Jhansi and a 1,000 MW pumped-storage facility in Mirzapur. According to company leadership,

the new plant supports both Ashok Leyland's mission to achieve net-zero emissions by 2048 and the state's drive to emerge as a green manufacturing hub.

This EV factory is scheduled to begin producing heavy-duty electric buses by September 2025, positioning Ashok Leyland among India's leading producers of zero-emission commercial vehicles.

Cityflo Taps Signpost India to Manage Transit Advertising Across Bus Fleet

Urban mobility platform Cityflo has partnered with media-tech firm Signpost India to oversee advertising across its fleet of buses. The collaboration will cover operations in Mumbai, Hyderabad, Delhi NCR, and other key metro regions.

Signpost India will manage various ad formats including full-body bus wraps and in-vehicle digital displays. The campaign strategy is focused on targeting working professionals who regularly use Cityflo for their daily commutes.

Cityflo Co-founder and CEO Jerin Venad said the decision to bring Signpost on board was aimed at developing impactful campaigns tailored for Cityflo's commuter base. Royston D'Almeida, Vice President of Enterprise at Signpost India, noted that transit advertising offers a strong channel to engage urban professionals at high-visibility moments.

Cityflo operates scheduled, fixed-route services, giving advertisers consistent reach during peak hours across residential and business districts. The company caters largely to corporate employees and office-goers seeking reliable alternatives to traditional public transport.

Several major brands have already launched campaigns through this tie-up, including Flipkart, SBI, Parle Agro, and Mirae Asset. These are currently visible across Cityflo's fleets in Mumbai, Hyderabad, and Delhi.

Signpost India, listed among BSE's top 1,000 performing companies in 2024, brings expertise in ad tech and campaign execution to the partnership.

With this move, Cityflo is diversifying its revenue streams while continuing to expand its presence in the urban transport space. Additional routes are expected to launch soon in existing markets.



NueGo Trains Over 3,000 Drivers to Power India's Intercity EV Transition

NueGo, the intercity electric bus brand of GreenCell Mobility, has trained more than 3,000 drivers and 400 onboard hosts as part of a structured electric vehicle (EV) operations program. This initiative supports India's shift towards electric mobility by addressing skill development in the commercial transportation workforce.

Operating a fleet of over 300 electric buses across more than 100 cities, NueGo runs long-haul services with vehicles capable of covering 250 km on a single charge. Each bus undergoes 25 rigorous safety checks that include both mechanical and electrical systems.

The company's training program spans one week for new hires and takes place at dedicated centers in Delhi, Indore, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, and Chennai. Conducted by in-house trainers, the curriculum includes 11 modules: eight focused on defensive driving and three on EV systems and customer service. Simulators, classroom sessions, and on-road practice are used to enhance real-world readiness.

Core topics include regenerative braking, battery-efficient driving, charging protocols, and high-voltage system safety. Soft skills are also part of the curriculum, aiming to improve passenger engagement. Additionally, all drivers undergo refresher courses every three months, covering essential skills like blind spot management, reversing, and parking.

GreenCell Mobility, backed by climate impact investor Eversource Capital, is building an Electric Mobility-as-a-Service (eMaaS) platform for India.

NueGo's service model prioritizes passenger safety, comfort, and punctuality. The brand also operates premium passenger lounges in select cities to enhance the travel experience.

Tata Begins Delivery of 148 Electric Buses to BMTC, Expanding Bengaluru's Green Mobility Network

Tata Motors has commenced the delivery of 148 Tata Starbus electric buses to the Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC), marking a significant milestone in the city's shift toward sustainable public transport. With this addition, BMTC's electric bus fleet supplied by Tata now exceeds 1,000 units, positioning Bengaluru among India's leading cities in EV adoption for urban mobility.



The new buses were flagged off by Karnataka's Transport Minister Shri Ramalinga Reddy, along with BMTC Managing Director Shri Ramachandran R., IAS, and other senior officials. Operated under a 12-year contract by TML Smart City Mobility Solutions Ltd., the Tata Starbus models are tailored for intra-city operations.

Each bus comes equipped with 35 ergonomic seats, a low-floor design for easy boarding, zero tailpipe emissions, and safety systems like Electronic Stability Control and Electronic Brake Distribution. An Integrated Transport Management System further enhances real-time operational efficiency. These buses have collectively clocked over 6 crore kilometers in daily service within Bengaluru, underscoring their reliability.

Shri Ramachandran noted that Tata's electric buses have maintained high operational uptime while offering a comfortable commuter experience. Tata Motors continues to play a pivotal role in India's electric mobility transition, offering smart and scalable EV solutions tailored to the needs of modern urban transport systems.

Ashok Leyland Ties Up with Tamil Nadu Grama Bank to Boost Commercial Vehicle Financing

Ashok Leyland has entered into a strategic partnership with Tamil Nadu Grama Bank (TNGB) to enhance vehicle financing accessibility for commercial vehicle buyers across Tamil Nadu. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aims to provide end-to-end financial support to customers, particularly in rural and semi-urban markets.

The agreement was formalized by Viplav Shah, Head of the Light Commercial Vehicle Business at Ashok Leyland, and Kannan Ponnuraman, General Manager of TNGB, in the presence of the bank's Chairman, Mani Subramanian. As part of this collaboration, TNGB will offer customized vehicle loan options with flexible repayment plans aligned to customer preferences. The initiative is expected to ease credit access for small transport operators, entrepreneurs, and fleet owners, enabling them to invest in Ashok Leyland's product range.

Ashok Leyland views this alliance as a step toward deepening market penetration and supporting financial inclusion through convenient credit facilities. Viplav Shah highlighted that the partnership will help customers



access Ashok Leyland's efficient, cost-effective mobility solutions with greater ease.

Chairman Mani Subramanian noted that this collaboration aligns with TNGB's mission to serve diverse borrower segments. With a network of 676 branches across Tamil Nadu, the bank offers financial products tailored to MSMEs, agriculture, and government-sponsored schemes, reinforcing its role in rural credit delivery. The alliance is positioned to support the growth of commercial transport businesses while strengthening Ashok Leyland's footprint in the region's vehicle financing ecosystem.

Uber Shuttle Ceases Operations in Mumbai Amid Crackdown on Unlicensed Bus Aggregators

Uber has shut down its shuttle bus service in Mumbai following a directive from Maharashtra Transport Minister Pratap Sarnaik, who ordered enforcement action against unlicensed bus aggregators. The decision is part of a broader regulatory push aimed at streamlining public transport and ensuring compliance with the Motor Vehicles Act.

Uber Shuttle had been operating on more than 100 routes across Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, and

Thane using a fleet of 450 to 500 buses. However, the service lacked a Stage Carriage permit, a mandatory license for transporting passengers on scheduled routes. Authorities determined that the pilot service was running without official state authorisation.

The shutdown has impacted thousands of daily commuters, particularly office-goers who relied on the service for air-conditioned, app-booked, and confirmed-seat transport between the suburbs and key business districts such as

BKC and Nariman Point. Many now face overcrowded alternatives and reduced convenience.

Other private players like Cityflo, also affected by the order, have requested a regulatory framework rather than blanket bans. Industry stakeholders argue for the implementation of the central Aggregator Policy, which remains unenforced at the state level.

For fleet operators and OEMs, the move highlights the need for regulatory alignment. Securing proper route permits, RTO approvals, and digital infrastructure compliance is now essential. At the same time, demand for app-based, comfortable, last-mile connectivity remains strong.

The state transport ministry has hinted at developing a regulated aggregator policy, opening doors for compliant private operators to re-enter the market.



Omega Seiki Mobility to Launch Two Electric Buses Models for Government and Luxury Segments

Omega Seiki Mobility (OSM) is preparing to debut two new electric bus models, targeting both the government transport sector and intercity luxury travel market. The launch is expected over the next 18 months.

The first model will be a 9-metre low-floor electric bus, tailored for state transport undertakings and smart city projects. Developed in collaboration with a Swedish engineering partner, the bus will offer a peak motor output of 190 kW, a 195 kWh



NMC battery, and a range of 200 km per charge. Fast charging from 0 to 80% is possible in 30 minutes, while standard charging takes roughly six hours.

This bus will be manufactured at OSM's upcoming UAE facility, which is slated to begin production in November 2025. The plant will have an annual capacity of 800 buses and is expected to serve export markets in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

The second variant will be a 12-metre high-deck luxury electric coach aimed at private intercity operators. Designed for long-haul comfort and performance, this model is expected to launch within 18 months. It marks OSM's entry into the premium B2C bus segment.

OSM expects the 9-metre model to command up to 40% market share in its category, while the luxury coach will cater to operators seeking sustainable, high-comfort fleet additions.

The dual launch positions OSM as a serious player in India's evolving e-bus space, with eyes on both domestic and international markets.

Cityflo Deploys First Electric Bus Fleet in Delhi NCR with Aaveg Partnership

Cityflo has partnered with Aaveg to roll out its first electric bus fleet in the Delhi NCR region, marking a major step in the company's transition to clean mobility. Aaveg will handle fleet ownership and maintenance, while Cityflo will oversee route planning, customer bookings, and daily service management.

The buses, supplied by EKA and operated under the Cityflo brand, are already in service on high-demand routes like Rohini to DLF Cyber City and Sohna Road. This collaboration integrates Aaveg's operational infrastructure with Cityflo's tech-driven commuter platform, aiming to provide a seamless and sustainable alternative to conventional urban travel.

Rushabh Shah, CBO and Co-founder of Cityflo, emphasized the strategic nature of the move: "This partnership helps us expand with electric buses while enhancing commuter experience in Delhi. Combining clean energy with tech-enabled reliability sets a new benchmark for daily transport."

Vivek Laroia, CEO of Aaveg, added, "This is about aligning operational scale with a sustainability-first mindset. Together with Cityflo, we're pushing for higher standards in urban mobility."

Cityflo targets electrifying 20% of its fleet by FY26 and will scale further as supporting infrastructure develops. The initiative aligns with India's broader goals of reducing emissions and improving public transportation standards in major cities.

Indian Electric Bus Sales in June 2025:

A Detailed Market Analysis



By Violina Pegu

A total of 528 buses were sold across the segment in June 2025. Switch Mobility made a big comeback to the top of the charts with a 23.8% market share.

India's electric bus (e-bus) market showed a huge growth in June 2025, with a total of 528 units sold across six different OEMs.

The overall electric bus sales in June saw a few OEMs bounce back from dip in sales in previous months to claim highest sales figures this time around. With a lot of OEMs making a comeback, a previous leader in sales saw its sales plummet to 5th position in the monthly sales list.



Electric Bus Sales In June 2025: Key Highlights

- Switch Mobility bounced back to the top of sales chart in June after a dip in sales in April and May 2025
- JBM Group managed to build up on its steady growth in April and May to gain a 23.3% market share in June 2025
- After hugely successful months of April and May 2025, PMI Electro Mobility saw its monthly sales reduce by over 60% in June 2025

Electric Bus Sales Report – OEM-wise Performance

| Manufacturer | Units Sold | Market Share (%) |
|----------------------|------------|------------------|
| Switch Mobility | 126 | 23.8% |
| JBM Group | 123 | 23.2% |
| Pinnacle Mobility | 108 | 20.8% |
| Olectra Greentech | 80 | 15.1% |
| PMI Electro Mobility | 57 | 10.8% |
| Tata Motors | 34 | 6.4% |
| Total | 528 | 100% |

Electric Bus Sales Since January 2025

| Manufacturer | January 2025 | February 2025 | March 2025 | April 2025 | May 2025 | June 2025 | MoM Change (May-June) | MoM% Change |
|-------------------------|--------------|---------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Switch Mobility | 125 | 88 | 113 | 21 | 51 | 126 | 75 | 147 |
| JBM Group | 48 | 36 | 4 | 46 | 65 | 123 | 58 | 89 |
| Pinnacle Mobility | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 12 | 108 | 96 | 800 |
| Olectra Greentech | 59 | 66 | 76 | 25 | 60 | 80 | 20 | 33.33 |
| PMI Electro Mobility | 68 | 57 | 25 | 188 | 147 | 57 | -90 | -61.22 |
| Tata Motors | 23 | 42 | 24 | 6 | 3 | 34 | 31 | 1,033 |
| Veera (Combined) | 13 | 4 | 4 | 3 | - | - | - | |
| Aeroeagle Automobiles | 23 | 12 | 28 | - | - | - | | |
| Total Units Sold | 360 | 12 | 275 | 292 | 338 | 528 | 190 | 56.21 |

Key Observations:

- The top 3 OEMs - Switch Mobility, JBM Group and Pinnacle Mobility accounted for nearly 70% of the electric bus market share in June 2025
- Switch Mobility made a triumphant return to the top of the sales chart in June, with a 147% MoM growth
- Pinnacle Mobility had the biggest MoM growth in June 2025



RIDING THE ROUGH ROAD:

The Hidden Struggles of India's Intercity Bus Operators

India's Intercity bus operations may be on the road to transformation. But the people behind the wheel need more than statistics. They need structural support, fair play, and a voice at the table.

By Shivam Gautam



The intercity bus travel market in India is on an upward trajectory. According to research by VIDECON Consultants, the sector reached a market size of ₹539 billion (\$6.7 billion) in FY23, a sharp jump from the previous year. Forecasts point to an even steeper climb, ₹688 billion (\$8.6 billion) by FY26, powered by expanding highways, rapid urbanization, higher disposable incomes, and the rising adoption of quality coaches.

Online bookings, currently making up 19% of total ticketing, are projected to grow to 26% by FY26, with online travel aggregators (OTAs) emerging as dominant platforms for customer acquisition.

From a distance, the picture is promising. But talk to the operators at the heart of this surge, and a more complex, troubled narrative unfolds.

The Invisible Battles Behind the Wheel

For private operators, who comprise the backbone of intercity mobility, this growth story hides an array of persistent, compounding challenges.

Regulatory harassment remains one of the most deep-rooted



“State-run buses have unrestricted access to routes, terminals, and city permits. Private buses, on the other hand, are limited to contract carriage permits in many states. In Maharashtra, only government undertakings get stage carriage permits. This stifles growth and undermines fair competition”

-Abhijeet Konduskar,
CEO, Konduskar Travels

and universally acknowledged challenges facing private bus operators in India.

From “permit violations” for halting at non-designated stops to repeated penalties for traffic obstruction, such actions have become a routine part of daily operations for many private players.

Operators report frequent revenue losses due to arbitrary challans, selective enforcement drives, and spot penalties, many of which, they argue, bear little connection to actual passenger safety. For private operators, the rules are more rigid, and the system, by design, deeply imbalanced.

“Every private bus operator is fighting invisible battles - against regulations, corruption, and unfair practices,” says Chintan Rathod, Owner of Nakoda Travels.

“Government harassment has become a constant. Even when we operate within the legal framework, we end up facing annual fines of ₹1 lakh or more. The traffic police often photograph our buses while boarding passengers and issue challans for traffic obstruction or permit violations. But the truth is, there are simply no designated stops provided, where else are we expected to halt?” adds Rathod.



From Partner to Platform: The Rise of OTAs

The emergence of OTAs such as RedBus, Paytm, and Abhibus reshaped the booking landscape. They made travel easier for passengers but have shifted the control of visibility and demand away from operators. Aggregators, once seen as enablers, have become gatekeepers as per operators.

“Earlier, if you ran a good service, passengers remembered your brand. Now, they only remember the app. Platforms like RedBus decide who gets bookings based on commission payouts, not service quality. You can literally jump from position 25 to position 4 by paying more. That’s not competition; that’s extortion,” says Rathod.

Solomon Dinakaran, Founder of Cee Jay Trans, reflects on this shift. “Yes, RedBus brought in convenience. But today, online ratings determine whether a customer even sees your bus listing. A single bad review can dent bookings. The pressure to advertise, offer discounts, and constantly monitor ratings is intense. Smaller operators are finding it harder to survive.”



“The aggregator model has pushed some players to evolve. Buses are cleaner, services are more punctual, and operators are using tech to enhance experiences. That’s the good part. But the cost of staying relevant on these platforms is rising faster than most people realise”

-Solomon Dinakaran,
Founder, Cee Jay Trans

However, he also agrees that, on the flip side, the aggregator model has pushed some players to evolve. It has compelled operators to adopt digital tools, improve punctuality, and offer better onboard services. Competition through online platforms has raised customer expectations, forcing even smaller fleets to upgrade their standards to stay relevant.

“Buses are cleaner, services are more punctual, and operators are using tech to enhance experiences. That’s the good part. But the cost of staying relevant on these platforms is rising faster than most people realise,” adds Dinakaran.

Operating Costs Are Spiralling

Operational pressures have reached an inflection point. Fuel prices remain volatile. Toll fees have increased. Maintenance costs have soared. And while customer expectations have evolved, pricing power remains weak.

“The price of new buses keeps climbing, fuel costs are unstable, and maintenance isn’t getting any cheaper,” says **Kaja Prem Lal, CEO of IRA Travels**.

“Chassis prices go up by 15% every quarter. Body-building adds another 15%. Yet we’re expected to keep fares affordable while absorbing a 30% production hike every quarter. It’s not sustainable,” he expresses.

For operators like Prem Lal, the only way out is innovation in bus design. “Unless we invest in low-cost, smart bus models, not low-quality, but scalable, we’re going to lose out to other modes of transport,” he adds.

Labour Pains: The Crew Conundrum

Beyond fuel and fleet, the intercity bus sector faces a human capital crunch. Expanding state welfare policies are gradually disincentivizing individuals from actively seeking employment, particularly in demanding sectors like intercity transport. As a result, attracting and retaining dependable crew members has become a growing and largely unspoken crisis for bus operators.



For many young workers, guaranteed rural income or urban welfare support feels more secure than the long, erratic hours and modest pay of bus-driving roles. Operators are now grappling with high turnover, inconsistent crews, and frequent service disruptions, making the shortage of reliable manpower one of the most pressing challenges across India's private bus industry.



Unfair Playing Field: Private vs State Operators

While private operators navigate regulatory harassment on a daily basis, another structural challenge looms large - unequal regulatory treatment.

Government-run buses benefit from preferential treatment - access to terminal infrastructure without charge, smoother police facilitation through urban corridors, and limited scrutiny over compliance.

"State-run buses have unrestricted access to routes, terminals, and city permits," says **Abhijeet Konduskar**, CEO, Konduskar Travels.

"Private buses, on the other hand, are limited to contract carriage permits in many states. In Maharashtra, only government undertakings get stage carriage permits. This stifles growth and undermines fair competition," he adds.

Konduskar points out that despite the private sector's investment in premium services and fleet modernization, policy bias remains entrenched. "We serve the same public. Why the discrimination?" he adds.

"The workforce today is less inclined to work consistently," says **Ashwin Yatham Reddy**, Director, BRS Travels.

"It's one of the most pressing problems that bus operators across India are grappling with today. Government subsidies and freebies have altered work ethic. Finding dependable, professional staff is becoming harder. And in this business, the crew defines everything - punctuality, cleanliness, customer satisfaction," Reddy avers.

The issue is not just manpower availability but also training and standardisation. For a service-oriented sector, inconsistent crew quality can directly impact customer experience, brand trust and revenue.



“The price of new buses keeps climbing, fuel costs are unstable, and maintenance isn't getting any cheaper. Chassis prices go up by 15% every quarter. Body-building adds another 15%. Yet we're expected to keep fares affordable while absorbing a 30% production hike every quarter. It's not sustainable”

-Kaja Prem Lal,
CEO, IRA Travels

Foreign Disruption and the ₹99 Ticket Problem

Adding to the pressure is the entry of foreign players like FlixBus, which began Indian operations with ultra-low fares and massive marketing.

“They came in with ₹99 tickets. How do you fight that?” asks Rathod. “We don’t have that kind of capital cushion. We’re not funded by VCs. We survive on daily margins.”

While new entrants bring global best practices, their subsidised pricing models have destabilised local economics, especially for mid-sized and smaller regional players.

Infrastructure: The Unseen Challenge

Even as India invests in a modern highway network, stretching through economic corridors and connecting Tier-2 cities at record speed, ground-level infrastructure challenges persist. For private players navigating the vast intercity ecosystem, the on-ground infrastructure remains fragile, fragmented, and largely overlooked in policymaking.

Poorly designed bus stops, lack of basic passenger amenities, bottlenecks at toll plazas, and unregulated terminal access all contribute to a daily operational grind that affects not just schedules, but service quality.



“It is a constant juggling act, balancing passenger satisfaction with harsh ground realities. Bad roads, traffic congestion, and limited terminal facilities all make scheduling unpredictable. Even with careful planning, delays happen. And when delays happen, complaints increase and ratings fall”

-Dharmasen Patil,
Director, Sangitam Travel Pvt. Ltd.



“Earlier, if you ran a good service, passengers remembered your brand. Now, they only remember the app. Platforms like RedBus decide who gets bookings based on commission payouts, not service quality. You can literally jump from position 25 to position 4 by paying more”

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Owner, Nakoda Travels





Operators report frequent revenue losses due to arbitrary challans, selective enforcement drives, and spot penalties, many of which, they argue, bear little connection to actual passenger safety. For private operators, the rules are more rigid, and the system, by design, is deeply imbalanced.



Dharmasen Patil, Director of Sangitam Travel Pvt. Ltd., sums up the hidden chaos with disarming clarity.

“Bad roads, traffic congestion, limited terminal facilities, they all make scheduling unpredictable. Even with careful planning, delays happen. And when delays happen, complaints increase and ratings fall,” Patil reveals.

Patil says operators like him are in a constant juggling act, balancing passenger satisfaction with harsh ground realities.

He lists his top five operational pain points, many of which have remained unchanged over the years:

- Regulatory complexity
- Volatile fuel and maintenance costs
- Brutal price wars
- Poor infrastructure
- The ongoing pressure to deliver both punctuality and safety.

“We try to keep our buses on time, but things like narrow town roads, encroached bus bays, or sudden diversions make it impossible some days. A single delay in the afternoon can disrupt the entire night schedule,” he adds.

Despite this, operators persist, adapting routes, coordinating on-ground teams via WhatsApp, and even partnering with local dhabas as informal rest stops when terminal access is denied.

“But we keep going,” he adds with a smile. “That’s what keeps this sector moving, a stubborn kind of resilience.”

Where Do We Go From Here?

The growth of India’s intercity bus industry is undeniable. More people are travelling than ever before. Highways are faster. Vehicles are more advanced. Booking is seamless. But if the private operators who make up an estimated 93% of the market continue to face unfair conditions, the industry risks hollowing out from the inside.

To ensure sustainable growth, the sector needs policy reform, transparent aggregator practices, and stronger investments in both men and machines.

“We need a reset,” says Kaja Prem Lal. “A model that values the operator as much as it values the passenger. That’s the only way forward.”

India’s intercity buses may be on the road to transformation. But the people behind the wheel need more than statistics. They need structural support, fair play, and a voice at the table. ●



MG Group Unveils New Identity and Super-Premium Intercity Coach

By Violina Pegu

NEW LAUNCH

MG Group has unveiled the Tigra, an in-house developed super-premium intercity coach, alongside the launch of its new corporate and brand identity. These landmark announcements were made at the Group's "RE:BORN" event in Bengaluru.

Developed and manufactured at MG Group's advanced facility in Belagavi, Karnataka, the Tigra sets a new benchmark in intercity and tourism travel. Designed for the 13.5m coach chassis platform, Tigra is positioned as a high-end offering for both domestic and international markets, combining elevated aesthetics with practical innovation.

Key highlights of Tigra include:

- ABS-moulded interiors with no sharp edges or visible fasteners for maximum safety and aesthetics.
- Ambient integrated lighting and premium upholstery for a luxurious travel experience.
- Signature full-length DRLs with heartbeat-style LED strip for a distinctive, modern look.
- PU-moulded assistance handles that enhance safety and ease for passengers.

"In the bus and coach body-building industry, progress is never overnight. It's built on strong relationships, consistent quality, and the ability to evolve with changing transportation needs. MG is not just a legacy of engineering, it's a legacy of character. The Tigra is going to be a segment leader from day one, we are optimistic of that," said Sivakumar V., President, Strategy and Sales, MG Group.

The launch of the new corporate identity signals MG Group's evolution from a behind-the-scenes OEM partner to a brand-led, product-driven mobility solutions provider. The refreshed logo features a seamless 'M to G' flow and a hexagonal bolt-inspired silhouette.

Speaking on the transformation, Anil Mohan Kamat, Chairman and Managing Director, stated, "This new identity signals a shift in our market positioning, we're no longer just a reliable vendor behind the scenes. We are stepping forward as a brand that leads with innovation, design, and premium product offerings like Tigra."

The rebranding also includes a new visual language and messaging strategy, aligning with MG's long-term ambitions in intercity mobility, sustainable transport, and next-generation travel solutions.

Backed by recent investments in tooling, jigs, and quality systems, MG's Belagavi facility is well-equipped to meet growing demand. Over the years, MG Group has delivered more than 125,000 bus bodies, serving diverse sectors such as schools, staff, defence, ambulance, and luxury intercity services.

Commenting on the milestone, Gireesha Prabhu, Chief Operating Officer, MG Group, remarked, "Today, we don't just unveil a new identity. We welcome a new era, bold instance, global in vision, and human at heart. Tigra offers supreme comfort, safety, and serviceability on all available 13.5-meter coach chassis." ●

“ This new identity signals a shift in our market positioning, we’re no longer just a reliable vendor behind the scenes. We are stepping forward as a brand that leads with innovation, design, and premium product offerings like Tigra. ”

-Anil Mohan Kamat

Chairman and Managing Director, MG Group.





Beyond the Painted Exterior: **Kaja Prem Lal Exposes the Hidden Cracks** **in India's Bus Industry**

“ Don't be dazzled by the shiny exterior of a new bus. Inside, this business has challenges that can break your back, ”

Kaja Prem Lal, CEO, IRA Travels

By Zainab Azhar

THE REAL ROUTE

Intercity buses are the lifeline of India, moving millions daily through highways, hills, and heartlands. But behind the roaring engines and glossy exteriors lies a business under mounting pressure. Costs are soaring, margins are shrinking, and competition, from both within and outside the sector, is getting fiercer by the day.

Few people understand this better than Kaja Prem Lal, CEO of IRA Travels. What began in 2005 as a small contract-based operation in Andhra Pradesh has since grown into a 63-bus fleet spanning four southern states. With over 250 employees and a reputation for dependable service, IRA Travels is a name built on consistency, but also on constant firefighting.

In this no-holds-barred conversation with Zainab Azhar, Kaja Prem Lal pulls back the curtain on the harsh realities of running a modern-day bus business in India. From rising fuel and production costs to the unrealistic hype around electric buses, he makes one thing clear - the industry is on the brink, and unless serious interventions happen soon, it could be headed for a slow collapse.

This is not your typical success story. It's a deep, sobering look at an industry in flux, and the people trying to keep it moving.

ZA: Intercity bus operations have become incredibly competitive today. What do you believe gives you an edge? How do you stay ahead in this crowded market?

KPL: That's a great question — because yes, this industry has become intensely competitive. Too many operators are chasing the same passenger base, and only a few will stand out.

For us, the approach is simple: focus on getting the basics right.

First, we prioritise punctuality. On-time departures and arrivals aren't optional, they're the foundation of trust. Second, we keep our fleet current. Comfort,

features, and safety standards evolve fast, and if your buses look or feel outdated, passengers won't give you a second chance.

And third, and this is something many overlook, we invest deeply in mechanical fitness. Preventive maintenance isn't a cost, it's an investment in uptime, reliability, and brand reputation. A breakdown on the road isn't just a delay, it's a trust deficit.

In this business, consistency wins. And that begins with discipline, not discounts.

ZA: Where do you see the bus industry heading in the next 10 years? What's your outlook - optimistic or cautious?

KPL: The core issue is cost. The price of new buses keeps climbing, fuel costs are volatile, and maintenance isn't getting any cheaper. At the same time, air travel is becoming more affordable and far more accessible, especially with government initiatives like UDAN and the rapid expansion of regional airports.

Consider this: not too long ago, a trip from Vijayawada to Hyderabad would cost around ₹1,000 by bus and nearly ₹10,000 by flight. Today, that same bus trip costs ₹1,700 – ₹2,000, while a flight is down to ₹5,000, and sometimes even less.

There's only so far we can raise bus fares before it becomes unreasonable for passengers. And when flights offer more speed, more comfort, and better value for time, people are going to make that switch. Many already are.

If we don't rethink cost structures, operating models, and the long-term value proposition of road travel, we're going to lose a large part of our market.



ZA: If that's the scenario, what do you think the industry can do to stay afloat? Are there any alternatives or solutions?

KPL: Honestly, there aren't many options left on the table right now. But one thing is absolutely clear, we need some form of low-cost bus models.

We keep chasing luxury in bus travel, more features, better seats, bigger promises. But no one's talking about the one thing that really matters right now - cost.

Input costs are rising steeply. Chassis prices go up by 15% every quarter. Body-building costs go up by another 15%. And operators are expected to keep ticket prices affordable while absorbing a 30% increase in every quarter. That's not sustainable.

The truth is, unless we start focusing on designing low-cost bus models, not low-quality, but smart, efficient, scalable, we're going to lose out to every other mode of transport.

Input costs are rising steeply. Chassis prices go up by 15% every quarter. Body-building costs go up by another 15%. And operators are expected to keep ticket prices affordable while absorbing a 30% increase in every quarter.

ZA: Let's shift to the topic of technology. How are you using it in your operations today? And do you feel anything is still missing?

KPL: Technology has definitely made a big impact, especially in the last few years. We now rely heavily on GPS systems to track our fleet in real time.

We have a fair share of Ashok Leyland buses and Leyland's AL SERVE app is quite handy. It gives us detailed insights on where the bus is, when it departed, what speed it's traveling at and it helps us monitor vehicle performance and ensure safety across the board.

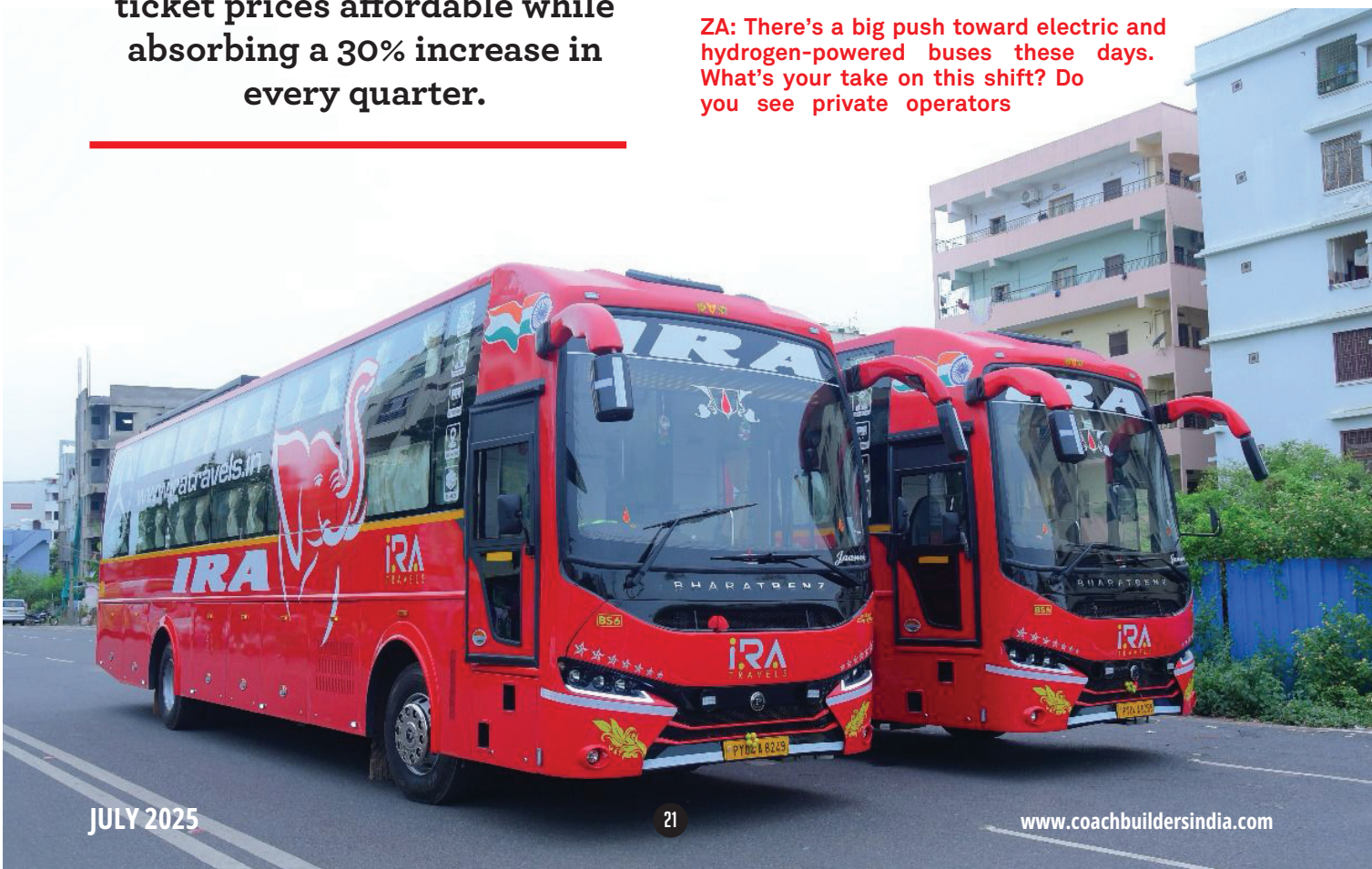
But yes, I do believe something is still missing, and it's a gap that directly affects operational transparency.

Right now, there's no way to verify real-time passenger count with certainty. Say a bus has 40 seats and only 25 passengers board officially, how do I know if the driver doesn't pick up 5 or 10 more en route and pocket the cash?

If we had seat-based smart sensors, each seat could be monitored. That would give us real-time data on seat occupancy, along with time and location stamps.

That kind of visibility would not only increase operational efficiency, it would also prevent revenue leakage and improve trust in the system.

ZA: There's a big push toward electric and hydrogen-powered buses these days. What's your take on this shift? Do you see private operators



THE REAL ROUTE



like yourself being able to adopt these technologies easily?

KPL: There's definitely a lot of momentum around electric and hydrogen buses, and the government is actively promoting these technologies. But if you ask me, as a private operator we're still quite far from making this transition commercially viable.

Take electric buses, for example. The upfront investment required is substantial, far beyond what most private operators can absorb on their own, especially without consistent and meaningful financial support.

Then there's the range limitation. Most electric buses today can only run about 250 to 300 kilometers on a full charge. For long-distance operators like us, who cover routes of 500 to 600 kilometers, that's just not practical. What are we supposed to do, stop midway for a few hours to recharge? That's not how real-world operations work.

In theory, subsidies could help bridge the gap. But in practice, we don't have access to reliable or sustained incentives. And without that or the supporting infrastructure like widespread, high-capacity charging stations adoption is nearly impossible, no matter how willing we are.

The intent is good. The technology is promising. But the business model just isn't there yet for private, long-haul operators.

ZA: If the government really wants private players to go electric, what kind of incentives or support would you say are absolutely essential?

KPL: First and foremost, we need a robust charging infrastructure. Charging stations must be widely available, especially along intercity routes. Without that, it's simply not possible to operate long-distance services reliably.

Second, electric buses need a significant improvement in range. For intercity operations, a single charge must cover at least 500 to 600 kilometers. Until we reach that benchmark, operators cannot depend on them for longer routes.

Third, there's the issue of design and appeal. Many of the electric buses currently available look outdated or unrefined. As I told you earlier, if passengers aren't visually impressed or comfortable, they won't choose to travel in them. Aesthetic design and passenger experience matter.

And finally, the financial side needs serious attention. Subsidies are important, yes, but they must be consistent and well-structured. More importantly, access to financing at practical, operator-friendly interest rates is crucial. Without that, the transition to electric will stay aspirational, not operational.

ZA: Let's talk about challenges. Every business has them, but in bus operations, what are the top five that really keep you on your toes?

KPL: This is a tough business. Most people just see the buses running on highways. They don't realise how much coordination happens behind the scenes.

First, the biggest challenge is keeping the vehicle clean and mechanically sound at all times. Cleanliness and mechanical health go hand in hand. One breakdown can undo months of trust you've built with passengers.

Second, we rely heavily on third-party vendors - fuel stations, tyre suppliers, mechanics. And not just one mechanic. Each system in the bus needs a different specialist - someone for the axle, another for steering, electricals, pneumatic lines, and so on.

Electric buses need a significant improvement in range. For intercity operations, a single charge must cover at least 500 to 600 kilometers. Until we reach that benchmark, operators cannot depend on them for longer routes.

Third, all these services must be integrated seamlessly into daily operations. If one part fails to align, the entire flow is disrupted. Keeping this machinery well-oiled is an everyday challenge.

Fourth, in the unfortunate case of an on-route breakdown, we must arrange an immediate replacement bus - same configuration, same amenities. If passengers are inconvenienced, they won't book with us again. Reputation is everything.

Fifth, and most unpredictable, is emergency management. A sudden driver no-show, a tyre burst, a delay at a fuel station - you have to be ready for anything, at any hour. There's no off-duty in this line of work.

ZA: A lot of operators have pointed out that the financial support mechanisms need reform. In your opinion, what changes should the government make to better support private bus operators financially?

KPL: There's a lot the government can do to help private operators.

For example, the CGTMA loan scheme is good in theory, but the high interest rates, along with the need to insure both the bus and the loan, create unnecessary financial strain. Waiving these extra charges would be a big relief.

Also, while there are schemes for SC/ST and women entrepreneurs offering 30–40% assistance, the funds are only available after the bus is already running. That doesn't help with initial setup costs.

Another issue is loan caps. Banks limit loans to ₹5 crore, and even with timely EMLs, I can't borrow again for two years. This makes expansion difficult when I have the vision but lack the funding.

All I'm asking is for the government to fund 60–70% of the requirements, not 100%. We're ready to contribute, but we need more support to grow.

ZA: Looking ahead, what emerging trends do you believe the bus fleet industry should embrace in the near future? Anything you're personally planning to implement?

KPL: Absolutely, I believe the future of bus travel must be more inclusive, family-friendly, and thoughtfully designed. Here are a few ideas/facilities that should be standard in intercity travel:

First, we need pantry services on long routes. Passengers often struggle with food options, and a basic pantry setup would improve their overall experience.

Second, we should have reserved seats for pregnant women, senior citizens, and people with physical challenges. If someone uses a wheelchair, there should be designated spots with accessible boarding and deboarding facilities.

Another important aspect is providing a breastfeeding cubicle. Even a simple, cloth-partitioned seat where a mother can feed her baby privately would make a big difference. Small touches, like a tray attachment for infants to sleep safely, can go a long way.

And here's something I'm particularly passionate about, an all-female crew. Female drivers and conductors would not only help normalize women in the workforce but also enhance safety and trust, especially for female passengers.

These aren't just ideas; we're actively working on incorporating many of these into our upcoming fleet. ●



Passenger Vehicle Expo 2.0: India's Largest Passenger Mobility Showcase Returns to Chennai

July 31 – August 2, 2025 | Chennai Trade Centre



Save the Date:
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After a landmark debut, Passenger Vehicle Expo 2.0 is all set to accelerate India's mobility transformation with an even more expansive and dynamic second edition. Scheduled from July 31st to August 2nd, 2025, at the Chennai Trade Centre, the event is organized by the All Omni Bus Owners Association (AOBOA) and supported by BOCI, bringing together industry leaders, policymakers, technology innovators, and operators under one roof.



Reflecting on Last Year's Success

The 2024 edition of the expo saw tremendous industry participation with over 5,000 fleet operators, 90+ exhibitors, and several landmark product unveilings. It sparked meaningful dialogues on intercity transport, technology adoption, and regulatory reform — setting the stage for collaborative growth across the passenger mobility ecosystem.

Major Launches to Watch

- Damodar Coach Builders will unveil a new line of luxury sleeper coaches, tailored for long-haul intercity travel with premium interiors and integrated washroom facilities.
- Ashok Leyland, the title sponsor, is set to launch its next-generation intercity bus chassis platforms, emphasizing modularity, enhanced ride quality, and reduced total cost of ownership.
- TATA Motors will showcase its latest MAGNA Intercity EV Coach, targeting the premium electric bus segment with a refined drivetrain, improved thermal management, and longer operational range.

Who Else Is Participating?

The expo features participation from leading OEMs like Eicher, Volvo, and Force Motors, along with service and component brands such as Apollo Tyres, Michelin, JK Tyres, Wheels India, Rambal, ELGI, Viva, and SPAL.

Tech-based intercity fleet aggregators like IntrCity Smartbus, FlixBus, and Zingbus will showcase their innovations in customer experience, dynamic pricing, and route optimization.

Fleet-tech innovators including Rapido, Gro Digital, Manatee, and Blackbox GPS will exhibit next-generation tools for ticketing, telematics, real-time tracking, and performance analytics, empowering operators to drive operational excellence.

LiquiConnect will demonstrate its customized fleet solutions, including FASTag services, integrated telematics, and financial tools to improve operational efficiency.

Electrigo Services is launching EV leasing solutions aimed at enabling cost-effective electric vehicle adoption for smaller fleet operators.

JTAC will showcase its advanced HVAC systems for buses along with mobile service units offering on-site repairs and maintenance.

Bitla Software and Ezeefinfo are presenting their latest GDS platforms and booking automation tools, helping operators streamline inventory and distribution.

SRMPR, one of the co-sponsors, will present their modern, luxurious caravans and custom-built vehicles, reflecting the growing interest in high-end personal and tourism mobility solutions.

Finance, alternative fuels, and infrastructure brands such as Federal Bank, Think Gas, and Shell complete a full-stack mobility showcase, offering solutions in vehicle financing, clean fuel adoption, and energy infrastructure.



Agenda Highlights

Across the three days, Passenger Vehicle Expo 2.0 will host a series of high-impact talks, workshops, and panel discussions led by industry experts, government representatives, and academic leaders. Highlights include:

- Electrification of Tamil Nadu Transport Sector
- Transforming Public and Private Transport through Innovation
- CUMTA Presentation – Comprehensive Mobility Plan
- We have alternative fuels, but we don't have an alternate future
- Understanding Vehicle Emissions and Your Role in Cleaner Transportation
- Edge AI and IoT for Connected Vehicles – From Laboratory to Road
- Enhancing Customer Service through Continuous Improvement
- Global Pathways to Modernising Public Transport

These sessions are curated in collaboration with IIT Madras, Anna University, SRM University, ITDP, and State Transport Training Institutes, who serve as knowledge partners. Their workshops will focus on future technologies, policy frameworks, and service quality improvements, tailored specifically for operators, technicians, and mobility entrepreneurs.

High-Profile Government Participation

The expo will be graced by Hon'ble Ministers from the Departments of Tourism, Transport, and Industries, who will share keynotes and participate in discussions on regulatory modernization, infrastructure development, and EV transition frameworks. ●



OC Transpo Orders 124 Electric Buses from New Flyer to Expand Green Fleet

OC Transpo, the public transit operator for Canada's National Capital Region, has placed an order for 124 new battery-electric buses from New Flyer. The procurement includes 40-foot Xcelsior CHARGE NG models and marks a significant leap in Ottawa's commitment to decarbonising its transit system.

This order builds on OC Transpo's previous purchase of 51 electric buses in 2023, bringing the total New Flyer battery-electric fleet ordered by the agency to 175 units. The latest deal is part of a call-off option under a 2023 agreement with the Toronto Transit Commission and was included in New Flyer's Q1 2025 backlog.

OC Transpo's service network spans Ottawa and parts of Gatineau, operating both bus services and the O-Train light rail. The newly ordered electric buses are expected to enter service by 2026, supporting the agency's goal to deliver quieter and cleaner mobility for a growing urban population.

Funding for the buses comes from a combination of municipal resources and federal support, including financing from the Canada Infrastructure Bank and the Zero Emission Transit Fund under Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada.

"New Flyer has delivered over 1,100 buses to OC Transpo over the past 35 years," said Chris Stoddart, President of NFI's North American Bus and Coach division. "This latest order reinforces our long-standing partnership and underscores our ability to deliver next-generation electric transit solutions on schedule."



Yutong Debuts IC12E Electric Intercity Bus at UITP Summit, Completes 4-Country Test Drive

Yutong has officially launched its new electric intercity bus, the IC12E, at the UITP Global Public Transport Summit 2025 in Hamburg. Developed specifically for the European market, the IC12E was unveiled alongside the U12 city bus under the brand's "Think Eco, Move Green" initiative.

Immediately following its debut, the IC12E embarked on a 1,272 km test drive across Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The journey was designed to demonstrate the bus' range, energy efficiency, and charging performance under real-world operating conditions. Yutong reports an average energy consumption of **0.7 kWh/km** (unladen) and a **single-charge range of 510 km**, recorded on the Hamburg-Copenhagen leg. A fast-charging session from 13% to 99% was completed in **1 hour and 40 minutes** using a single connector.

The route included challenging gradients of up to 20% in Norway, which the IC12E reportedly managed without performance loss, highlighting its suitability for regional and intercity operations across varied European terrain.

Built on Yutong's two decades of experience in the continent, the IC12E is part of the company's effort to meet stringent regional requirements for zero-emission transport. The U12 city bus, also on display, featured Yutong's in-house battery safety system and a maximum passenger capacity of 95.

Yutong views the multi-country road test as a validation of the IC12E's readiness for European deployment and a showcase of its commitment to high-performance, zero-emission transit solutions.

Karsan's Autonomous e-Atak to Begin Six-Month Passenger Service in Paris with RATP

Karsan is set to deploy its **Autonomous e-Atak** on Route 393 in Paris, starting September 2025, in partnership with RATP. The 8-meter electric minibus will operate over a 4.5-kilometre stretch between Sucy-Bonneuil RER and Thiais–Carrefour de la Résistance, serving real passengers under daily traffic conditions for a six-month pilot period.

This marks the latest milestone in Karsan's European autonomous mobility rollout. The e-Atak, powered by **Adastec's flowride.ai Level-4** autonomous driving system, has previously been used in cities like Stavanger (Norway), Tampere (Finland), and soon Gothenburg (Sweden). In each case, it has navigated complex scenarios, including tunnel driving, heavy traffic, and lane changes.

Before passenger operations begin, the e-Atak is undergoing comprehensive evaluation by **UTAC**, France's independent testing and certification body. These tests, both dynamic and static, will continue through August to ensure the vehicle meets international safety and operational standards.

Karsan CEO Okan Bas stated, "Our vehicle is currently being tested by UTAC. Their evaluations so far confirm



that the Autonomous e-Atak is safe, intelligent, and ready for operation. Once testing concludes, it will provide full passenger service, representing a significant leap for driverless public transport in France."

The Paris project underscores Karsan's accelerating role in the European autonomous transit sector, with its e-Atak now moving from pilot validations into mainstream urban integration.

Karsan Launches World's First Autonomous Airport Bus Service at Rotterdam

Karsan has inaugurated the world's first autonomous airport bus service at Rotterdam The Hague Airport. Operated by DAM Shuttles, two of the Turkish manufacturer's **Autonomous e-Atak** buses will ferry passengers between the airport terminal and Meijersplein Metro Station, marking a major advancement in autonomous mobility for airport transport.

The 8-meter e-Atak is built on **Adastec's flowride.ai platform**, achieving **SAE Level-4** autonomy. Equipped with LiDAR units, radar sensors, RGB and thermal cameras, the bus can navigate complex urban environments without a driver on board. It performs all driving tasks independently, including stopping at stations, managing passenger



flow, and interpreting traffic signals. The vehicle has a maximum operating speed of **40 km/h** in autonomous mode.

The service is fully certified by the **Dutch vehicle authority RDW**, making the e-Atak Europe's first RDW-approved full-size autonomous bus for airport operations.

The launch ceremony, held on July 11, brought together key

officials, including the Dutch Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management, Karsan CEO Okan Bas, and representatives from ADASTEC, RET, MRDH, RTHA, Applied Autonomy, and DAM Shuttles.

"This project shows that autonomous mobility is no longer a futuristic vision but a functional solution for today's public transport," said Bas. ADASTEC CEO Dr. Ali Ufuk Peker highlighted the collaborative achievement, calling it a turning point for airport-based autonomous deployments.

This launch builds on Karsan's growing European presence, with similar deployments already in Norway, Finland, and Sweden, and an upcoming launch in Paris later this year.

Iveco Bus to Unveil G-Way CNG Midibus and eDaily LE at Busworld 2025

Iveco Bus is set to debut its new **G-Way CNG midibus** at *Busworld Europe 2025* in Brussels. Compatible with biomethane and shortlisted for the Sustainable Bus Award 2026, the G-Way underscores Iveco's commitment to clean fuel alternatives and operational flexibility.

The G-Way will be presented in two lengths—**9.5 and 10.7 meters**—and features a compact 2.33-meter width, making it one of the narrowest biomethane midibuses in its class. It is aimed at transit operators who navigate narrow streets or have accessibility limitations.

Alongside the G-Way, Iveco Bus will also reveal its new **eDaily Low Entry Minibus**, designed for zero-emission urban transport. With a focus on flexible, last-mile connectivity, the eDaily LE expands the company's electric offering for city-based operations.

Iveco Bus's exhibit will also feature the **12-meter E-Way**, powered by the latest battery technology for all-day operation, as well as the **Crossway Low Entry Elec** and **Crossway Elec** models, tailored for interurban and peri-urban electric mobility.

For longer distances, the **Evadys coach** will be showcased, highlighting its biofuel compatibility for both charter and line-haul use cases.

The brand will also promote its **Energy Mobility Solutions** platform, which serves as a full-service system integrator for electric transitions. Coupled with the **Iveco ON** digital suite for fleet monitoring and the industry's broadest dealer network, the offering positions Iveco Bus as a comprehensive partner in the mobility ecosystem.



Alexander Dennis Completes Successful Enviro100EV Trial with Go-Coach



Alexander Dennis has concluded a two-week trial of its compact battery-electric **Enviro100EV** with UK operator **Go-Coach**, aiming to evaluate the vehicle's performance on both rural and town routes. Branded as a "big small bus," the Enviro100EV ran under normal operating conditions without any need for driver retraining.

Equipped with a **Voith Electrical Drive System** and a **354kWh battery pack**, the bus was driven by staff previously accustomed to diesel-powered Enviro200 models. "It works like any normal bus, you just drive it," said **Austin Blackburn**, Engineering Director at Go-Coach. "Even though the bus is narrower, the cab feels bigger."

Passenger feedback highlighted the **ride comfort and easy accessibility**, reinforcing the model's suitability for local services. Energy consumption during the trial averaged an impressive **0.64 kWh/km**, according to Alexander Dennis's **AD Connect telematics platform**, a figure attributed to the efficiency of the Voith driveline and smart energy management systems.

Shaun Millar, National Account Manager at Alexander Dennis, emphasized the importance of the trial in refining the product's performance. "The feedback from Go-Coach has been hugely valuable," he said. "It confirms the Enviro100EV can easily handle full-day duty cycles, even on rural routes, with energy to spare."

This trial positions the Enviro100EV as a strong contender for operators seeking a versatile, energy-efficient solution for varied route profiles.

TransLink Approves Major Battery-Electric Bus Expansion in Metro Vancouver

TransLink is set to add **102 new battery-electric buses** to its Metro Vancouver fleet, following board approval of a significant funding package aimed at accelerating the region's zero-emission transit goals.

The \$479 million CAD investment, supported by the **Canada Community Building Fund (CCBF)** and administered by the **Union of BC Municipalities**, will cover vehicle procurement, infrastructure upgrades, and technology trials. The funding is part of a broader strategy to phase out aging diesel buses and transition to a more sustainable fleet.

In addition to new buses, the plan includes the **installation of 64 new bus chargers** and facility improvements at the **Port Coquitlam Transit Centre**. A **pilot project** featuring a 60-foot electric trolleybus with in-motion charging capabilities is also included.

"This investment enables us to better serve our customers while significantly reducing our environmental impact," said **Kevin Quinn**, CEO of TransLink. "We're positioning ourselves for a cleaner, more efficient future."

TransLink's current battery-electric fleet includes **19 active vehicles**, with **57 more Nova LFSe+ buses** already



on order. The system also operates **10 on-route overhead chargers**. With the latest funding, the agency aims to reach **178 electric buses by 2030**.

This move reinforces Metro Vancouver's commitment to large-scale transit electrification, as municipalities across British Columbia push forward with aggressive climate and sustainability targets.

Irizar e-mobility to Deliver 14 Electric Buses to London Gatwick Airport

Irizar e-mobility has secured a contract with **London Gatwick Airport** to supply a fleet of **14 fully electric Irizar ie tram buses**, marking the airport's first deployment of all-electric passenger transport vehicles.

The 18-metre articulated buses will operate between long-stay car parks and terminal buildings, providing a sustainable and efficient shuttle service for airport users. Designed with a modern, tram-inspired exterior, the **Irizar ie tram** offers **step-free boarding**, **high passenger capacity**, and **dedicated luggage racks** tailored to airport transit needs.

Powered by Irizar's latest battery technology, the buses will use **ultra-fast pantograph charging**, enabling a full recharge in under six minutes, crucial for maintaining operational uptime in a high-frequency environment. Each unit is

equipped with **digital vision systems**, enhancing driver awareness by replacing traditional mirrors with real-time camera feeds for improved visibility in all directions.

This delivery adds to Irizar e-mobility's growing presence in the UK, where more than **50 of its electric buses** are already in service across multiple cities. The London Gatwick project strengthens Irizar's position in the UK's transport decarbonisation push, while helping one of the country's busiest airports reduce emissions and modernise its ground operations.



FlixBus Expands to Australia, Strengthening Global Reach

FlixBus is set to launch intercity coach services in Australia, marking its expansion into a fifth continent. This strategic move aligns with the country's upcoming summer travel season and enhances Flix's growing footprint across the Asia-Pacific region.

Headquartered in Munich, the company has steadily scaled from Europe to North America, Latin America, and India. Its Australian debut will follow Flix's proven asset-light model, combining in-house digital booking platforms and customer service with local operator partnerships to manage vehicles and daily logistics. This approach is already in use across 44 countries.

Yvan Lefranc-Morin has been appointed as Senior Managing Director for Australia. A veteran of Flix with prior roles in France and the Benelux region, he will lead operations from Sydney and oversee collaborations with domestic bus operators.

Flix sees Australia as a key component of its broader regional growth strategy. The Asia-Pacific intercity coach market is forecasted to grow at a compound annual rate of 12.2% between 2023 and 2028.

CEO and co-founder André Schwämmlein noted that while Australia's geography presented initial hurdles, its long-term promise was always clear. With more than 500 million passengers served and over 6,800 destinations connected globally, Flix is positioning this launch as another milestone in its global expansion.



Wrightbus Reveals New 6x2 Streetdeck Zero-Emission Bus

Wrightbus has officially unveiled its new 6x2 Streetdeck zero-emission bus, with prototypes completed at its production facilities in Northern Ireland and Malaysia. This model is the latest addition to Wrightbus' expanding zero-emission portfolio, which has seen the launch of several innovative products over the past year, including a next-generation hydrogen coach, electric midi-buses, and a hydrogen double-decker.



Designed to offer enhanced battery capacity while retaining full passenger capacity, the 6x2 chassis accommodates both fixed and steering axle configurations. Wrightbus CEO Jean-Marc Gales praised the engineering team's efforts, noting the technical challenge involved in balancing high energy capacity with space for passengers.

Orders have already been secured from operators across Europe and the Far East. A prototype of the new model will undergo durability and efficiency trials over the summer, followed by a 12-month demonstration with a transport operator in Hong Kong.

The reveal follows Wrightbus' recent £150 million finance agreement with HSBC UK. The investment will fuel the company's expansion initiatives, including increased staffing at its Ballymena and Malaysian facilities, a repowering unit under its NewPower division in Bicester, and the opening of a new European service center in Brühl, Germany.

Wrightbus currently supports over 7,500 jobs within its supply chain. The 6x2 Streetdeck underlines the company's commitment to innovation, sustainability, and global growth in the zero-emission public transport segment.

Suffolk County Transit Orders Up to 132 Buses from New Flyer, Expands Hybrid and Electric Fleet

New Flyer has secured a contract to deliver up to 132 buses to Suffolk County Transit over the next five years, further strengthening its presence in New York's public transport sector.

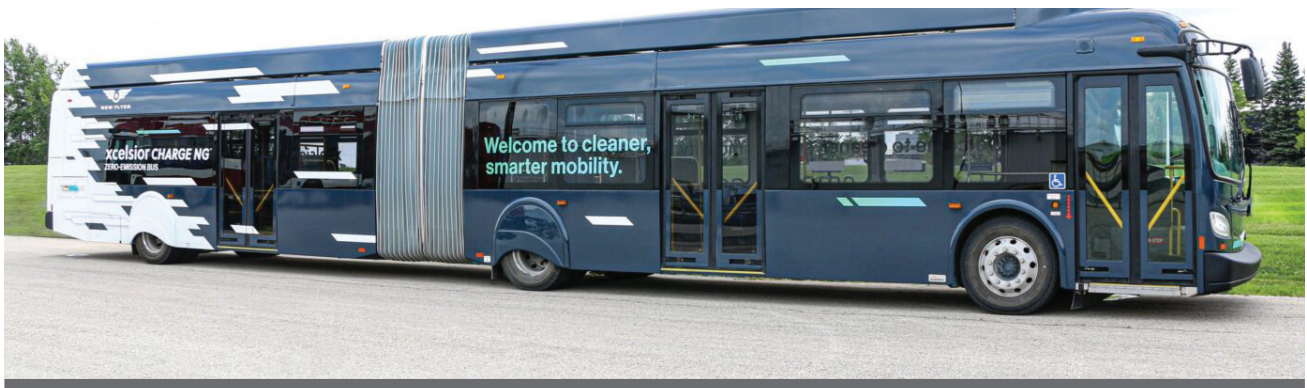
The agreement, recorded in the first quarter of 2025, includes the supply of 92 hybrid-electric 35-foot Xcelsior® buses and 40 battery-electric 40-foot Xcelsior CHARGE NG™ units. These new additions will complement the county's existing fleet of 73 hybrid Xcelsior buses previously provided by New Flyer.

This mixed procurement highlights Suffolk County Transit's commitment to cleaner transit solutions while balancing reliability and operational efficiency. The new vehicles are expected to enhance route dependability, improve rider comfort and reduce overall fleet emissions.

New Flyer's approach, centered on a unified Xcelsior platform, allows transit agencies to streamline operations. The shared architecture across hybrid and electric variants enables simplified maintenance, training and parts management, reducing costs over the vehicle lifecycle.

Chris Stoddart, President of North American Bus and Coach at NFI, noted that this deal reinforces the platform's adaptability and reliability. He emphasized that the order is designed to deliver long-term service improvements for transit riders in the region.

With this order, Suffolk County Transit continues its transition toward a greener and more sustainable transportation model, leveraging New Flyer's proven expertise in both hybrid and electric technologies.



FlixBus Deploys LNG Coaches on Prague-Kraków Route, Expands Alternative Fuel Strategy

FlixBus has launched two liquefied natural gas (LNG)-powered coaches on its long-distance route between Prague and Kraków, becoming the first operator to introduce LNG buses in both Czechia and Poland. This move aligns with Flix's broader goal of achieving net-zero emissions in Europe by 2040.

The two vehicles, Scania Irizar models, are built specifically for long-haul intercity travel. LNG technology offers a cleaner-burning alternative to diesel, with

estimated CO₂ reductions of 10 to 15 percent. If run on bio-LNG where available, emissions cuts can reach up to 90 percent, enhancing the sustainability profile of FlixBus operations.

This deployment marks a significant step in Flix's ongoing evaluation of alternative propulsion methods. The company has already trialed LNG buses in Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands, and now brings this initiative to Central Europe. According to Flix, LNG is currently one of the most viable low-

emission options for long-distance routes, especially in regions where charging or hydrogen infrastructure is limited.

With over 100 vehicles running on alternative drivetrains across its network, FlixBus continues to diversify its energy mix. The introduction of LNG coaches on the Prague-Kraków route is part of the company's multi-pronged approach to decarbonising intercity travel while maintaining operational range and service consistency.

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