THE BUS INSIDER

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BY COACH BUILDERS INDIA

INALCO

The Silent Strength Behind India's Modern Bus Fleets

AITP 2025: Key Updates

Capital-Light Electrification

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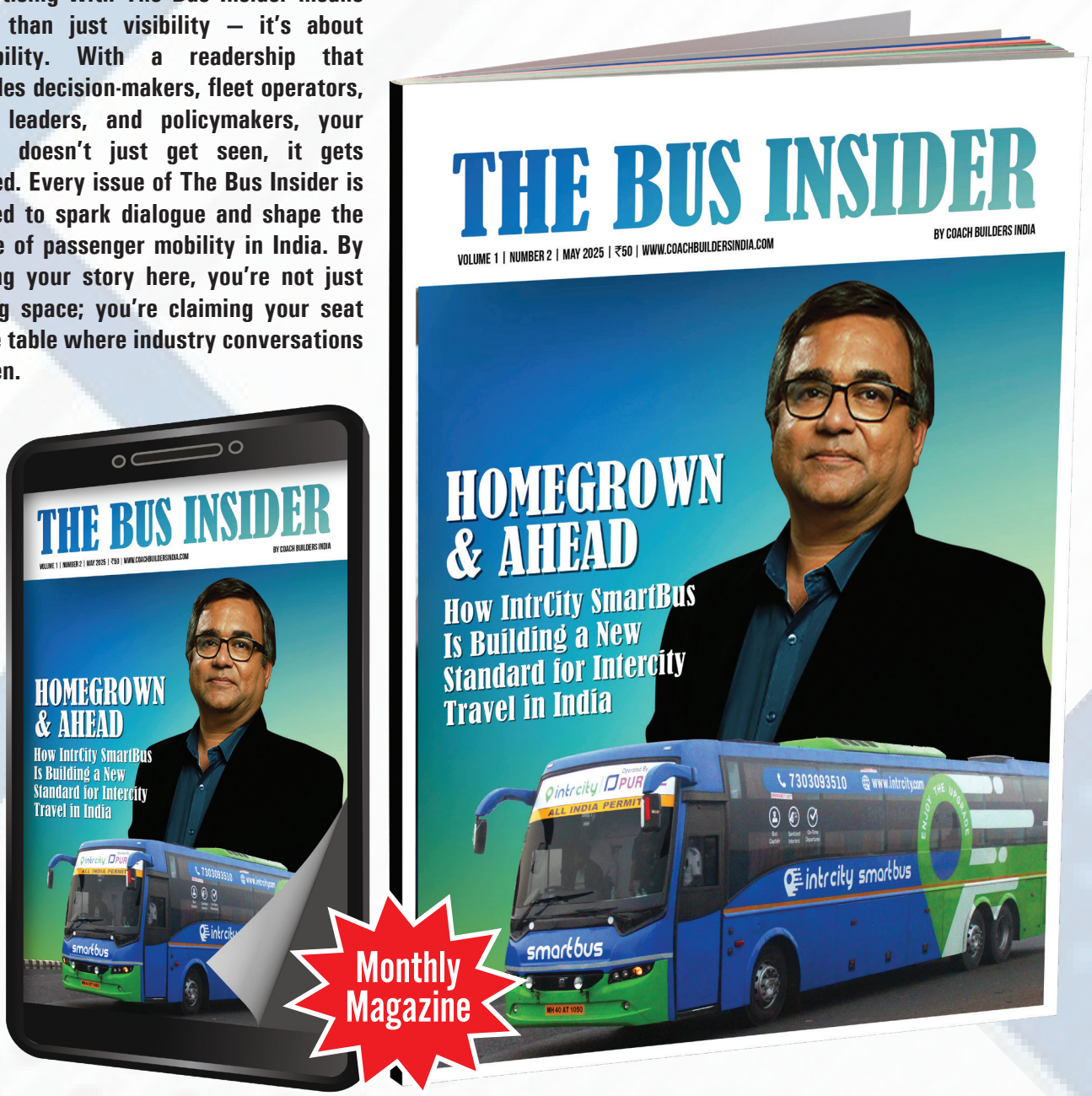

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Hello everyone,

A very happy festive season to all of you! As Navratri lights up the country and business picks up pace, it feels like the perfect moment to pause, reflect, and share what's happening in our industry. This is always a peak season, not just for operations, but for ideas, conversations, and transformations and we are witnessing both in equal measure.

The industry, as you can see, is moving at a rapid pace. Last month it was AIS 153 coming into force, changing safety norms and operational standards. And now, the government has released a draft notification on the new AITP (All India Tourist Permit) rules. On the surface, these rules are formulated for enhanced safety and oversight. But beneath that, they have the potential to disrupt the entire existing framework. Operators will need to navigate this carefully.

To help unpack this, we have a perspective from one of the industry's most prominent thought leaders, Adv. Nataraja Sharma S. His insights explore the loopholes in the proposed framework and suggest reforms that could make the rules more practical and less disruptive. For anyone involved in interstate or tourist operations, this is a must-read.

We also bring you an exclusive conversation with Sunil Kumar Ravindran, Director of Green Energy Mobility Solutions (GEMS). Sunil has a remarkable story to tell as a pioneer venturing into long-haul electric bus operations in India. He candidly shares the challenges of running electric fleets across highways, the gaps slowing adoption among private operators, and how GEMS is building an integrated ecosystem that combines vehicles, energy, and digital solutions. It's a glimpse into the future of Indian mobility, and it's clear that electric buses are no longer a distant dream — they are already shaping the road ahead.

And, of course, we shine a spotlight on INALCO Private Limited, one of the leaders in aluminium solutions for bus manufacturing. Their precision-engineered materials combine strength, durability, and operational efficiency, quietly powering buses across India while allowing manufacturers to focus on design and passenger experience.

As we share these stories, I want to take a moment to wish you all once again a very happy Navratri. May this festive season bring joy, growth, and safe journeys for your teams, your passengers, and your businesses. The industry is evolving fast, but with vision, collaboration, and innovation, there is every reason to be optimistic.

Here's to new rules, new technologies, and new opportunities.

Cheers to the journey ahead!

Till next time!

Shivam Gautom

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MG Automotives Among First Bus Body Builders in India to Achieve AIS 153 Certification

MG Automotives (Bus & Coach) Pvt. Ltd. has become one of the first in India to secure AIS 153 Certification for its 13.5-metre sleeper and seater-sleeper buses, across all OEM chassis platforms.

The certification marks a milestone for the company and the industry. AIS 153, recently introduced by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH), sets strict standards for bus safety, structural integrity, and body design. From September 2025, every new bus manufactured in India must comply with these new standards.

By meeting the requirement well ahead of schedule, MG Automotives has reinforced its reputation as a forward-looking coach builder. The company's certified models include both sleeper and seater-sleeper configurations, strengthening its position as a trusted name in safe, reliable mobility. In a public statement, MG Automotives thanked customers, OEM partners, and regulators for their support, stating that the achievement reflects its commitment to raising the bar each time.

This milestone follows the unveiling of MG's new brand identity and the launch of the premium intercity coach, MG TIGRA, earlier in July. Both developments highlight the company's proactive approach in shaping a safer and more regulated future for Indian road transport. MG Automotives' early adoption of AIS 153 underlines its vision of delivering passenger-first innovations while keeping pace with evolving national standards.

ChargeZone Acquires Fresh Bus Charging Network to Build India's Largest Intercity EV Supercharging Ecosystem

ChargeZone, India's largest EV charging network, has acquired the complete charging infrastructure of Fresh Bus, the all-electric intercity bus operator. The move strengthens ChargeZone's footprint in southern India while advancing its nationwide ambition to build a dedicated supercharging network for electric buses.

The acquisition brings into the fold strategically located stations across Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai, Mysore, Tirupati, Guntur, and Visakhapatnam. Under the arrangement, Fresh Bus will receive priority access to these facilities to ensure seamless fleet operations. At the same time, the stations will also be open to other EV operators to boost utilization.

Both partners are working to integrate renewable energy sources at charging sites in Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, and Vijayawada, supporting India's push toward greener mobility.

"Building a reliable intercity supercharging network is critical for scaling long-distance electric travel," said **Kartikey Hariyani**, Founder and CEO of ChargeZone. "This partnership marks a milestone in making that vision a reality."

Fresh Bus, which has partnered with ChargeZone since 2023, expects improved efficiency under dedicated surveillance and smarter energy management. The company has outlined an ambitious plan to expand its fleet to 5,000 electric buses within five years. ChargeZone currently operates more than 13,500 charging points across 1,200 locations in India and the UAE, with a target of one million points in the future. Together, ChargeZone and Fresh Bus are shaping a premium, zero-emission intercity travel ecosystem, underpinned by robust infrastructure and sustainable energy.

Eicher Deploys First Electric Tarmac Buses with IndiGo at Bengaluru Airport

Eicher Trucks and Buses, part of VE Commercial Vehicles (VECV), has delivered six Skyline Pro-E electric tarmac buses to IndiGo at Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru. This marks the company's first entry into the aviation sector with zero-emission passenger transport solutions.

The 12-metre Skyline Pro-E is designed for high-volume airport ground operations. Each bus is powered by lithium-iron phosphate batteries with CCS2 fast charging capability. The model accommodates 17 seated passengers plus driver, and an additional 52 standing, supported by full air suspension, power-assisted steering, and all-axle disc brakes for reliability and comfort. Developed with an in-house EV powertrain, the Skyline Pro-E reflects Eicher's strategic push into sustainable public transport. The company is simultaneously expanding charging infrastructure through industry partnerships, reinforcing its long-term electric mobility roadmap.

"This deployment underscores Eicher's commitment to support the 42 million passengers using Bengaluru Airport annually with sustainable transport," said Suresh Chettiar, Executive Vice President, Bus Division, VECV.

For IndiGo, the integration of electric tarmac buses aligns with its operational scale and sustainability goals. The airline, India's largest by market share, operates more than 2,200 daily flights with a fleet exceeding 400 aircraft, carrying over 118 million passengers in FY25.

As a joint venture between Volvo Group and Eicher Motors, VECV continues to combine engineering expertise and operational scale to advance clean transport solutions. The Bengaluru deployment signals a pivotal step toward electrifying aviation ground mobility in India.

JBM Ecolife Secures $100 Million IFC Investment to Scale India's E-Bus Transition

JBM Ecolife Mobility has received a landmark $100 million long-term capital investment from the International Financial Corporation (IFC) to accelerate electric bus adoption across Maharashtra, Assam, and Gujarat. The funding will support the purchase and operation of 1,455 air-conditioned e-buses, marking IFC's first equity investment in Asia's e-bus sector and its largest globally.

Nishant Arya, Vice Chairman and Managing Director of JBM Auto, said, "We are proud to partner with IFC on their largest-ever e-bus deployment. This investment will further strengthen our role in shaping India's sustainable mobility landscape." Makhtar Diop, IFC's Managing Director, described e-mobility as "the future," highlighting the partnership as a benchmark for globally replicable urban transport solutions.

The projects in Maharashtra and Assam are being executed under the Pradhan Mantri e-bus Sewa Scheme and incorporate a Payment Security Mechanism to mitigate payment risks for state and municipal operators. This framework is expected to enhance financial viability and scale future e-bus deployments.

The initiative is projected to save over 600 million liters of diesel, cut 1.6 billion kilograms of CO_2 emissions, generate 5,500 jobs, and serve more than one billion passengers.

JBM has already deployed 2,500+ e-buses across 10 states and 15 airports, with an active order book of 11,000 units. Its Delhi-NCR plant, among the world's largest dedicated e-bus facilities, has a production capacity of 20,000 units annually.

This milestone aligns with India's goal of achieving 40% e-bus penetration by FY2030, reinforcing buses as the backbone of sustainable public transport.

FlixBus and DIAL Launch Luxury Airport Shuttle Linking IGI with Noida

FlixBus has partnered with Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL), a GMR-led consortium, to launch India's first luxury airport shuttle service. The round-the-clock service will directly connect Indira Gandhi International Airport's Terminals 1, 2, and 3 with Noida and Greater Noida.

The initiative marks a first in organised airport-to-city connectivity, bringing international standards of comfort and reliability to one of the busiest aviation hubs in the world. Currently, only 20% of Delhi Airport passengers use public transport. The premium shuttle aims to raise this share by offering a safe, sustainable, and affordable alternative.

The fleet comprises new 12-metre air-conditioned buses, each with 45 reclining seats. Frequency will range between 45 minutes and one hour, with an average journey time of 130–180 minutes depending on traffic. Major stops include Botanical Garden, Noida Sector 18, ATS Homekraft, Gaur City Centre, and Alpha 1 in Greater Noida.

Passengers will benefit from a host of features such as USB charging ports, CCTV surveillance, trained crew, real-time bus tracking, and complimentary water bottles. Tickets can be booked online via the FlixBus app, website, RedBus, MakeMyTrip, and Paytm, or purchased offline at kiosks located at all IGI terminals.

"Through this partnership with DIAL, we are proud to introduce a globally proven model of airport connectivity tailored for India," said Surya Khurana, Managing Director, FlixBus India.

By setting new benchmarks in intercity mobility, FlixBus' airport shuttle is poised to redefine how millions of passengers access Delhi's international gateway.

IFC Invests $37 Million in GreenCell Mobility to Boost India's Shared E-Bus Network

The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private investment arm of the World Bank, has committed $37 million to GreenCell Mobility, a leading shared electric mobility operator in India. The investment, structured as a mix of debt and equity, will support the expansion of GreenCell's electric bus fleet and charging infrastructure across the country.

Founded in 2019 and backed by Eversource Capital, GreenCell operates more than 1,200 electric buses under its NueGo brand, covering both intra-city and intercity routes. The company also runs over 270 charging stations, ensuring reliable operations for its growing fleet. Its services span contracts with state transport undertakings and premium intercity travel, making it one of the few players straddling both markets.

According to IFC, the investment will help create thousands of jobs, expand clean transport options, and contribute to India's broader climate goals. The initiative will also tap into the government's Payment Security Mechanism under the PM-eBus Sewa scheme, designed to ensure timely payments and improve financial viability for e-bus operators.

GreenCell has been steadily building its funding base to drive growth. In 2023, it raised $36.7 million from Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation for its Uttar Pradesh project, followed by $55 million in debt financing from ADB, AIIB and CTF to scale operations nationwide.

With IFC's backing, GreenCell is positioned to accelerate deployment of e-buses across multiple states, reinforcing its role as a key player in India's transition to zero-emission public transport.

Sangitam Travels Expands Network with New Pune–Latur–Udgir Route

Sangitam Travels, one of Maharashtra's most trusted intercity operators, has launched a new daily service connecting Pune to Udgir via Latur. The addition marks an important milestone in the company's mission to improve regional mobility and strengthen public transport infrastructure across the state.

The service, which will run 365 days a year, is designed to meet the needs of commuters, professionals, students, and families. By directly linking key cities such as Pune and Latur with Udgir, the route extends vital regional connectivity and addresses the rising demand for reliable and high-quality travel.

"The Pune–Latur–Udgir route represents more than just an expansion of our services. It is a step towards creating stronger bonds between regions, empowering communities, and making travel more accessible," said Dharmasen Patil, Director, Sangitam Travels.

Founded in 1983 with a single bus on the Jalgaon–Pune route, Sangitam Travels has built a reputation for trust, operational excellence, and innovation. Today, the operator is recognized as a leading name in regional transport, known for its customer-first philosophy and strong community ties.

With this expansion, Sangitam not only reaffirms its long-standing commitment to safety, comfort, and affordability but also underscores its vision of bridging urban and rural Maharashtra with dependable travel networks. Looking ahead, the company plans to continue diversifying its route portfolio and modernizing its fleet, further strengthening its role as a key player in the state's transport ecosystem.

LeafyBus Secures $4.1 Million Funding to Expand India's Intercity Electric Bus Network

New Delhi-based LeafyBus, India's first intercity electric bus operator, has raised USD 4.1 million from Enetra India, backed by Singapore's Impact Capital Asia Management (ICAM), to scale its fleet from 10 to over 100 buses across North, East, and South India within 18–24 months.

The company currently operates India's only intercity electric service powered by the nation's first 360 kW fast-charging station on the Delhi–Dehradun route, completing three daily trips over 900 km. LeafyBus plans to expand to high-demand corridors including Agra, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Amritsar, and Patna, aligning route selection with charging infrastructure readiness and passenger demand.

The funding will support fleet deployment, technology-driven route planning, automated bus allocation, real-time monitoring, and predictive maintenance to ensure reliability and operational efficiency. Rohan Dewan, Founder and CEO of LeafyBus, said, "This investment allows us to expand thoughtfully while creating safer, cleaner, and more comfortable intercity travel for millions." Animesh Sharma, Co-Founder, added that the company is focused on integrating technology with operational experience to build trust and dependable service for passengers.

LeafyBus operates premium, air-conditioned buses equipped with ADAS, DMS, alcohol detection, dedicated helplines, panic buttons, and reserved seating for women. The company has partnered with JBM Electric Vehicles for 200 buses and secured initial fleet financing through AMU.

Neeraj Gupta, Founder and MD of Enetra India, emphasized, "LeafyBus is setting benchmarks in sustainable intercity transport. Our investment supports scalable, reliable, and environmentally responsible mobility solutions for India's future." This funding positions LeafyBus at the forefront of India's electric intercity mobility, driving adoption of clean, safe, and efficient transport solutions.

Ashok Leyland Expands LCV Presence in Bengaluru with New Dealership

Ashok Leyland, the flagship of the Hinduja Group and one of India's largest commercial vehicle manufacturers, has further strengthened its Light Commercial Vehicle (LCV) network with a new dealership in Bengaluru. This marks the company's 3rd LCV outlet in the city and 11th in Karnataka, underlining the state's growing importance for the brand.

The new facility, operated by Sanvit Motors, is strategically located at Old Madras Road near Hoskote Toll Gate. Built on the 3S model – Sales, Service, and Spares – it is equipped with advanced diagnostic tools, quick service bays, and modern infrastructure, ensuring an efficient and reliable customer experience.

Speaking at the launch, Viplav Shah, Head – LCV Business, Ashok Leyland, said, "Karnataka has always been an important market for us. Our products are trusted for their mileage, reliability, and performance. With a robust network and industry-leading service retention, this new dealership strengthens our commitment to deliver world-class products and unmatched service."

Ashok Leyland currently has over six lakh LCVs operating across India. The company recently entered the sub-2-ton segment with SAATHI, designed with the largest loading area

and a payload capacity of 1,120 kg. Alongside SAATHI, the company's LCV portfolio includes the robust BADA DOST platform, the versatile DOST range, the high-performance PARTNER load carrier, and the MiTR bus for staff and school applications.

With this expansion, Ashok Leyland is not only reinforcing its retail footprint but also reaffirming its leadership in India's fast-growing LCV segment.

BOCI Announces Prawaas 5.0 for August 2026 at Gandhinagar

The Bus and Car Operators Confederation of India (BOCI) used the Bharat Prawaas Awards 2025 as the stage to unveil plans for Prawaas 5.0, India's flagship multimodal transport exhibition, scheduled for August 2026 at the Helipad Exhibition Centre, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

The announcement came during the awards ceremony at Bharat Mandapam, attended by Union Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, senior government officials, and industry leaders including redBus CEO Prakash Sangam and Tata Motors Executive Director Girish Wagh. BOCI showcased a preview film highlighting the scale, vision, and innovations planned for the 2026 edition.

Prawaas 5.0 aims to bring together policymakers, fleet operators, manufacturers, and technology providers under one roof to explore future-ready mobility solutions. The event will also launch the State Ranking Index, a collaborative initiative with the World Resources Institute (WRI) to evaluate Indian states on bus operation ease, investment climate, workforce development, safety measures, clean fuel adoption, public-private partnerships, and institutional bus services. The comprehensive report will be released during Prawaas 5.0, providing actionable insights to support policy reforms and interstate competitiveness in the transport sector.

The Bharat Prawaas Awards 2025, which recognized 63 winners from over 230 nominations, also highlighted the contributions of bus operators, STUs, and emerging players to India's passenger mobility ecosystem. RedBus served as the lead partner, including the People's Choice Awards, celebrating excellence in ground transport.

By anchoring Prawaas 5.0 in Gandhinagar, BOCI reinforces its commitment to building a modern, inclusive, and sustainable transport ecosystem while setting the stage for India's next generation of passenger mobility innovation.

Eka Mobility to Invest ₹8 Billion to Scale Electric Bus Production

Eka Mobility, the electric bus manufacturer promoted by Pinnacle Industries and backed by Japan's Mitsui Corp and Dutch VDL Group, has announced an ₹8 billion investment to expand production capacity and strengthen delivery commitments across India.

The funding, a combination of equity and debt, will enable Eka to ramp up its monthly deliveries, targeting 500 buses per month by the end of the fiscal year. This comes on the heels of the company's ₹18 billion investment announced in 2022, aimed at scaling operations and meeting growing demand from state transport authorities and private operators.

Founder and Chairman Sudhir Mehta emphasized, "This investment allows Eka to accelerate delivery timelines and strengthen our ability to serve both domestic and international markets. With two plants operational in Pune and a third under construction in Madhya Pradesh, we are focused on building a robust production and delivery ecosystem."

The move aligns with a surge in electric bus demand, particularly following Maharashtra's reinstatement of a 5,000-unit order after earlier delays. Eka operates in a competitive landscape alongside Tata Motors, JBM Auto, Ashok Leyland, and PMI Electro Mobility Solutions.

In FY25, India sold 3,314 electric buses, representing 6% of total bus sales. Eka delivered 72 units, achieving a 0.3% market share, and has already registered and delivered 163 buses since April. The company's expanded investment and production plans underscore its commitment to scaling operations, meeting increasing market demand, and supporting India's push toward electric mobility.

Pinnacle Industries Powers Comfort and Safety on Amrit Bharat Express

Pinnacle Industries, India's leading provider of automotive and railway seating solutions, has been appointed as the official partner for designing and manufacturing sleeper berths and executive seating for the Amrit Bharat Express, Indian Railways' next-generation high-speed trains. The service represents a strategic leap in long-distance rail travel, connecting major cities with faster, safer, and more affordable journeys.

For this landmark project, Pinnacle Industries has engineered ergonomically optimized sleeper berths and executive seats that combine superior comfort, safety, and durability across air-conditioned and non-air-conditioned travel classes.

Key features of the seating solutions include:

- **Enhanced Comfort:** Thicker cushions and refined ergonomics for long-distance travel.
- **Thoughtful Design:** Sleek aesthetics with color-coordinated finishes and aluminum extrusions for upper berths.
- **Passenger Safety:** "Anti-injury" fittings integrated into seats and berths.
- **Fire Safety Compliance:** Fully compliant with EN45545-2 HL3 standards and Indian Railways' fire-retardant requirements.

Arihant Mehta, President of Pinnacle Industries, said, "We are honored to contribute to this visionary initiative. Our seating solutions reflect a commitment to comfort, safety, and innovation while being proudly Made in India. This project underscores our role in driving modern, reliable, and accessible public transport solutions."

With decades of experience in automotive and railway interiors, Pinnacle Industries continues to set benchmarks in mobility solutions, reinforcing its position as a trusted partner in India's ongoing rail modernization journey. The collaboration with Indian Railways highlights the company's expertise in delivering high-quality, passenger-centric solutions that enhance travel experience on India's emerging high-speed rail network.

Olectra Greentech Appoints Mahesh Babu as Managing Director

Olectra Greentech Limited has announced major leadership changes following its board meeting on September 24, 2025. The move underscores the company's commitment to strengthening its management as it navigates India's fast-evolving electric mobility sector.

Mahesh Babu Subramanian has been appointed Additional Director effective September 27, 2025, immediately after the company's Annual General Meeting. Subject to shareholder approval, he will also take over as Managing Director for a three-year term.

Subramanian, an industry veteran with over 30 years of experience, has previously led SWITCH Mobility as CEO and Mahindra Electric as Managing Director. He holds a postgraduate degree in Engineering from BITS Pilani and is a Fulbright Scholar, having completed leadership programs at Carnegie Mellon University, IMD Switzerland, and Yale University.

The board also re-appointed Chintalapudi Laksmi Kumari as Independent Director for another five-year term beginning January 9, 2026. With 38 years of legal experience across civil, criminal, constitutional, and arbitration matters, she continues to bring strong governance and legal expertise to the board.

Effective September 28, 2025, Olectra's board committees have been reconstituted. The updated Key Managerial Personnel lineup includes Subramanian as Managing Director, P. Rajesh Reddy as Whole Time Director, B. Sharat Chandra as Chief Financial Officer, and P. Hanuman Prasad as Vice President – Company Secretary & Head Legal.

EcoFuel Secures Landmark Tamil Nadu Order for Diesel-to-CNG Bus Retrofitting

EcoFuel Systems (India) Ltd., a pioneer in diesel-to-CNG retrofitting, has bagged a landmark order to convert 850 diesel buses to CNG across Tamil Nadu. The project, part of the state's ambitious clean transport drive, will be executed within 12 months, positioning Tamil Nadu as a frontrunner in affordable green mobility.

With this contract, EcoFuel's converted fleet in India will cross 1,500 buses. The company will retrofit state depot buses with its certified CNG kits, known for seamless integration, high safety, and fuel efficiency.

"Tamil Nadu's decision to retrofit diesel buses to CNG validates our technology and commitment to sustainable innovation. Our solution reduces carbon footprint while being economically viable for transport corporations," said Virendra Vora, Founder and Chairman, EcoFuel Systems.

Why It Matters

- Cost savings: Retrofitting avoids the high capital cost of new electric buses.
- Environmental benefits: Cuts emissions, aligning with the National Green Mobility Mission.
- Scalable model: Creates a roadmap for other states seeking affordable clean mobility.

EcoFuel's Track Record

- 1.3M LOVATO kits sold in India
- Over 500K sequential kits installed
- 22+ years of industry presence with a nationwide service network
- 100% compliance with European standards and BS-VI norms
- Previous retrofit success with Varanasi Nagar Nigam under the Ganga Cleanliness Project

Founded in 2003 and headquartered in Mumbai, EcoFuel Systems is a leading provider of CNG, LNG, and LPG vehicle conversion solutions. With proven expertise and a nationwide footprint, the company continues to power India's transition to cleaner, greener transport.

INALCO
ALUMINIUM SHEETS & COILS

The Silent Strength Behind India's Modern Bus Fleets

In the world of bus manufacturing, where every panel matters and every kilogram counts, one company has quietly emerged as a game-changer. INALCO Private Limited, headquartered in New Delhi, has made aluminium its canvas and quality its creed. While many materials vie for attention in commercial vehicle construction, INALCO has chosen a singular focus - enabling safer, lighter, and more efficient buses that serve millions across India.

Founded in 2018, INALCO may still be a young company, but its journey reflects a maturity born of vision, meticulous planning, and relentless execution.

"Aluminium is more than just a material - it is sustainable, versatile, and transformative," says Mohit Garg, CEO & Managing Director. "We founded INALCO out of a passion for the metal and a commitment to the industries it serves, but the bus sector became our heart from day one."

The company's state-of-the-art facility in Bhiwadi, Rajasthan, is a testament to that commitment. With four continuous casters,

> **"Our precision-engineered aluminium lets partners focus on comfort, design, and performance, making us the silent force behind every bus on India's roads"**
>
> **Mohit Garg, CEO & MD, INALCO Private Limited.**

advanced rolling mills, and a production capacity of 40,000 metric tonnes annually, INALCO produces aluminium sheets, chequered sheets, and coils, offering excellent strength, finish, and workability.

The factory blends automation with precision, enabling consistent quality across a wide range of aluminium alloys, each designed to meet the exact demands of bus body construction.

Every sheet, coil, and panel from INALCO is crafted for buses that demand reliability and efficiency. Strong yet lightweight, each sheet ensures buses perform seamlessly, reducing downtime and enhancing operational productivity.

From Vision to Reality: The INALCO Journey

INALCO's trajectory has been both rapid and deliberate. Within a few short years, the company carved a reputation for reliability, precision, and on-time delivery.

"Our growth has not been about chasing numbers," Garg explains. "It has been about earning trust and providing solutions that make a real difference for bus manufacturers and, ultimately, the passengers they serve."

Also, the focus on buses is not incidental. In India, buses are more than vehicles - they are lifelines of public transport. They connect cities, towns, and villages, enabling millions to commute affordably every day. Recognizing this, INALCO has oriented its product development to meet the sector's unique needs - lightweight yet strong aluminium sheets, superior

At a Glance

- **Established: 16th June 2018**
- **Headquartered: Connaught Place, New Delhi**
- **Employees: 300**
- **Annual Production Capacity: 40,000 MT**

Leadership:

- **Mohit Garg, CEO & Managing Director**
- **Kartik Garg, Executive Director**
- **Parth Garg - Executive Director**
- **Mukund Garg, Asst. Executive Director**

corrosion resistance, and precision engineering for durability and safety.

"Our mission is to support manufacturers in building buses that are safer, lighter, and more efficient," Garg says. "By providing consistent quality, we allow our partners to focus on design, passenger comfort, and operational excellence. In a way, we become an invisible partner on every bus that rolls out on India's roads."

Engineering Excellence: Products and Technology

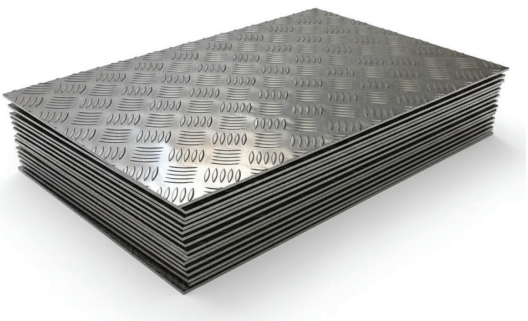
INALCO's facility is more than a manufacturing plant - it is a hub of innovation. Advanced casters, high-precision rolling mills, and automation systems ensure each sheet and coil meets stringent standards. The company recently commissioned a state-of-the-art color coating line, boosting surface finish, corrosion resistance, and design flexibility for diverse applications across industries.

"Bus manufacturers have complex needs. Strength, flatness, and surface quality are critical, but so is consistency across large volumes," Garg notes. "Our technology allows us to meet these needs at scale, with a reliability that the market trusts."

The facility's capabilities also extend to chequered sheets, a material widely used in flooring and structural reinforcement. Each product is tension-leveled, ensuring superior flatness and performance in demanding bus applications. By investing in these innovations, INALCO positions itself not just as a supplier, but as a strategic partner in bus body manufacturing.

Commitment to the Bus Industry

INALCO's dedication to the bus sector goes beyond production. "This is a deeply personal connection for us," Garg reflects. "Buses are about mobility, access, and community. When we serve this industry, we



With a workforce of 300, INALCO emphasizes skill development, process ownership, and a culture of problem-solving. Every team member, from the factory floor to management, shares a common commitment: delivering aluminium solutions that exceed expectations and build lasting relationships.

The INALCO Advantage

- High-strength aluminium for safety and durability
- Lightweight solutions improving fuel and energy efficiency
- Precision-rolled sheets with superior surface finish
- Reliable, timely supply for uninterrupted production
- Tailored technical support and partnership

contribute to something bigger than just metal and machines. We help ensure people can move safely and efficiently every day."

This philosophy translates into concrete benefits for bus body builders. INALCO's aluminium sheets combine reduced weight with strength, allowing manufacturers to optimize fuel efficiency and payload without compromising safety. Corrosion-resistant coatings extend vehicle lifespan, while precision engineering ensures a flawless fit for every panel. For operators and passengers, these innovations mean buses that are reliable, durable, and safe over the long haul.

Partnerships That Speak Volumes

INALCO's credibility is reflected in its client roster. Leading names like Olectra Greentech and Ashok Leyland rely on its aluminium solutions, a testament to the company's reputation for quality, delivery, and service.

"When you supply to industry leaders, you cannot afford inconsistency," Garg says. "These partnerships are built on trust, not contracts. Every coil we deliver is part of a larger mission to advance the bus industry."

Beyond supplying material, INALCO actively collaborates with manufacturers to explore new possibilities. From lightweighting initiatives to aesthetic design enhancements using color-coated aluminium, the company contributes both technically and creatively to the products its partners bring to the market.

> **"Leadership, for me, is about integrity, responsibility, and curiosity. We listen first, invest in the right technology, and focus relentlessly on quality. Our goal is to grow alongside our partners by helping them succeed."**

Mohit Garg,
CEO & MD,
INALCO Private Limited.

Sustainability at the Core
Aluminium itself is a symbol of sustainability, fully recyclable and energy-efficient in lifecycle terms. INALCO leverages this property to support India's broader environmental goals. "Sustainability is embedded in everything we do," Garg notes. "Our production processes, material selection, and innovations all aim to reduce environmental impact while providing maximum value to our clients."

Looking ahead, INALCO is expanding its capabilities to support next-generation bus manufacturing. The color coating line, for example, not only improves aesthetics but also enhances functional durability, enabling electric and modern buses to meet exacting operational standards.

"We are shaping our clients for what's next," Garg says. "Electric buses are the future - lighter, greener, and smarter - and our aluminium solutions are designed to power this new era of mobility."

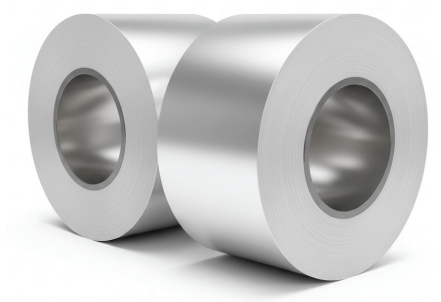
Leadership Philosophy
At the helm of INALCO, Mohit Garg combines strategic vision with hands-on operational expertise.

"Leadership, for me, is about integrity, responsibility, and curiosity," he reflects. "We listen first, invest in the right technology, and focus relentlessly on quality. Our goal is to grow alongside our partners by helping them succeed."

This philosophy extends throughout the organization. With a workforce of 300, INALCO emphasizes skill development, process ownership, and a culture of problem-solving. Every team member, from the factory floor to management, shares a common commitment: delivering aluminium solutions that exceed expectations and build lasting relationships.

The Road Ahead: Innovation and Growth
INALCO's short-term goals are as focused as its founding vision: expanding production capacity, reducing lead times, and strengthening customer partnerships. The medium- and long-term vision is ambitious - to lead the bus industry in aluminium innovation, supporting electric mobility, lighter bus construction, and sustainable manufacturing practices.

INALCO's aluminium sheets combine reduced weight with strength, allowing manufacturers to optimize fuel efficiency and payload without compromising safety. Corrosion-resistant coatings extend vehicle lifespan, while precision engineering ensures a flawless fit for every panel.



"Over the next five years, we aim to set industry benchmarks in quality, technology, and sustainability," Garg says. "We are committed to innovation that enables our clients to build buses that are safer, more efficient, and future-ready. This is not just business, it is a responsibility to the communities those buses serve."

In addition to technical innovation, INALCO is exploring strategic collaborations to accelerate adoption of modern materials in bus manufacturing. By aligning with leaders in electric mobility and advanced vehicle design, the company is ensuring that its aluminium solutions remain relevant and indispensable as the sector evolves.

Defining a Standard: INALCO's Impact on the Bus Industry
In a market where operational demands, passenger safety, and regulatory compliance intersect, INALCO has positioned itself as a trusted partner. Its combination of advanced manufacturing, product innovation, and client-centric service is creating a new standard

> **"When you supply to industry leaders, you cannot afford inconsistency," Garg says. "These partnerships are built on trust, not contracts. Every coil we deliver is part of a larger mission to advance the bus industry."**

for what aluminium suppliers can offer the bus industry.

"Every sheet we produce, every innovation we deploy, is meant to make buses better," Garg emphasizes. "We are not just supplying material; we are enabling safer, more reliable, and more sustainable mobility for millions."

The company's story is also one of purpose-driven growth. By dedicating itself to the bus sector, INALCO aligns business success with social impact, providing solutions that enable affordable, efficient, and green public transport. It is this blend of vision, leadership, and operational excellence that sets the company apart in India's competitive aluminium landscape.

Looking Forward: A Future Built on Aluminium

INALCO's narrative is far from finished. With strong leadership, cutting-edge facilities, and a clear focus on the bus industry, the company is poised to shape the next decade of Indian bus manufacturing.

From supporting electric mobility to enabling lightweight, safer vehicles, INALCO is at the forefront of a transformation that affects manufacturers, operators, and passengers alike.

"We are excited about the future," Garg says. "Our mission is clear: provide unmatched quality, support innovation, and ensure every bus that uses our aluminium is safer, lighter, and more efficient. By doing this, we are contributing to a more sustainable, reliable, and connected transport system for India."

In a sector where every decision matters, where every material impacts performance and safety, INALCO Private Limited is proving that dedication, precision, and purpose can elevate an entire industry. The buses on India's roads carry more than passengers - they carry the promise of innovation, sustainability, and a company that is quietly shaping the future of mobility.

Understanding the New AITP 2025 Draft Rules:

Key Updates

By Shivam Gautom

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has released draft amendments to the **All India Tourist Permit (AITP) Rules, 2025**. Published on September 12, 2025, under G.S.R. 630(E), the notification invites feedback from stakeholders within 30 days.

After the 30-day feedback period, the Ministry will review all suggestions and objections from bus operators and associations. Based on this input, the draft rules may be revised before the final version is published, setting the compliance timeline for operators across the country.

These amendments aim to standardize operations, improve compliance, and enhance safety across India's inter-state tourist vehicle operations. While the changes are intended to bring clarity and uniformity, several provisions have raised questions among operators regarding feasibility and operational impact.

Key Points of Concern

While the draft AITP rules aim to bring uniformity and improve compliance, several provisions have raised practical concerns among operators. Feedback from bus operators and associations indicates that certain clauses could impact day-to-day operations, long-distance routes, and compliance procedures.

Overall, the industry has highlighted three key areas where clarification or adjustment is needed to make the rules more workable and fair:

Compulsory Travel to Home State (Rule 4A(1)(a))

The draft mandates that a vehicle cannot remain outside its home state for more than 45 days. Operators have requested flexibility and that the maximum period outside the home state be extended to 90 days. This would better accommodate long-distance and circular routes without operational disruption.

Challan Compliance (Rule 4A(1)(e))
Vehicles with pending challans must settle them within 30 days to remain compliant. Operators have proposed extending this period to 90 days and ensuring the availability of online challan dispute mechanisms before enforcement, ensuring fairness and due process.

Route Details Upload (Rule 10(1A))
Operators are required to upload the starting point, destination, and route details on the **Vahan portal** at least 24 hours before departure. Industry stakeholders have expressed concerns about the practicality of this requirement and suggested revising or removing this clause to reduce administrative burden.

Industry Engagement
Following the release of the draft AITP rules, bus operators and association representatives from across India have actively reached out to both the central and respective state governments to voice their concerns. Stakeholders highlighted that certain provisions, if implemented as drafted, could create operational challenges, increase administrative burdens, and affect long-distance and interstate services.

Operators have sought clarifications and suggested practical amendments to ensure that the rules achieve their intended goals of safety and standardization without disrupting day-to-day operations.

A large delegation of bus operators from across India, including representatives from Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and several northern states, came together to meet Union Minister Nitin Gadkari to discuss concerns over the AITP draft rules.

The operators highlighted provisions they felt could disrupt long-distance operations, add administrative burdens, or create compliance challenges.

Industry insiders have highlighted a key area of ambiguity in the draft AITP rules - the definition of "tourist." According to several operators, the term remains loosely defined, making it unclear how vehicles carrying passengers for different purposes should be classified.

While no representatives from Coach Builders India were present at the meeting, key outcomes were shared with us by the operators who attended:

- The 24-hour advance passenger list requirement for AITP vehicles might not be enforced, in all probability.
- Vehicles already registered in a state will receive temporary relief under the home state travel rule
- Operators are encouraged to submit written feedback regarding challan compliance to enable a considered policy decision.

Another point likely to bring relief to operators is that the government has indicated the home state travel rule may not apply to vehicles registered before the new rules come into effect.

It has to be noted that the points discussed and outcomes shared from the meetings with the Ministry are currently under consideration. These should not be interpreted as finalized rules, as the draft AITP amendments are still under consultation and may be revised before formal notification.

Tourist vs Passenger
Industry insiders have highlighted a key area of ambiguity in the draft AITP rules - the definition of "tourist." According to several operators, the term remains loosely defined, making it unclear how vehicles carrying passengers for different purposes should be classified.

Many believe the government needs to clearly differentiate between tourists and regular intercity passengers and consider introducing separate permits for tourist and passenger buses. Without this clarification, operators warn that compliance could remain inconsistent, and enforcement could inadvertently penalize legitimate services.

Stakeholders are urging MoRTH to address this definitional gap in the final rules to ensure clarity, fairness, and operational feasibility across states.

Moving Forward
As of now, the draft AITP rules remain under consultation, with the government showing openness to consider practical concerns raised by operators. Industry stakeholders are encouraged to review the draft carefully, provide structured feedback, and coordinate with state associations to ensure that the final rules are balanced, implementable, and supportive of safe, efficient interstate operations.

All India Tourist Permit Rules:

From Vision to Reality and Boon to Bane – 2021 to 2025

By Adv. Nataraja Sharma S.

The concept of the All-India Tourist Permit (AITP) is not new. Even prior to 1999, tourist vehicles were allowed to operate across states, but the process was cumbersome. Permits relied on individual state authorizations, requiring operators to pay taxes at border check posts, leading to higher costs, frequent delays, and opportunities for corruption.

As India's travel and tourism industry grew, the demand for a "One Nation, One Tax" system intensified. This vision was realized in April 2021 with the launch of the AITP Rules under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari.

The 2021 Launch: A Post-COVID Relief

The timing was significant. The travel industry, battered by COVID-19, needed fresh support. The AITP rules promised:

- Seamless nationwide movement of tourist buses.
- Removal of border checkposts.
- Simplification of compliance under the banner of Ease of Doing Business.

However, vague drafting led to confusion. Terms like "Permit Fee" versus "Road Tax" were unclear. Several states, especially in the South, where road tax per seat ranges from ₹3,000 to ₹4,400, opposed the rules, fearing loss of crucial revenue.

The 2023 Amendment: Tackling Misuse

By 2023, issues of misuse surfaced. Operators began registering vehicles in North-Eastern states, where taxes were far lower (₹45,000–₹60,000 annually), creating unfair competition with genuine tourist operators in high-tax states.

The amendment tried to fix loopholes, but challenges remained:

- **Ambiguity persisted:** The word "Tourist" was still loosely defined, enabling overnight buses and intercity services to misuse AITP.
- **No clarity on road tax:** States continued to demand it, undermining the promise of One Nation, One Tax.
- **Weak enforcement:** With no strict penalties, many owners paid taxes only when caught, fostering corruption.

The 2025 Amendment: A Course Correction

The 3rd Amendment in 2025 introduced more checks, including:

- Mandatory Vehicle Location Tracking Devices (VLTDs).
- Uploading passenger lists 24 hours before travel.
- Requirement to touch the home state once every 45 days.
- Revenue-sharing mechanisms between states.

Yet, deeper structural issues remain unresolved. Southern states still resist AITP, citing constitutional rights over taxation. The lack of a uniform national tax policy is the biggest barrier to true implementation.

Uploading the passenger list more than 24 hours in advance is impractical and may result in revenue losses for operators. Furthermore, the current requirement for vehicles to report to their home state every 45 days creates unnecessary administrative burden and opens the door to potential corruption.

Even under the Motor Vehicles Act, similar issues have persisted. Ideally, vehicles should only be required to return to their home state once every 90 days.

It is also concerning that vehicle registrations are being issued in states such as Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, and various Union Territories without proper inspection or verification.

This practice undermines regulatory standards and raises serious questions about the integrity of the registration process in these regions.

Tax Evasion Became Easy

Due to the absence of a penal provision and the lack of a date-to-date adjustment mechanism for AITP tax, there is widespread tax evasion. This information is readily available on the Union Government's portal. The resulting revenue loss not only affects the government's income but also creates unhealthy competition among vehicle owners who comply with the rules.

Who Really Benefits?

Instead of supporting genuine tourist operators - whose buses typically run seasonally or occasionally - the AITP has inadvertently become a boon for night service operators running daily intercity and intracity services. These commercial operators now dominate the use of AITP, while true tourist operators continue to bear heavy tax burdens in their respective home states, putting them at a significant disadvantage.

For example:

- In the North-East, the annual tax per bus may be ₹60,000.
- In the South, the quarterly tax alone is between ₹1.2–1.8 lakh.

This disparity has made genuine operators uncompetitive and discouraged tourism investment.

Uploading the passenger list more than 24 hours in advance is impractical and may result in revenue losses for operators. Furthermore, the current requirement for vehicles to report to their home state every 45 days creates unnecessary administrative burden and opens the door to potential corruption.

Credit: Arbaj Rahman

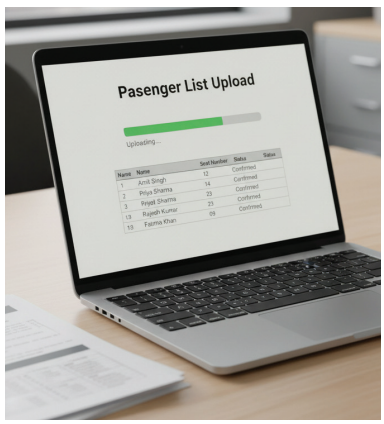
Security and Governance Concerns
The removal of check posts, while progressive, has also created risks. Reports suggest that buses operating along the Nepal and Bangladesh borders are being misused for the illegal transportation of goods, including narcotics, posing a significant threat to the country's internal security.

Without uniform enforcement, checks, and minor restrictions, these loopholes threaten both safety and revenue integrity.

The Way Forward
For AITP to succeed in its true spirit, certain reforms are essential:

1. **Limit permits to five states per authorization:** This will simplify tax sharing and improve oversight.
2. **Separate permits for tourist and intercity buses:** So that genuine tourist operators are not sidelined by daily service providers.
3. **Introduce a uniform national road tax policy:** The heart of the "One Nation, One Tax" vision.
4. **Stronger and transparent enforcement:** Penal provisions should rely on digital systems, reducing RTO discretion and corruption.

To ensure sustainability and protect genuine tour operators, there is a pressing need for further amendments to the current framework. These changes should be made through informed discussions that take into account the diverse geography and operational realities across the country.



The intent of Hon'ble Minister Nitin Gadkari was commendable; however, the execution faced significant setbacks due to a pleathora of reasons.

Without such reforms, the All India Tourist Permit system risks becoming a bane rather than a boon for the very sector it was meant to support.

The All India Tourist Permit (AITP) rules, introduced in 2021, were a bold and visionary attempt to reshape India's tourism and transport landscape. The intent of Hon'ble Minister Nitin Gadkari was commendable; however, the execution faced significant setbacks due to resistance from states, vague drafting, lack of uniform taxation, misuse by certain operators, and inadequate escalation of issues by state transport departments to the Union Government.

Nonetheless, if the Union and state governments can collaborate to establish a fair, transparent, and uniform regulatory framework, the AITP can still fulfill its original promise - to make India's tourism sector globally competitive, in alignment with the true spirit of One Nation, One Tax.

About the Author
Advocate Nataraj Sharma S, a practicing lawyer at the High Court of Karnataka, specializes in criminal law, constitutional matters, and public interest litigation. Known for his commitment to social justice, he has played a key role in exposing major corruption cases in Karnataka. He has also held prominent leadership positions, including Trustee of New Mangalore Port Trust, President of the Karnataka State Bus Owners Association, and President of the Federation of Private Transport Associations.

JBM Enters the UAE: Partners with Al Habtoor Motors to Accelerate UAE's Electric Bus Adoption

The collaboration aims to introduce state-of-the-art electric buses and strengthen UAE's vision for sustainable public transport.

By Violina Pegu

In a significant move to advance sustainable mobility in the Middle East, JBM Electric Vehicles (P) Ltd, a subsidiary of JBM Auto Ltd. and one of India's leading electric bus manufacturers, has partnered with Al Habtoor Motors, a prominent UAE automotive distributor, to introduce next-generation electric buses to the UAE market.

The partnership was formalized during a signing ceremony attended by senior executives from both companies. Under the agreement, Al Habtoor Motors will serve as the exclusive importer and distributor of JBM's e-buses in the UAE, overseeing nationwide deployment, service infrastructure, and customer support. Together, the companies aim to contribute to the UAE's Net Zero by 2050 Strategic Initiative by delivering advanced, zero-emission mobility solutions that reduce operating costs, lower emissions, and enhance passenger experience across urban, intercity, and specialized transport segments.

JBM Electric Vehicles brings a proven track record in manufacturing sophisticated, emission-free buses for diverse global markets. Its integrated manufacturing facility in India, among the world's largest dedicated e-bus plants, has an annual production capacity of 20,000 units. JBM's portfolio spans urban, intercity, staff, school, tarmac, and tourist coach applications, all equipped with advanced lithium-ion battery systems, smart charging technology, and a comprehensive suite of safety features. The

company's buses have clocked over 200 million kilometers, transported more than a billion passengers, saved over 350 million liters of diesel, and cut over a billion kilograms of CO2. JBM has pledged to reach three billion e-kilometers globally within the next three years.

"The UAE is a strategic market for JBM Electric Vehicles," said Nishant Arya, Vice Chairman and MD, JBM Auto. "Our vision is to deliver complete EV ecosystem solutions, from source to wheel. Partnering with Al Habtoor Motors, a trusted and experienced transport solutions provider, enables us to implement sustainable, future-ready public transport solutions aligned with the UAE government's goals." Arya added that over a 10-year period, the collaboration is expected to reduce CO2 emissions by more than 2.8 billion kilograms, save over 1 billion liters of diesel, and serve upwards of 1.6 billion passengers.

Ahmed Al Habtoor, CEO of Al Habtoor Motors, emphasized the strategic significance: "Transportation is central to addressing the climate crisis. This partnership allows us to position Al Habtoor Motors among the leading e-mobility players in the UAE. By combining JBM's proven EV technology with our deep local expertise, we aim to deliver reliable, high-performance electric buses that meet stringent local standards and operate effectively under the region's challenging climatic conditions."

"The UAE is a strategic market for JBM Electric Vehicles. Partnering with Al Habtoor Motors, a trusted and experienced transport solutions provider, enables us to implement sustainable, future-ready public transport solutions aligned with the goals of the UAE government."

- Nishant Arya,
Vice Chairman and MD, JBM Auto

The collaboration leverages JBM's comprehensive EV ecosystem, JBM E-verse, which provides end-to-end solutions including e-buses, charging infrastructure, and fleet leasing services. Al Habtoor Motors will introduce JBM buses across multiple segments, including urban transit, staff and school transport, intercity, tarmac, and tourist coaches, ensuring operators benefit from a turnkey solution that combines cutting-edge technology with strong aftersales support.

Industry experts note that this partnership reflects a broader trend in the Gulf region: the rapid adoption of zero-emission buses to meet environmental targets while enhancing operational efficiency and passenger comfort. With governments and operators increasingly prioritizing sustainability, collaborations such as this signal a growing shift toward integrated e-mobility solutions that combine hardware, software, and service networks.

This venture represents a strategic milestone for both companies, positioning them at the forefront of clean public mobility in the UAE. By combining global EV expertise with localized deployment and support, JBM Electric Vehicles and Al Habtoor Motors are setting new benchmarks for sustainable transportation, demonstrating how advanced technology can align with ambitious climate and urban mobility goals.

GEMS Shows How Private Operators Can Electrify India's Intercity Highways

"Electric is the future. Lead the change or risk being left behind. The numbers may seem tough, but the payoff is clear."

Sunil Kumar Ravindran,
Managing Director, GEMS

By Violina Pegu

India's push to electrify public transport has gained significant momentum in recent years, particularly in city-based operations. Government incentives, regulatory support, and growing awareness of sustainability have driven electric buses onto urban routes. Yet long-distance intercity travel has largely remained a frontier, with electric adoption gaining limited traction, especially among private operators.

This is where **Green Energy Mobility Solutions (GEMS)** is making its mark, pioneering high-mileage, long-haul electric mobility as one of the first private operators in the space.

Founded by **Sunil Kumar Ravindran**, a veteran of South India's interstate bus industry, and **Balavignesh Subramani**, Co-founder and Director, with operational expertise in freight and mining, GEMS brings together deep industry experience and a forward-looking vision. The company's strategy is not limited to running electric buses - it integrates fleet operations, renewable-backed charging infrastructure, and innovative leasing models to create a scalable, ecosystem-driven approach to intercity EV deployment.

The company recently signed two landmark MoUs at the Passenger Vehicle Expo 2.0 in Chennai - 100 Tata Motors Magna EV coaches and 50 leased buses through Electrigo. These agreements position GEMS to electrify key South Indian corridors, proving that electric mobility is ready to power India's intercity highways.

In this candid conversation, **Director Sunil Ravindran** reveals the challenges of long-distance electric bus operations, the gaps slowing private adoption, and how GEMS is pioneering an integrated model to make electric mobility work on India's highways.

Let's start at the beginning. What sparked your journey into electric mobility, and how did the vision for Green Energy Mobility Solutions take shape, from idea to execution?

I've spent decades in interstate mobility, and over the years, I've seen it all - the opportunities, the challenges, and the constant battle with fuel costs, compliance, and sustainability concerns. Somewhere along the way, it became clear to me that the future of transport won't rely on fossil fuels. And if that change is inevitable, why shouldn't we be the ones to lead it?

That's really how GEMS was born. What started as a business idea around electric fleet operations quickly evolved into something bigger - an ecosystem play. We built Mana Energy to accelerate high power charging and renewable integration, and founded Ziel to drive digital fleet intelligence. Instead of small pilots or piecemeal solutions, we wanted a model that connects vehicles, energy, and digital platforms into one seamless, scalable system.

Electric intercity transport is still a relatively bold space to enter. What drew you specifically to the intercity segment, and how do you see GEMS carving a niche in this emerging electric frontier?

It is bold, no doubt! But that's also exactly where the impact is biggest. Intercity travel drives some of the highest fuel consumption and emissions in commercial transport. While city electric buses have

The transition is inevitable. Whether you choose to lead it or lag behind is the decision you must make. The economics of electric mobility may seem challenging at first, but once you factor in fuel savings, compliance benefits, and long-term brand value, it becomes a winning move.

seen strong government support, intercity routes have largely been overlooked, even though millions of passengers travel long distances every day.

For me, stepping into intercity wasn't about being different for the sake of it. It was about tackling the harder problem first.

GEMS aims to embed reliability and efficiency into long-haul electric travel. That's our niche, showing that electric buses can handle long routes, high utilization, and tough operating conditions at scale. It also allowed us to take the hard-earned experience from running ICE fleets in intercity operations and put it to a bigger, greener purpose.

You recently inked an MoU with TATA Motors for the Magna EV. Why the Tata Magna? Were there specific performance or operational metrics that made the Magna stand out?
We evaluated multiple models, but the TATA Magna EV stood out because it is purpose-built for intercity travel. Our decision hinged on a few critical parameters - battery range, energy efficiency, passenger comfort, and after-sales support. Tata Motors also brought the credibility of being India's leading commercial vehicle manufacturer and a strong service network, something non-negotiable when scaling fleet operations.

Magna gives us confidence that our passengers will experience both safety and comfort, while our operations team has a dependable vehicle capable of handling high-mileage routes with ease.

You've also partnered with ElectricGo to lease 50 electric buses. How will the rollout be structured, and how do you plan to integrate these buses into your intercity routes?
Leasing is a crucial piece of our strategy. Through our MoU with ElectricGo, we are inducting 50 vehicles on a phased basis. The model is simple - ElectricGo handles procurement, registration, and compliance, while GEMS focuses on operating them at maximum efficiency.

The rollout will span Q4 2025 and Q1 2026, starting with shorter intercity corridors before scaling up to longer routes. This phased approach allows us to train teams, optimize charging schedules,

> "I see GEMS shaping the blueprint for India's sustainable transport ecosystem, showing that electric mobility isn't just a city phenomenon, but a nationwide, long-haul solution. If we succeed, the ripple effects will transform how India moves people and goods."

Balavignesh Subramani,
Co-founder & Director, GEMS

and ensure passengers adapt seamlessly, without disrupting service.

Which regions or corridors are you targeting for the first wave of deployment, and how many vehicles will be operational in Phase 1?
Our first deployments are focused on high-demand corridors in South India, including Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Coimbatore. These routes are commercially strong, with heavy passenger traffic and proven intercity bus demand.

In Phase 1, combining leased and procured vehicles, we aim to have 50–60 buses on the road by mid-2026. As depot infrastructure strengthens and route data matures, we plan to scale up to 100+ buses.

What does your energy strategy look like? Are you building your own infrastructure, partnering with charge point operators, or both?
To unlock the full potential of our fleet, we need control

over energy sourcing. That's why Mana Energy Solutions, our sister company, is setting up high-capacity charging depots along key corridors, supported by renewable power and storage solutions.

While we'll collaborate with existing charge point operators where available, our core approach is to develop GEMS-owned charging hubs at strategic nodes. This ensures our fleet isn't dependent on fragmented infrastructure and can maintain the uptime levels expected of intercity operators.

What was the "first shock" you experienced when starting long-distance electric bus operations, and what have been the biggest challenges since?

The first shock is always the gap between the technology promise and operational reality. Range anxiety, charging downtime, and the upfront cost of vehicles are real challenges. For intercity travel, route planning and depot readiness are non-negotiable - without them, operations can quickly suffer.

But the biggest lesson is that challenges fade when you design for the entire ecosystem, not only the vehicles. By synchronizing vehicles, energy, and digital platforms, we've de-risked our pilots and built the confidence to scale.

Most private fleet operators still hesitate when it comes to electrifying their fleet. Having taken the plunge yourself, what would you say to others still on the fence?

The transition is inevitable. Whether you choose to lead it or lag behind is the decision you must make. The economics of electric mobility may seem challenging at first, but once you factor in fuel savings, compliance benefits, and long-term brand value, it becomes a winning move.

My advice - don't wait for the perfect moment. Start small, partner wisely, and build operational muscle. Because, at the end of the day, the market, passengers, and regulators are all moving toward electric mobility.

Leasing is a crucial piece of our strategy. Through our MoU with ElectricGo, we are inducting 50 vehicles on a phased basis. The model is simple - ElectricGo handles procurement, registration, and compliance, while GEMS focuses on operating them at maximum efficiency.

What's the big picture? Where do you see GEMS Mobility Solutions in 3 to 5 years, and what role do you hope to play in shaping India's sustainable intercity transport landscape?

In the next 3–5 years, I see GEMS emerging as India's leading operator of electric intercity and high-performance commercial vehicles. Our vision is to run a few thousand EVs across both passenger and utility segments, all powered by renewable-backed depots.

Beyond buses, we plan to expand into electric trucks and mining equipment, pioneering electrification in these heavy-duty categories. This will not only strengthen our position in commercial EV operations but also tackle some of the most energy-intensive, hard-to-abate sectors.

Smaller Batteries, Smarter Charging:

How India Can Electrify Bus Fleets Capital-Light

By Lalit Chauhan, Country Manager, Microgrid Labs India

India's bus electrification drive is moving from ambition to action. The government's PM eBus Sewa program alone targets 10,000 e-buses across 100+ cities, sparking a wave of tenders, depot upgrades, and charging projects nationwide. But as scale ramps up, a critical question emerges: **can we electrify quickly without locking ourselves into costly battery imports, heavy capex, and grid bottlenecks?**

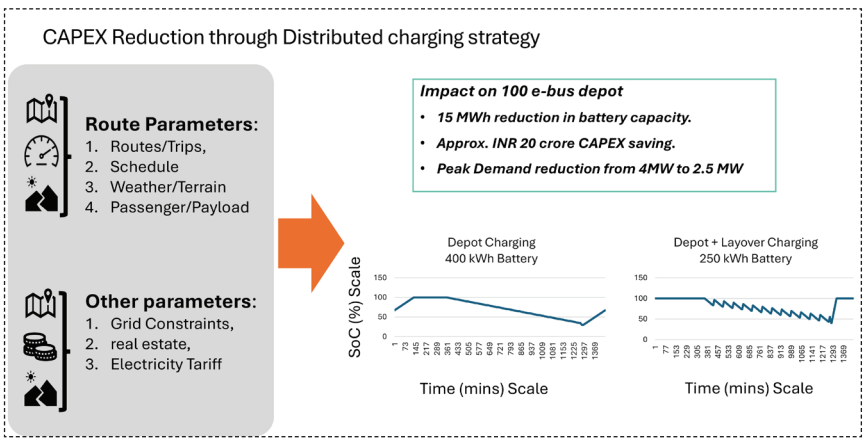
The answer is yes, if we treat operations, vehicles, and charging as a **single integrated system** rather than a procurement checklist.

The Systems Lens: Routes → Batteries → Chargers → Grid
Electrifying buses isn't just about swapping diesel tanks for kilowatt-hours. Energy use depends on route length, layovers, traffic, gradients, temperature, and passenger peaks. When those realities are modeled alongside grid capacity, tariff windows, and charger dispatch, operators can right-size battery packs, charging infrastructure, and power demand—all at once.

Evidence from Indian pilots shows that while discoms' concerns over peak loads are real, managed charging and time-of-day (ToD) tariffs can **flatten demand curves** and avoid costly feeder upgrades. The right data-driven design lowers both **capex and operational strain**.

Opportunity Charging vs. "Big Battery, Depot-Only"
The global lesson, and India is proving it, is that distributed opportunity charging beats "large-battery, depot-only" for many duty cycles.

- **Hybrid charging:** Combining overnight depot charging with targeted mid-route or terminal top-ups, allows buses to run with smaller batteries while meeting service blocks.
- **Case studies:** In Patna, strategically placed opportunity chargers reshaped the economics of availability and charger utilization. UITP's work in Karnataka highlights how terminals, not oversized batteries, extend daily range.
- **System effects:** Surveys show that simultaneous midday in-depot charging can stress feeders more than on-route top-ups, making distributed, scheduled opportunity charging the smarter grid play.



The Geopolitical Stakes: Batteries Are the New Oil
Here's the reality - India still imports most of its lithium-ion cells, and cells make up **75–80% of a battery's cost**. Meanwhile, China controls the majority of global cell production and critical mineral refining. This concentration creates **strategic vulnerabilities** as India's e-bus pipeline scales.

Every reduction in onboard battery size achieved through smarter charging and scheduling isn't just an engineering tweak - it's a hedge against **import dependence and price shocks** that compound across thousands of vehicles.

India's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) program for Advanced Chemistry Cells (ACC) is a step in the right direction, but gigafactories take years. In the near term, the **fastest lever is to reduce watt-hours per bus without reducing service**.

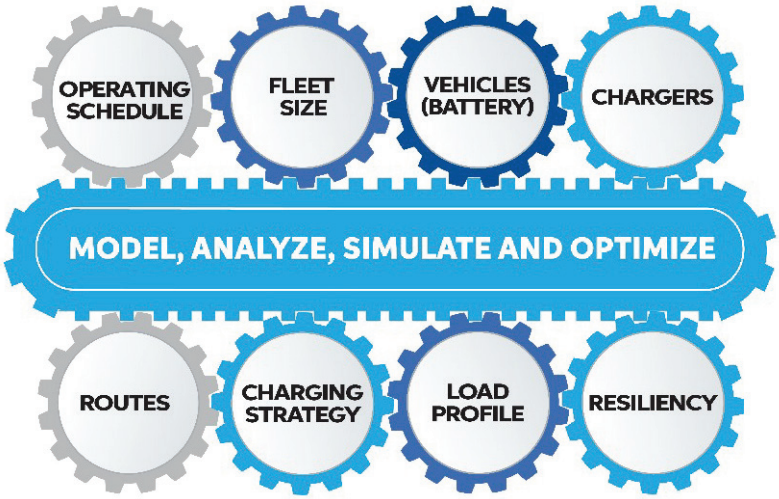
Why "BESS Everywhere" Isn't the Answer
Battery energy storage systems (BESS) can buffer depot peaks, but they simply add more imported batteries into the system. For most depots, the first 80% of the benefit comes from **software-first measures**:

- Charger scheduling aligned with ToD tariffs
- Staggered mid-route top-ups
- Demand response with discoms

These are **fast, capital-light interventions** that deploy in months, not years. BESS should be used **surgically** to solve residual problems once scheduling and modest grid upgrades have done their part.

Digital Twins: Planning Before Procurement
The fastest path to resilient electrification is to **simulate the system before spending**. Tools like **EVopt from Microgrid Labs** build operational digital twins that combine routes, blocks, dwell times, depot constraints, tariffs, and grid limits.

Joint Modelling of Transportation and Energy



India's Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) program for Advanced Chemistry Cells (ACC) is a step in the right direction, but gigafactories take years.

This co-optimization allows agencies to:
- Justify smaller battery packs vIdentify high-leverage opportunity charging sites
- Align charging schedules with grid and tariff realities

BMTC/KSRTC have already used this approach to plan depot and route deployments, proving the value of "software before steel."

A Playbook for India's Operators and Cities

1. **Adopt a systems approach:** View electric buses not as standalone vehicles or chargers, but as an integrated system of routes, batteries, chargers, and grid.
2. **Right-size batteries and chargers:** Base sizing on block-level modeling, not worst-case assumptions.
3. **Adopt distributed charging:** Pair depot charging with well-placed terminals for opportunity top-ups.
4. **Schedule charging like service:** Dispatch chargers against ToD tariffs and avoid synchronized spikes.
5. **Engage discoms early:** Share modeled load shapes to co-plan feeders and managed charging pilots.
6. **Use BESS sparingly:** Size only for the problems left unsolved by scheduling and software.
7. **Localize progressively:** Support domestic cell production, while hedging imports now through smaller onboard packs.

The Bigger Picture: Energy Security by Design

Electrified buses are more than a transport upgrade. They are a triple dividend: cleaner air, quieter cities, and lower lifecycle costs. But they also sit at the nexus of industrial policy and geopolitics.

India's advantage lies in its software DNA. By leading with **digital-twin planning, distributed opportunity charging, and managed load integration with discoms**, India can:
- Reduce demand for imported battery kWh
- Stretch scarce grid capacity further
- Reduce CAPEX and improve ROI
- Deliver reliable, high-frequency public transport

This is not just good engineering, it is **strategic autonomy**. Smaller batteries, Smarter charging and Software based system level optimization are India's fastest path to electrification at scale, without capital lock-in or import dependency. ●

About the Author

Lalit Chauhan drives the transition to smarter, greener transportation through advanced technology and AI. In his role as Country Manager at Microgrid Labs, he leads large-scale projects that integrate fleet operations, charging strategies, and energy management into a single digital-twin platform. His background spans distributed systems, data science, and software design, enabling him to deliver practical, cost-effective solutions.

Rajesh Reddy Chandra

The Man Behind India's Most Trusted Bus Operators' Community

In an industry where information can make or break operations, one digital initiative has quietly transformed the way bus operators across India communicate. Rajesh Reddy, a second-generation entrepreneur in the intercity travel sector, recognized a persistent gap - operators often struggled to access timely updates, peer advice, or practical solutions. This was especially more pronounced during critical moments like the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response, he launched Bus Operators India, a WhatsApp group designed not just for messaging, but for building a trusted, professional network across the country.

Inherited Responsibility

Rajesh Reddy didn't set out to become the linchpin of India's intercity bus community. Born into a family with deep roots in the bus transportation sector, he inherited more than just a business - he inherited a responsibility.

After completing his BTech, he dove straight into operations, fleet management, and policy work in the family business, gaining hands-on insights into the daily challenges of running intercity and long-haul bus fleets.

Over the years, Reddy observed recurring gaps - operators often struggled to access accurate, timely information, whether it was updates on permits, RTO compliance, or logistics coordination.

"The industry thrives on trust and peer knowledge," he says. "I realized that a strong, connected community could become a powerful enabler." This insight planted the seed for

something bigger than day-to-day operations - a platform that could bring together bus operators across India, irrespective of fleet size, location, or background.

Rajesh also credits Vijay Sai Naidu, owner of Aditya Logistics, Bangalore, as both his inspiration and mentor in this journey.

The Spark: Birth of Bus Operators India

In mid-2013, Reddy launched Bus Operators India on WhatsApp, one of the first initiatives of its kind. Initially, it was a crisis response tool, aimed at bridging information gaps during unpredictable events like regulatory changes or emergencies. The idea was simple yet powerful.

"Operators were facing uncertainty, compliance challenges, and a lack of reliable peer support," he explains. "I realized a real-time, collaborative platform could become a lifeline."

Today, the group has grown into a vibrant, curated community of over 650 operators and allied service providers, with around 257 actively engaged members. The community is intentionally kept high-quality and interactive. Members range from private contract carriers and intercity operators to long-haul luxury coach owners.

"We maintain diversity but with purpose," Reddy says. "Every member is operationally active and contributes meaningfully to the dialogue."

Connecting the Backbone of Indian Mobility

The diversity of the group mirrors the diversity of India's bus industry itself. Members include private fleet owners, intercity travel companies, mini-bus operators, and even long-haul luxury coach services. Yet, they all share a common goal - operational excellence.

Through daily discussions, they exchange updates on RTO compliance, new permit regulations, vehicle maintenance, and logistics coordination. They also share verified vendor contacts, discuss design improvements, and collectively tackle challenges that impact thousands of commuters every day.

"The group bridges gaps that used to slow down operations and increase costs," Reddy explains. "It's about creating a real-time ecosystem for collaboration."

In an industry where even a single day's delay can have financial and operational implications, this type of instant peer support has proved invaluable.

Stories of Real Impact

The proof of the group's value is in the outcomes. Reddy recalls one instance when an operator in Kerala faced a sudden compliance issue with VLTD regulations. Within hours, peers from neighboring states shared contacts of approved vendors, saving him days of downtime. In another case, a bus body builder connected with an operator through the group, securing a long-term supply agreement for custom-built sleeper coaches.

"These aren't hypothetical benefits," Reddy notes. "Every day, our members see tangible results that improve their operations and livelihoods."

> **"I wanted to create a space where every operator, big or small, could feel heard, supported, and empowered."**
> **- Rajesh Reddy**

Operators often privately message their appreciation. One shared how guidance on GST helped him navigate complex filings, while another recruited an experienced driver in a remote district within 24 hours thanks to a post in the group. The common feedback? The group feels like a professional "family"—reliable, fast, and real.

A Professional Family

What sets Bus Operators India apart is its practical, action-oriented approach. Discussions range from RTO compliance updates and permit rules to spare parts availability and vehicle body design improvements. Members coordinate logistics during peak seasons, advise on technology upgrades, and share insights that improve operational efficiency. In an industry where operators often work in isolation, Reddy's initiative underscores the value of community.

"Community isn't just important—it's critical," he says. "Operators thrive on trust, timely updates, and shared resources. Networking doesn't just help them survive; it allows them to influence the future of Indian transport." Unlike aviation or railways,

> **"Bus Operators India started as a simple WhatsApp group, but it quickly became a lifeline for operators across the country. We share updates, solve problems, and connect peers in real time. It's more than a group, it's a trusted community where every operator feels supported and empowered."**

- Rajesh Reddy,
Admin, Bus Operators India

bus operators face non-uniform regulations, fluctuating fuel costs, and high entry barriers for innovation. A connected operator community bridges knowledge gaps, forms alliances, and enables collective action, whether for advocacy or operational efficiency.

Beyond WhatsApp:
A Vision for the Future

Reddy isn't stopping at WhatsApp. Plans are underway for a dedicated mobile platform that integrates bulletin boards, legal updates, and partner directories, while retaining the group's collaborative, family-like culture. There's also a vision to register as a formal association or consortium, giving operators a collective voice in policy discussions and government advocacy.

"We're preparing for a future where every operator, regardless of size, can access the same information and support," Reddy says. "It's about decentralization, sustainability, and empowerment."

His long-term goal is clear: build a self-sustaining support system that combines technology, advocacy, and capacity building, ensuring operators are ready to meet the challenges of modern mobility.

The Man Behind the Mission

What makes Rajesh Reddy's work extraordinary is its selflessness. He does not profit from the group. Instead, he invests his time, energy, and insight to ensure that India's operators have a reliable support system. He personally vets new members, moderates discussions, and ensures the platform remains focused and high-value. His ethos is simple: create a community that operators can rely on, where knowledge flows freely, and collaboration outweighs competition.

Through Bus Operators India, Reddy has transformed the landscape of peer networking for bus operators in India, creating a model of trust, transparency, and collective growth that others can emulate. By fostering dialogue, sharing solutions, and amplifying voices, the platform ensures that operators, regardless of fleet size, can navigate changes effectively and collectively.

The Road Ahead

As India's intercity transport sector evolves, with electric buses, technology integration, stricter regulations, and higher passenger expectations, Reddy believes a connected operator community is more important than ever. For him, the mission is clear: empower the backbone of Indian mobility so that every bus operator has access to knowledge, support, and opportunity. "I wanted to create a space where every operator, big or small, could feel heard, supported, and empowered," he reflects. In doing so, Rajesh Reddy has become more than a facilitator - he has become a quiet force shaping the future of India's bus industry.

First Bus Orders 17 Next-Generation Alexander Dennis Electric Buses for Bath

Alexander Dennis, a subsidiary of NFI Group Inc. and a leader in propulsion-agnostic bus solutions, has secured a firm order from British operator First Bus for 17 next-generation zero-emission buses. Deliveries are scheduled for 2026 and will serve Bath city routes, forming part of First Bus's wider investment in electric buses and charging infrastructure, supported by the Department for Transport's Zero-Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) funding.

The fleet will include 12 Enviro200EVs and five Enviro100EVs. The 10.9m Enviro200EVs offer 33 fixed seats plus five tip-up seats in wheelchair and buggy bays and are specifically designed for Bath's historic streets with short overhangs and a narrow 2.47m width. The more compact 8.5m Enviro100EVs, described as Alexander Dennis's "big small bus," feature 26 seats, including six tip-ups, combining manoeuvrability with full passenger comfort. Both models are powered by the Voith Electrical Drive System (VEDS), delivering proven efficiency and smooth operation. Independent Zemo Partnership testing has demonstrated up to 97% grid-to-wheel efficiency, reinforcing Alexander Dennis's reputation for reliable, high-performance electric buses.

Rob Pymm, Commercial Director, First Bus Wales & West, said, "These new electric buses will bring quiet, clean, and comfortable journeys while supporting Bath's sustainability ambitions."

Marie Connell, National Account Manager at Alexander Dennis, added, "Following successful trials of our Enviro400EV double deckers, we are excited to deliver these next-generation electric buses, offering passengers in Bath a step change in ride quality and environmental performance."

Klaipėda Expands Green Fleet with IVECO URBANWAY Hybrid CNG Buses

UAB "Klaipedos Paslaugos", Klaipeda's public transport operator, has placed an order for 25 IVECO BUS URBANWAY 12-meter city buses, combining hybrid technology with natural gas. The procurement, executed through a public tender, represents a key step in the city's commitment to sustainable urban mobility.

The acquisition is backed by a 10-year bank financing package, which includes full-service support, warranty coverage, and additional operational services to ensure long-term reliability and efficiency. Deliveries are scheduled for the first quarter of 2026, with the buses set to enhance the city's eco-friendly fleet and provide quieter, cleaner service across Klaipeda's public transport network.

"Most of our fleet already uses alternative fuels, and these hybrid CNG buses will further reduce pollution and help us achieve our environmental goals, especially when using biomethane as fuel," said UAB "Klaipedos Paslaugos" CEO.

Giorgio Zino, IVECO BUS Head of Bus Commercial Operations Europe, added, "We are proud to support Klaipeda's transition to cleaner urban mobility. The URBANWAY HYBRID CNG, compatible with biomethane, is a proven and sustainable solution for cities."

The URBANWAY HYBRID CNG delivers 16% fuel savings compared with standard diesel buses, reduces CO2 emissions by up to 19%, and ensures quieter operation ideal for urban environments. Fully aligned with IVECO BUS's technology-neutral approach, the model allows operators to select an energy mix tailored to operational requirements and local conditions.

This order underscores Klaip□da's leadership in sustainable public transport and supports Lithuania's broader carbon-reduction goals, highlighting the growing role of hybrid and alternative-fuel technologies in European urban mobility.

Karsan's Autonomous e-ATAK Begins Passenger Service in Gothenburg

Karsan's Autonomous e-ATAK electric bus has officially entered passenger service in Gothenburg, Sweden. Operated by Vy Buss under contract with Västtrafik, the 8.3-metre bus will run for one year on a 4-kilometre route linking Gothenburg Central Station and Liseberg Station, serving seven stops.

Equipped with Level 4 autonomous driving technology developed with ADASTEC, the e-ATAK uses LiDAR, radar, cameras and GNSS for navigation and safety. Its 220 kWh battery offers urban-grade performance, charging in three to five hours depending on method, and is built to operate reliably in varied weather conditions.

Karsan CEO Okan Bas said the deployment highlights both the company's engineering strength and Sweden's commitment to next-generation mobility. "Overcoming harsh Scandinavian climates and dynamic traffic, the Autonomous e-ATAK will deliver a new passenger experience in comfort, safety, and reliability," he said.

The project is the first real-world passenger use of a series-produced Level 4 autonomous bus in Sweden. Karsan, which has supplied over 2,000 electric vehicles in 27 countries, views this as a milestone in its expansion into autonomous transport solutions.

ADASTEC CEO Dr. Ali Peker added, "This service proves the maturity of our technology. With every journey, we are not just moving people, but building sustainable, inclusive cities for the future."

The pilot reinforces Gothenburg's position as a hub for smart urban transport and marks a significant step forward in Europe's autonomous mobility landscape.

BYD Unveils 3rd-Generation e-Bus Platform with 1,000-Volt Architecture

BYD has launched its third-generation electric bus platform, debuting on September 15 in China. The new e-Bus Platform 3.0 introduces a 1,000-volt electrical architecture, marking a first for the bus industry, alongside Cell-to-Chassis integration of BYD's LFP Blade batteries and a suite of advanced safety and efficiency systems.

The first model built on this platform, the BYD C11, is an 11-meter bus available with modular battery packs ranging from 184 kWh to 593 kWh, offering ranges between 220 and 730 kilometers.

The 1,000-volt system powers the drivetrain, electronics, and auxiliary units—technology BYD has already proven in its Tang EV and Han EV passenger cars. CTC battery integration embeds the Blade packs directly into the chassis, improving structural rigidity, lowering vehicle height, and preserving luggage space. BYD describes it as its thinnest bus-specific battery system to date.

Efficiency upgrades include silicon carbide power electronics and a 7-in-1 thermal management unit, delivering up to 18% energy savings and extending range by 50–80 kilometers in low-temperature operation.

Safety and driver assistance are also in focus, with features such as Driver Disability Assistance 2.0, millisecond-response tire blowout stability, intelligent torque control (iTAC), and optional active suspension.

While BYD has not disclosed launch markets or timelines, the platform is positioned to reinforce its leadership in global e-bus innovation and respond to rising demand for high-capacity, long-range zero-emission fleets.

MCV Inaugurates Cairo Plant for Volvo Electric Buses, Strengthening European Supply Strategy

MCV (Manufacturing Commercial Vehicles) officially inaugurated its new Cairo production facility for Volvo electric buses on 16 September, marking a key milestone in Volvo's shift to contract manufacturing for the European market.

The 10,000 m² facility, completed in just 12 months, is dedicated to producing the Volvo 7900 and 8900 electric bus ranges. With two parallel assembly lines of 10 stations each, the plant has an annual capacity of 1,200 units. Around 300 employees are focused on this programme, supported by MCV's 2,000-strong workforce in Egypt.

The production process involves chassis shipped from Sweden, completed through MCV's supporting factories, and finalized at the new site. Notably, MCV had already begun producing Volvo e-buses in 2024 while construction was still underway, with the first units delivered to operators such as De Lijn and Transdev in Benelux.

The partnership, announced in 2023, followed Volvo's decision to cease in-house bus body production in Europe and instead rely on trusted third-party partners. MCV, founded in 1995 by Eng. Karim Ghabbour, has been

a long-standing Volvo partner across the UK and Asia-Pacific, supplying buses to global markets spanning Europe, Asia, Australia, and Africa.

Now positioned as the exclusive bodybuilder for Volvo's European e-bus portfolio, MCV's Cairo facility represents a cornerstone in Volvo's European e-mobility strategy. It ensures greater production scale and supply resilience at a time when demand for electric buses continues to rise across the continent.

Scania Unveils New Combustion and Plug-in Hybrid Powertrains for Buses and Coaches

Scania has introduced an all-new powertrain platform for buses and coaches, offering operators a choice between advanced combustion engines and plug-in hybrid systems. The move underscores Scania's twin focus on sustainability and profitability, addressing both regulatory compliance and operational efficiency.

At the core of the platform is the new Scania Super combustion powertrain, the company's most efficient to date. Built around a 13-litre engine paired with a new Scania Opticruise gearbox, the unit delivers fuel savings of up to 8% compared to current equivalents. The platform also meets upcoming Euro 7 emission standards and is designed for a lifecycle of two million kilometres. Filters have been relocated to the cooler side of the engine to simplify maintenance and enhance durability.

Complementing the combustion option is Scania's plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV) powertrain, tailored for long-distance operations and zero-emission zones. With a 290 kW electric motor integrated into a six-speed powershift gearbox, the PHEV can operate in four modes - electric, hybrid, charge sustain, and forced charging. Its battery enables an electric range of up to 80 kilometres per charge, offering operators flexibility in mixed-route conditions.

The hybrid platform also incorporates Scania Zone geofencing technology, allowing seamless, automated switching between electric and combustion modes in restricted areas.

Carl-Johan Lööf, Head of Product Management for People Transport Solutions at Scania, said the new portfolio delivers "competitive solutions, regardless of specific needs or challenges.

Mercedes-Benz eIntouro Completes Extreme Heat Trials Ahead of Busworld Debut

The Mercedes-Benz eIntouro, Daimler Buses' first fully electric intercity bus, has successfully passed its summer endurance tests in Spain. After five weeks of intensive trials in Andalusia, the model proved its performance, safety, and efficiency under ambient temperatures of up to 45°C - a key milestone ahead of its world premiere at Busworld Europe 2025 in Brussels.

The programme assessed drivetrain performance, energy management, battery thermal regulation, and air conditioning under heavy load. The eIntouro also mastered climbs in the Sierra Nevada up to 2,500 metres, with downhill runs confirming the effectiveness of its electric continuous brake and energy recuperation system. Daily test cycles ranged from 300 to 500 kilometres.

Two prototypes further demonstrated real-world readiness by completing a 4,000-kilometre round trip from Mannheim to Granada, relying solely on public charging networks across Germany, France, and Spain. Charging behaviour was validated at multiple rapid-charging stations, with adjustments made to cooling and drivetrain systems for series production.

Earlier this year, Daimler Buses also tested the eIntouro in the Arctic Circle, where it performed reliably in temperatures as low as -30°C.

The eIntouro range includes the 12.18-metre eIntouro and 13.09-metre eIntouro M, seating 50 to 63 passengers. Equipped with a 320 kW electric central drive and up to two battery packs totalling 414 kWh, it offers a range of up to 500 km. Charging via CCS Type 2 delivers up to 300 kW, with a full charge possible in 90 minutes. Already available to order, the eIntouro marks Daimler's strongest step yet into zero-emission intercity mobility.

VinFast to Debut Electric Buses at Busworld Europe 2025

Vietnamese EV manufacturer VinFast is set to showcase its first electric bus models in Europe at Busworld 2025 in Brussels this October. The launch of the EB 8 and EB 12 marks the company's official entry into the European public transport market.

The EB 12 has already been homologated to UNECE and CE regulations, designed specifically with European standards and infrastructure in mind. Equipped with LFP battery packs from global suppliers like CATL and Gotion, both models feature capacities of up to 422 kWh, delivering a real-world range of up to 400 km. Fast charging at 140 kW allows a full recharge in two to three hours. While details such as passenger capacity and dimensions will be revealed at Busworld, early indications suggest that the EB 12 will be a twelve-metre solo bus, with the EB 8 positioned as an eight-metre midibus.

Alongside its bus launch, VinFast will present its broader strategy for entering the European market. The company plans to work closely with European specialists and suppliers, replicating the partnership-driven approach that helped roll out its VF 6 and VF 8 electric SUVs across the region. Chairwoman Le Thi Thu Thuy emphasised Europe's alignment with VinFast's mission ans stated, "Europe shares VinFast's vision of a green and sustainable future. The launch of our electric bus models at Busworld is a strong statement of our long-term commitment to the region."

VinFast stressed that its European debut supports the Paris Climate Agreement and the EU's zero-emission roadmap, which requires all new buses to be emission-free by 2035. Back home in Vietnam, VinFast has been running electric buses for four years with an annual production capacity of 1,500 to 2,000 vehicles. With the EB 8 and EB 12, the company aims to contribute to "smart, green, and sustainable cities" while making electric mobility more accessible for European commuters.

Volvo Launches New BZR Electric Coach Chassis With Upto 700 km Range

Volvo Buses has raised the bar in sustainable mobility with the launch of its new Volvo BZR electric coach chassis, a breakthrough platform that promises to transform long-distance electric travel. Designed with cutting-edge technology, the chassis comes equipped with an industry-leading battery capacity of up to 720 kWh, offering an impressive operating range of up to 700 km under the SORT 3 test cycle.

This launch marks a major step forward in the electrification of intercity and long-haul mobility, enabling routes previously considered unviable for electric coaches. Operators can now take advantage of extended range and fewer charging stops, paving the way for interregional, tour, and charter services to go green.

Modular, Versatile Design

The Volvo BZR Electric coach chassis is available in both two-axle and three-axle configurations, with four to eight modular energy storage units. This flexibility allows operators to tailor buses to specific operational needs, whether prioritizing maximum range or optimizing for shorter, high-frequency routes.

Beyond sheer power and range, Volvo has focused on practicality and safety. The chassis supports both 250 kW CCS charging and 450 kW OppCharge, offering operators the choice between depot and on-route charging. Built with responsibly sourced materials, the chassis also emphasizes durability and lifecycle sustainability.

Comfort and Safety at the Core

Passenger comfort and safety remain central to Volvo's offering. The new platform incorporates Volvo's latest active safety systems, designed to protect both passengers and vulnerable road users. With a smooth, quiet ride, high seating comfort, and advanced stability features, the BZR Electric is positioned as a premium option for long-distance commuters and leisure travelers alike.

A Global Solution

By introducing this coach chassis, Volvo Buses now covers the full spectrum of electromobility solutions—city, intercity, long-distance, and tour/charter. The first units have already been bodied by Carrus Delta for customers in the Nordic and Benelux regions, signaling strong demand in markets leading the clean transport transition.

"The Volvo BZR Electric coach chassis shows how electrification can go beyond reducing tailpipe emissions," said Anna Westerberg, President of Volvo Buses. "It enables new routes, enhances versatility, and delivers safety and comfort while minimizing environmental footprint."

With the BZR Electric, Volvo Buses has taken a bold leap, proving that the future of long-distance mobility is not only electric—but also efficient, safe, and sustainable.

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