THE BUS INSIDER

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BY COACH BUILDERS INDIA

INALCO
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THE SAFETY CRISIS

ARE OPERATORS SOLELY RESPONSIBLE?

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RELIABILITY
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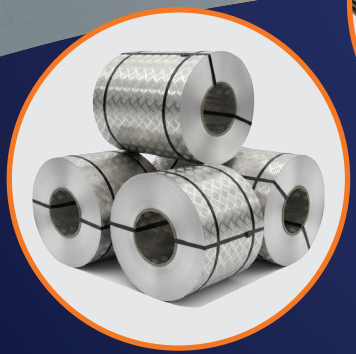

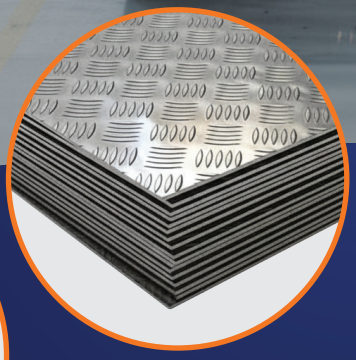

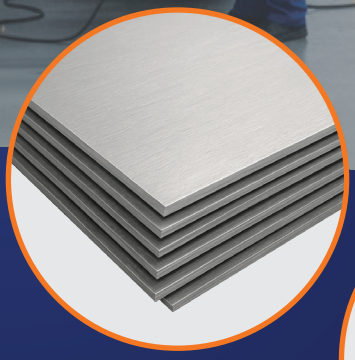

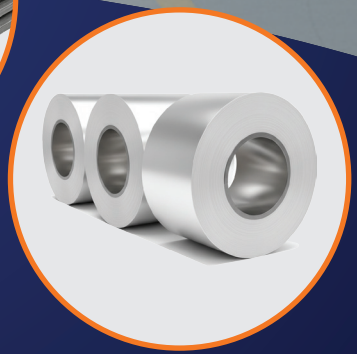

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EDITORIAL

Hello everyone,

This month has been a difficult one for all of us connected to the bus industry. The recent fires shook everyone, from passengers, operators to everyone connected to the ecosystem. For days, I found myself going through the same videos, the same reports, the same questions we've all been asking - how does something like this still happen? And why does it keep happening?

Some stories hit harder than others. And these incidents have reminded us, very painfully, that behind every bus on the road, behind every trip completed, there is an entire chain of decisions, responsibilities, and standards that must hold firm. Because when one link breaks, everything breaks.

As we built this issue, I realised that the conversation around bus safety in India has always been fragmented. In most cases, only the operators get blamed. But rarely do we step back and see the full picture - the ecosystem, the alignment, and the gaps that exist between what the rules say and what actually happens on the ground.

And that's why this month's issue matters so much.

We wanted to go beyond the noise and bring forward perspectives that are honest, informed, and necessary. The cover story traces where the safety chain weakens, not to point fingers, but to understand the system we're all part of. We also feature viewpoints from some of the most prominent leaders of this industry, each shedding light on how compliance should not just be a formality but a shared responsibility.

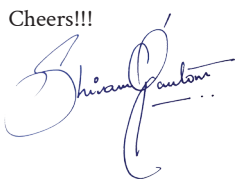
No bus becomes unsafe because of one person or one decision. It happens because somewhere, somehow, we stopped paying attention to the basics: compliance, maintenance, materials, enforcement and training. And bringing that attention back is the first step toward change.

There's a quiet determination I've sensed in the conversations we had this month. A willingness to fix what's broken, to modernise, to align standards, and to rebuild trust with passengers who deserve better. That gives me hope. Because real transformation doesn't start with outrage. It starts with responsibility. And responsibility belongs to all of us.

I'm grateful to everyone who contributed to this issue - the experts, the operators, the leaders, and the voices that chose clarity over comfort. And to our readers, thank you for staying with us as we grow, evolve, and try to tell the stories that matter.

Here's to a safer future, stronger systems, and an industry that continues moving India forward with dignity and purpose.

Cheers!!!



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IntrCity SmartBus Calls for Stronger Enforcement of Bus Safety Standards

> **"WE'RE PUSHING PRACTICAL MEASURES AND BETTER OVERSIGHT TO MAKE SAFETY A BUILT-IN EXPECTATION."**
>
> **DINESH RATHI,** SR. VP, INTRCITY SMARTBUS

India's leading next-generation bus network, IntrCity SmartBus, has teamed up with coach builders MG Group and S.M. Kannappa Automobiles to address critical safety gaps highlighted by recent bus fire incidents. Together, they have released a technical white paper titled "Bus Safety Standards in India: Facts, Advancements & the Road Ahead", urging a shift from rules on paper to stricter enforcement on the ground.

The white paper comes amid growing scrutiny of India's intercity mobility sector for passenger safety and infrastructure gaps. It combines insights from certified coach builders, the engineers behind most of India's buses, and identifies uneven compliance and weak inspection practices as key challenges, despite robust AIS safety standards. Many recent incidents were linked to electrical alterations, overloading, and poor maintenance.

IntrCity SmartBus emphasized that it works only with certified, compliant manufacturers, ensuring partner fleets adhere to approved safety norms. The company has proposed establishing a National Bus Safety Code, uniform enforcement by state transport authorities, and mandatory safety announcements on long-haul routes. It also recommends regular awareness programs for drivers, operators, and passengers to foster a safety-first culture across the industry.

"IntrCity SmartBus' vision is to make long-distance bus travel safer, standardized, and transparent," said Dinesh Rathi, VP – Bus Transformation Team, IntrCity SmartBus. "With this white paper, we aim to focus on practical steps, better compliance and stronger oversight, so safety becomes a built-in expectation for every passenger."

Industry experts contributing to the paper, including Vaibhav Narang, Director, S.M. Kannappa Automobiles, and MG Group leaders Prasad Chougale and Sivakumar V, stressed the urgent need for nationwide enforcement.

The white paper highlights that simple preventive measures, such as regular maintenance, trained drivers, and avoiding unauthorized electrical fittings, can significantly reduce risks. MG Group added, "Safety should never be compromised for cost. India can achieve European-level safety if adherence becomes non-negotiable."

Illegal Sleeper Bus Modifications will be a "Jailable" Offense: Nitin Gadkari

India's intercity bus sector is once again under intense scrutiny following a recent surge in bus fires and growing evidence of illegal sleeper-bus modifications that have already claimed dozens of lives.

Amid nationwide outrage over unsafe buses, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari has issued a strong warning to operators, builders, and owners across the industry.

In an interview with News18, he stated that the newly amended AIS 153 bus body code, developed by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, will play a decisive role in preventing such tragedies and ensuring safer long-distance travel.

Gadkari emphasised that every bus in India must comply with the new code, without exception. "Anyone found using buses made or modified against the code will be sent directly to jail," he warned, noting that the law now includes strict penalties and jailable offences for violations.

In force from September 1, the revised AIS 153 marks a major step toward standardized, safer bus design in India. Framed under the Central Motor Vehicle Rules (CMVR), it defines how buses should be designed, built, and tested, bringing uniformity in safety, structural quality, and passenger comfort, regardless of the fabricator.

The updated code not only sets limits for noise, vibration, and harshness but also strengthens requirements for fire-safety systems, emergency exits, and other safety-critical features essential for long-distance sleeper buses.

Together, these measures aim to make intercity and sleeper buses safer, more reliable, and better aligned with global safety norms. With enforcement tightened nationwide, illegal sleeper-bus modifications now constitute a jailable offence, signalling that safety shortcuts will no longer be tolerated.

As India moves toward safer roads and smarter mobility, the AIS 153 bus body code may well be the turning point, helping restore public confidence in long-distance travel and preventing future tragedies like those in Jaisalmer and Kurnool.

Mahindra Trucks & Buses Records 14% Growth in October Sales

Mahindra & Mahindra's Trucks and Buses business has posted a 14% year-on-year sales increase for October 2025, delivering 2,034 units compared to 1,791 units in the same month last year. The combined performance reflects the contributions of both Mahindra Trucks & Buses Division (MTBD) and SML Mahindra Limited, the latter integrated into the business following M&M's majority acquisition of SML Isuzu.

The October rebound follows a subdued September, when sales dipped 8% amid customers postponing purchases in anticipation of GST 2.0. The revised GST rate, reduced from 28% to 18% for commercial vehicles, took effect on September 22 and helped restore buying sentiment during the festive period.

Cargo vehicles supported the upturn, recording 1,255 units, up 8% from last October. Passenger vehicles outpaced overall growth, rising 24% to 779 units. Within MTBD, however, sales declined 2% to 975 units. Cargo sales dropped 3% while passenger vehicles rose slightly by 3%.

SML Mahindra delivered the stronger performance within the group, growing 32% to 1,059 units. Cargo vehicle sales climbed 29%, and passenger vehicles increased 36%, underscoring the brand's rising market traction.

For the seven-month period ending October, the combined business reported 16,622 units sold, reflecting 6% growth. Cargo sales rose 13% to 8,139 units, while passenger sales remained largely stable at 8,483 units.

Vinod Sahay, Executive Chairman of SML and President of Mahindra's Trucks, Buses and Construction Equipment, attributed the positive momentum to festive demand and the GST revision. He cautioned, however, that heavy commercial vehicles continue to face market headwinds even as light and intermediate segments show gradual recovery.

The GST 2.0 reform has been widely welcomed by industry stakeholders, with expectations of sustained improvement in retail sentiment through the remainder of the financial year.

Ashok Leyland Shifts Switch Mobility's Global EV Production to UAE for Cost-Efficient Expansion

Ashok Leyland is restructuring its global electric bus operations, moving Switch Mobility's manufacturing base from the United Kingdom to Ras Al Khaimah (RAK) in the United Arab Emirates. The decision follows an extended viability assessment of the Sherburn plant, which the company has now shut down due to high operating costs and supply chain inefficiencies.

According to Shenu Agarwal, Managing Director and CEO of Ashok Leyland, and CFO K. M. Balaji, the shift is a strategic repositioning rather than a retreat from global markets. Switch India has already achieved PAT-positive results in the first half of the current financial year, but sustaining profitability internationally requires a stronger cost structure and more efficient logistics.

Agarwal noted that RAK offers significant advantages in terms of market access, supply chain efficiency and operating economics, making it the right location for Switch's next phase of global growth. The RAK facility will manufacture electric buses for the UK and European markets, while also serving the fast-growing Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region. Components for these buses will continue to be sourced from India.

The move reflects a broader automotive industry trend of shifting production to regions that offer lower costs and strategic proximity to key markets. For Ashok Leyland, RAK provides a capital-light path to scaling global EV operations. The company will expand its existing facility rather than building a new plant, keeping the total investment below USD 3 million.

The transition strengthens Switch Mobility's ability to compete globally, aligning cost efficiency with rising demand for electric buses across Europe, the Middle East and other international markets.

Tata Partners with THINK Gas to Boost LNG Infrastructure for Commercial Vehicles

Tata Motors has signed a strategic memorandum of understanding with THINK Gas to accelerate the development of liquefied natural gas infrastructure for commercial vehicles across India. Announced on October 30, 2025, the partnership aims to fast-track the adoption of LNG-powered trucks for long-distance freight transport.

The two companies will collaborate on identifying high-demand freight corridors and logistics hubs where LNG stations can be deployed. THINK Gas, backed by global investors including I-Squared Capital, Osaka Gas and Sumitomo Corporation, will manage fuel quality, ensure supply reliability and offer favourable pricing to Tata Motors customers.

LNG is emerging as a viable alternative to diesel for long-haul fleets. Its higher energy density enables trucks to travel 600 to 1,000 kilometres per fill, while offering around 30% lower CO2 emissions and significant reductions in particulate matter and NOx. India currently has around 1,500 LNG trucks on the road. Government plans call for 1,000 LNG stations nationwide and for one-third of heavy trucks to shift to LNG by 2030.

Rajesh Kaul, Vice President and Business Head – Trucks, Tata Motors, said the collaboration will help customers transition to cleaner, more efficient long-haul operations. THINK Gas Senior Vice President Somil Garg added that the partnership will support the company's corridor expansion plan connecting industrial hubs, agricultural zones and logistics clusters.

India's LNG trucking ecosystem is gaining momentum, with players like GreenLine Mobility Solutions, Blue Energy Motors and Adani Total Gas expanding fleets and infrastructure. However, challenges remain, including high upfront vehicle costs and limited refuelling availability.

For Tata Motors, which holds a 42% commercial vehicle market share, the move strengthens its broader alternative-fuel strategy spanning electric, CNG, LNG and hydrogen technologies.

Ashok Leyland to Invest in the Battery Ecosystem for a Sustainable India

Ashok Leyland is preparing for one of its most significant forward-looking investments, with plans to enter domestic battery manufacturing at a scale that could reach ₹5,000–₹10,000 crore over the next 7–10 years. The final outlay will depend on how quickly India's EV and energy storage markets evolve, Managing Director and CEO Shenu Agarwal told the media during the company's post-results briefing.

For now, the company is maintaining its earlier projection of around Rs.5,000 crore. However, Agarwal acknowledged a potential upside if EV adoption accelerates. The announcement follows Ashok Leyland's September declaration of a partnership with China's CALB Group, the world's third-largest battery manufacturer, to produce next-generation batteries for automotive and stationary storage applications. CALB, already a supplier to Ashok Leyland, will not invest at this stage.

The plan will unfold in phases. Phase One, capped at ₹500 crore over the next 18 months, will focus on battery pack assembly. This includes integrating imported cells into modules and vehicle-ready battery packs. Phase Two will involve significantly higher investment to bring full cell manufacturing capabilities to India.

The company is currently assessing multiple states for the plant location, evaluating logistics, cost competitiveness, scale, and government incentives. A decision is expected by late December or early January.

Initially, production will cater to captive demand from Ashok Leyland, Switch Mobility and other Hinduja Group entities, which together require 4–6 GWh over the next 4–5 years. Switch Mobility holds an order book of more than 1,800 e-buses and is targeting break-even this fiscal year.

Over time, Ashok Leyland plans to supply batteries to other OEMs across segments, leveraging economies of scale as India's EV and energy storage markets expand.

ICAT Opens ISOL-2025, Spotlighting Intelligent Lighting and Safety Innovation

The International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) has inaugurated the eighth edition of the International Symposium on Lighting (ISOL-2025) at its Centre-2 campus in Manesar. Held on 17 and 18 November, the two-day event brings together industry leaders, researchers, and policymakers to examine emerging trends shaping the automotive lighting ecosystem. More than 700 professionals attended the opening session, reflecting growing industry interest in intelligent, energy-efficient, and safety-focused lighting technologies.

ISOL-2025 features 34 technical papers across six sessions, covering intelligent lighting systems, glare management, lighting's role in driver-assistance functions, EV-ready lighting solutions, EMC challenges, and regulatory developments. The symposium places strong emphasis on lighting's contribution to safety, vehicle design, and the next generation of ADAS-enabled mobility.

Two panel discussions anchor the programme. The first focuses on innovations designed to enhance night-time driving safety, particularly glare reduction and visibility enhancement. The second examines the shift toward smart, adaptive and connected lighting technologies that support automated and electrified mobility.

A technical exhibition running alongside the event showcases new products, components and technology solutions from OEMs, tier-one suppliers, and service providers. The exhibition is designed to promote indigenous capability building, encourage R&D collaboration, and strengthen self-reliance in the lighting supply chain.

The ISOL Awards for Innovation and Excellence will also be presented during the event, recognising outstanding contributions from industry stakeholders.

With more than 1,500 delegates expected over both days, ISOL-2025 reinforces its position as a key platform for knowledge exchange and industry-academia collaboration, supporting India's broader push toward advanced, safer, and globally competitive automotive technologies.

Tata AutoComp Secures Third Deming Prize in Two Years

Tata AutoComp Systems has secured another major milestone, with Tata AutoComp Hendrickson Suspensions Limited (THSL) receiving the 2025 Deming Prize for excellence in Total Quality Management. The award, announced on November 17, makes THSL the world's first commercial vehicle suspension system manufacturer to earn this recognition. It also marks Tata AutoComp's third Deming Prize in two years, following wins by its Composites Division and Tata Ficosa in 2024.

Established in 1951 by the Union of Japanese Scientists and Engineers, the Deming Prize is one of the most demanding global honours for TQM implementation. It evaluates leadership commitment, customer satisfaction, process discipline, organisational learning, and demonstrable business results. THSL's selection underscores its strong manufacturing systems, quality culture, and continuous improvement practices.

Arvind Goel, Vice-Chairman of Tata AutoComp Systems, said the back-to-back recognitions highlight the company's deep commitment to TQM as a strategic foundation. He noted that more business units are now preparing to adopt the TQM framework and pursue the prize in coming years. Managing Director and CEO Manoj Kolhatkar described TQM as a "people's movement," enabling customer-centric transformation and sustainable growth.

A joint venture between Tata AutoComp and Hendrickson International, THSL supplies parabolic and lift axle suspension systems for trucks, tippers, trailers, and buses across India's medium and heavy commercial vehicle markets.

Tata AutoComp currently operates 21 business units, 11 global joint ventures, and 66 manufacturing facilities across India and international markets. Its portfolio covers plastics, composites, HVAC systems, seating, exhaust systems, and a growing electric mobility suite including battery packs, thermal management, and integrated drivetrains.

The 2025 Deming Prize reinforces Tata AutoComp's position as a global benchmark in quality-led manufacturing for the commercial vehicle industry.

JBM Group Forms JV with Sodecia to Build ₹150 Crore Hot-Stamping Plant in Pune

JBM Group has signed a strategic joint venture with Portugal-based Sodecia Automotive International to set up a state-of-the-art hot-stamping facility in Chakan, Pune. The foundation stone was laid at JBM's Neel Metal Products plant by Acharya Devvrat, Hon'ble Governor of Maharashtra and Gujarat, in the presence of JBM leadership and senior Sodecia executives.

The JV will invest ₹150 crore to establish the new unit, scheduled to be operational by Q2 FY27. The partnership combines JBM's four decades of manufacturing expertise with Sodecia's global leadership in hot-stamping technology.

The upcoming plant will manufacture lightweight, high-strength, safety-critical components for both ICE and electric vehicles. Hot stamping enhances structural rigidity while reducing vehicle weight, a capability increasingly crucial for passenger cars and EV platforms. JBM has already set up a dedicated hot-stamping die facility at Greater Noida as part of its long-term plan to deepen competencies in this domain.

S.K. Arya, Chairman of JBM Group, said the JV reflects the company's commitment to bringing advanced global technologies to India and strengthening its position as a trusted partner to OEMs worldwide. Vice Chairman Nishant Arya added that the collaboration will accelerate the rollout of next-generation lightweight systems essential for modern mobility.

Sodecia CEO Rui Monteiro described India as one of the world's most dynamic automotive markets and said the partnership allows the group to combine capabilities with a proven industry player.

The JV marks a significant step in strengthening India's domestic ecosystem for high-strength automotive components, supporting OEMs as they move toward safer, more efficient, and electrified mobility.

Chartered Speed Secures Rating Upgrade as Revenue Nearly Doubles and EV Transition Accelerates

Chartered Speed Limited, one of India's largest passenger mobility operators, has received a significant credit rating upgrade from India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra), reflecting the company's strong financial performance and expansion strategy. The agency has revised the company's long-term rating to IND A- from IND BBB+ with a Stable Outlook. Its short-term rating has also been upgraded to IND A1 from IND A2+.

The upgrades come on the back of a sharp improvement in operating performance. Chartered Speed reported a 91.99% rise in Revenue from Operations in FY25, reaching ₹6,667.74 million compared with ₹3,473.02 million in the previous fiscal. Ind-Ra noted that the company's scale, operational resilience and diversified portfolio across city, intercity and contract mobility contributed to the positive assessment.

Chartered Speed is now preparing for its next phase of growth with a sharper focus on clean transportation. The company plans to convert about 25% of its entire fleet to electric vehicles by FY27. It is also laying the groundwork to enter the e-bus segment through special-purpose vehicles, strengthening its position in India's evolving public transport and shared mobility ecosystem.

Founded in 2010, Chartered Speed has grown into a major industry player with a fleet of over 2,000 buses serving more than 3.5 lakh passengers daily, as per a Frost & Sullivan report. Its operations span government contracts, city and intercity services, long-distance travel, and mobility solutions for staff and schools.

The upgraded ratings are expected to support the company's expansion plans and reinforce its reputation as a stable, future-focused mobility provider.

India Ratings:
Electric Buses to Capture 10–12% of New Bus Sales by FY27

According to India Ratings and Research, electric buses in India are expected to account for 10–12% of new bus sales by FY27, up from 5% in FY25.

BY **VIOLINA PEGU**

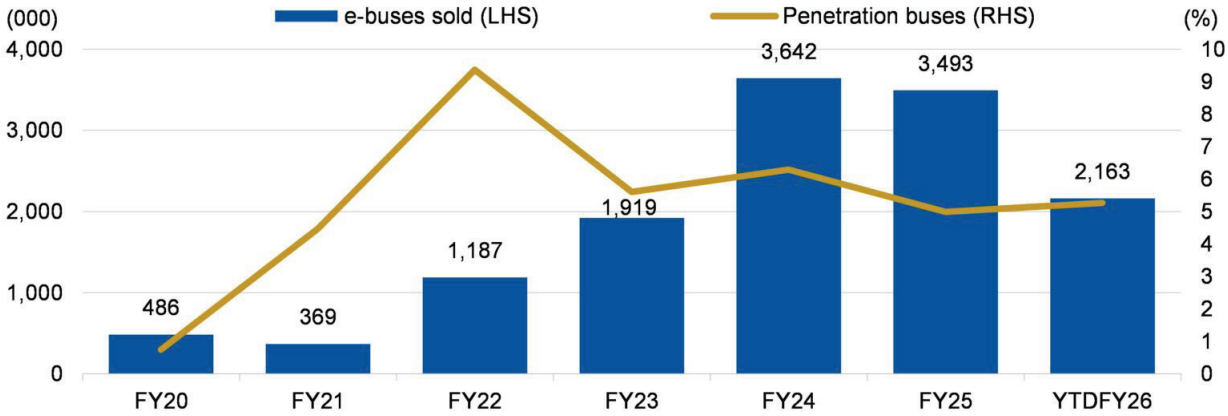
Electric buses in India are expected to make up 10–12% of new bus sales by FY27, according to India Ratings & Research. That's a sharp rise from 5% in FY25. The growth is largely driven by government policies and the fact that total ownership costs of electric buses are more favourable than internal combustion vehicles.

India has set strong climate goals. The country aims to cut carbon intensity by 45% by 2030 and reach net zero emissions by 2070, as announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at COP26 in 2021. Road transport is a big part of this challenge. It accounts for 12% of India's energy-related CO_2 emissions. Although trucks and buses make up only 4% of India's vehicles, they produce nearly 50% of total transport emissions, says a Niti Aayog report. This makes bus electrification a key opportunity to reduce pollution.

Compared to other South Asian nations, bus usage in India is low. The electric bus sector is still in its early days. According to the International Energy Agency's Global EV Outlook 2025, e-bus penetration in India is only around 5%. By contrast, in China, more than 60% of buses are electric. Most e-bus deployment in India is limited to cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Ahmedabad, and Lucknow. These cities were chosen in part under the PM E-DRIVE scheme because of their high traffic and serious air pollution.

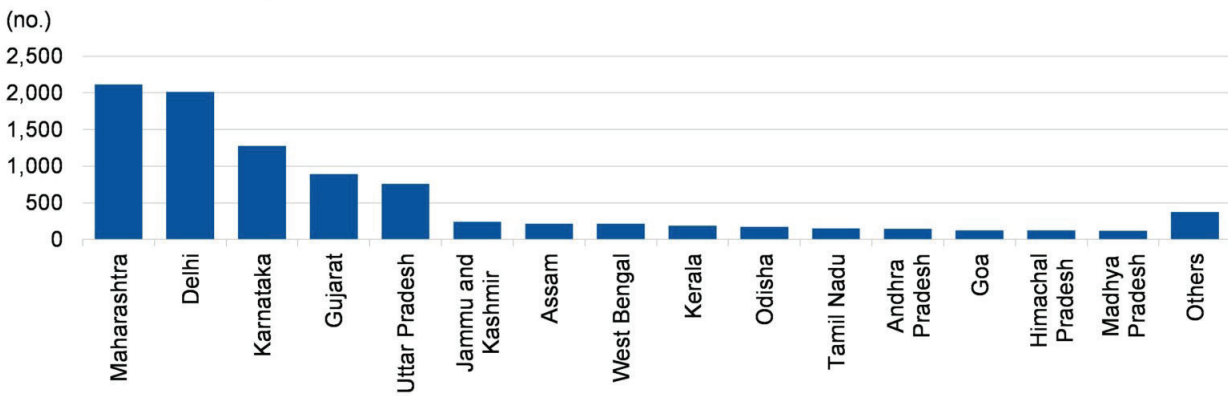
According to the International Energy Agency's Global EV Outlook 2025, e-bus penetration in India is only around 5%. By contrast, in China, more than 60% of buses are electric.

E-Bus Penetration in India



Source: Vahan Dashboard, Ind-Ra

State-wise Deployment of Electric Buses



Note: Data till 19 July 2024. It includes BEV + Strong Hybird Evs. Class of Vehicles includes buses, Omni buses & educational institution buses; Source: pib.org.in, Ind-Ra

The PM E-DRIVE scheme, launched in October 2024, allocated ₹10,900 crore for electric vehicle deployment and charging infrastructure through March 2026. It replaced the FAME-II programme, which ended in March 2024. Under the scheme, subsidies are offered for electric bus purchases. The subsidy is up to ₹10,000 per kWh, capped at ₹3.5 million per bus. The target is to deploy 14,028 electric buses across nine major cities.

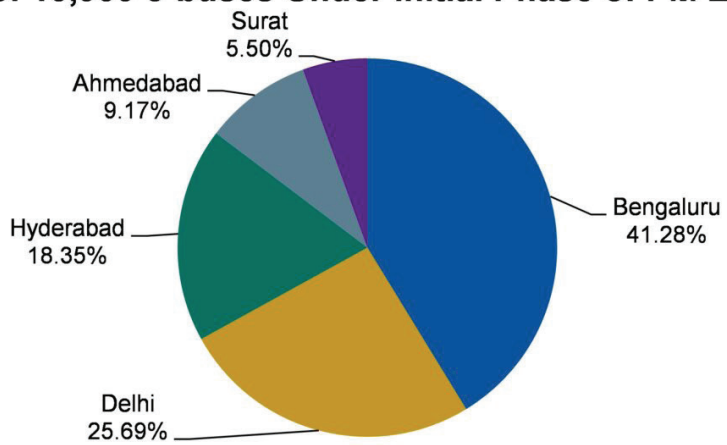
Even so, the e-bus industry faces several hurdles. Charging infrastructure is still weak. The supply chain for parts faces bottlenecks. Private bus operators are mostly excluded from subsidy schemes. These challenges could slow growth in the near term, as flagged by India Ratings.

But there is still strong optimism for the future. Order books are promising, policies remain supportive, and the low base of bus penetration gives room for rapid expansion. In the medium to long term, adoption of e-buses is expected to rise sharply.

Another important push comes from the PM e-Bus Sewa scheme. It supports public-private partnerships to deploy e-buses. It also offers help for building behind-the-meter power infrastructure and charging stations in depot areas. The scheme provides payment security so that operators are paid on time. This addresses a major concern that has kept some manufacturers and operators away.

In October 2024, the government announced a payment security mechanism under PM e-Bus Sewa. The budget allocated for this is ₹3,435.33 crore, covering the deployment of over 38,000 electric buses between FY25 and FY29. This payment guarantee is meant to make investments more attractive for both operators and manufacturers.

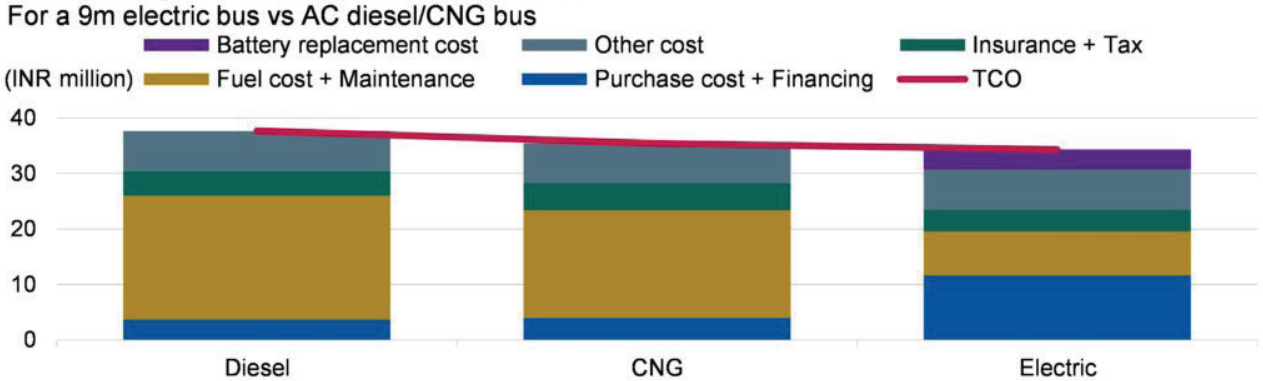
Deployment of 10,900 e-buses Under Initial Phase of PM E-Drive Scheme



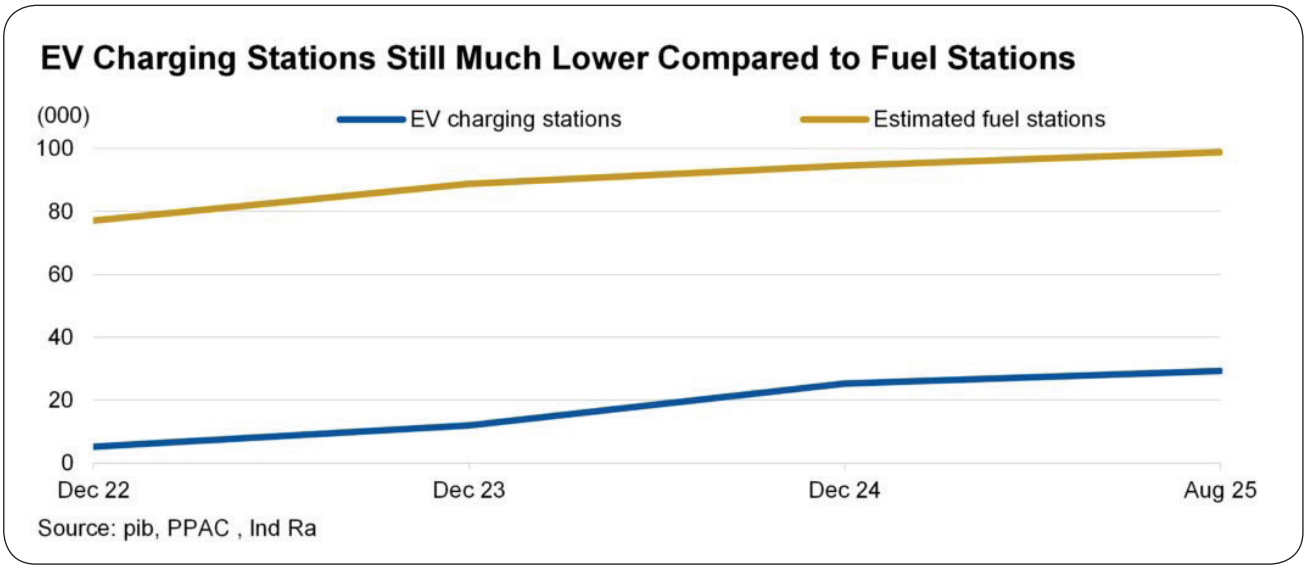
Source: pib.org.in, Ind-Ra

TCO Analysis Favours Electric Buses

For a 9m electric bus vs AC diesel/CNG bus



Note: Assumptions include 200kms travel per day for a 180kWh battery size bus with a life cycle of 12 years and one time battery replacement cost built in. Financing @ 12% RoI for 5 years
Source: WRI report. MoRTH data, Industry estimates, Ind-Ra



Upfront costs for electric buses remain significantly higher than those for diesel or CNG buses. Still, because electric buses cost less to run, their total cost of ownership is lower in the long run. Also, building charging stations for e-buses is easier than setting up CNG filling stations, which are mostly limited to bigger cities.

Despite these advantages, some problems remain. There are not enough EV charging stations in general. Industry estimates show that India has fewer than one-third as many EV chargers as fuel stations. Under current plans, 22,100 fast chargers are to be built for cars, 1,800 for e-buses, and 48,400 for two- and three-wheelers.

Most existing subsidies focus on state transport undertakings (STUs), which run only 5–7% of India's registered buses. Many STUs are losing money, operate small fleets, or do not fully use their capacity. These issues expose the risk of payment delays. While the PM e-Bus Sewa scheme's gross cost contracts and payment security help reduce this risk, including private bus operators will be vital for the segment's rapid growth, notes India Ratings.

The supply chain for e-buses is another major bottleneck. Deliveries have been slower than many expected. The top five e-bus makers in India have collective order books exceeding 25,000 buses for the next one or two years. But these orders are not being fulfilled quickly. Many manufacturers depend on imports for key parts — especially for batteries, chassis, and powertrains. There aren't enough local suppliers for these critical components, which is holding back production.

But there is hope. India is building its capacity to manufacture batteries domestically. Large investments are underway. The Ministry of Power has already approved ₹5,400 crore in Viability Gap Funding for 30 GWh of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). On top of that, 13.2 GWh is already being developed. By 2028, these investments are expected to pull in ₹33,000 crore more into the battery sector.

India Ratings says that e-buses offer a promising shift toward cleaner and more economical public transport. The benefits are clear: lower emissions and cheaper running costs. But to keep up the momentum, the country needs to address infrastructure gaps, fix supply chain issues, and ensure that private operators also benefit from policy support. With the right collaboration between government and industry, the e-bus revolution in India can really take off.

India has fewer than one-third as many EV chargers as fuel stations. Under current plans, 22,100 fast chargers are to be built for cars, 1,800 for e-buses, and 48,400 for two- and three-wheelers.

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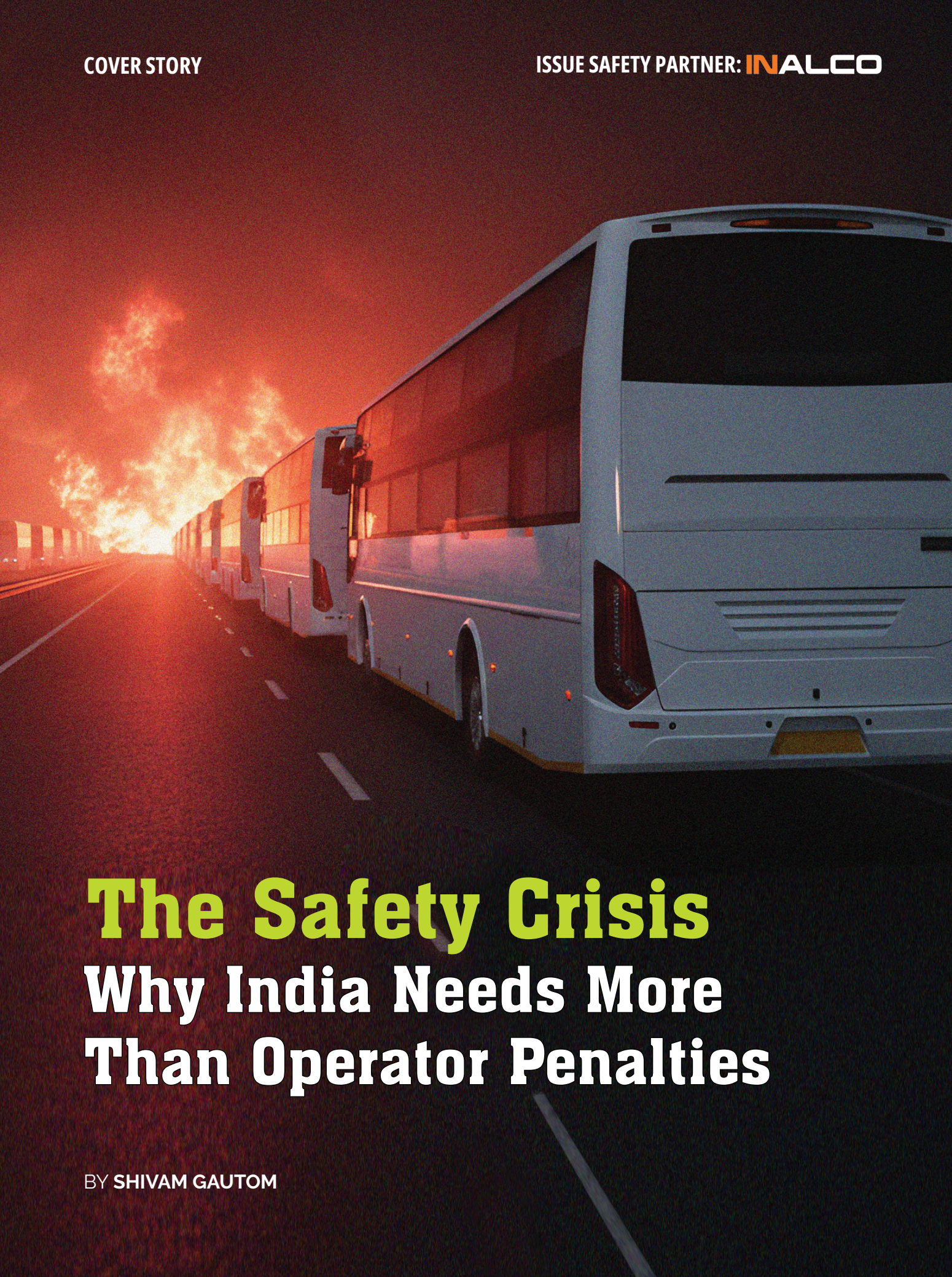


The Safety Crisis

Why India Needs More Than Operator Penalties

BY **SHIVAM GAUTOM**

India's intercity bus network just lived through one of its toughest periods in recent memory. A string of deadly fires shook public confidence, ignited national debate, and pushed the industry into confronting a question it has comfortably sidestepped for years — how safe are our buses, really?

As the images spread across news channels and social media, so did confusion. Verified engineering facts mixed with speculation. Every accident was painted with the same brush. And in the noise, one truth got lost — India's bus safety story is not simple. It is layered. It is systemic. And it goes far beyond any single operator or vehicle.

It is the story of a fragmented ecosystem where every stakeholder holds a piece of responsibility, yet no one controls the chain end-to-end.

India does not lack safety standards. It suffers from gaps in how those standards are enforced, interpreted, and followed on the ground. And in an industry where one weak link can put hundreds of lives at risk, that gap becomes fatal.

Let's try to step back from the daily outrage and look at the full picture, the engineering realities, the systemic failures, the operator-level choices, and the urgent need for shared accountability. Because if there was ever a moment for the industry to reset, it is now!

A Fragmented Safety Chain Held Together by Loose Ends

A bus is not built in one place. It is assembled across an ecosystem that rarely speaks in one voice. The chassis comes from the OEM. The body is constructed by a bus body builder, sometimes certified, often not. Electrical systems may be installed by third-party vendors. Permits and fitness checks come from the RTO and local transport offices. Enforcement lies elsewhere.

Everyone participates but no one supervises the whole journey. This is the heart of India's bus safety challenge — a chain built across silos, where alignment is optional and accountability is diluted at every step.

In a recent white paper released by IntrCity SmartBus, coach building bigwigs like the MG Group and S.M. Kannappa Automobiles point out that India's Automotive Industry Standard codes for the bus industry are strong on paper and, in many areas, comparable to European frameworks.

DR. HARISH SABHARWAL, NATIONAL PRESIDENT, ALL INDIA MOTOR TRANSPORT CONGRESS (AIMTC)

> **"IT IS A SYSTEMIC FAILURE WHERE WEAK REGULATION AND POOR ENFORCEMENT MAKE CUTTING CORNERS EASY. ATTRIBUTING BLAME SOLELY TO THE OPERATOR IS AN OVER-SIMPLIFICATION OF A COMPLEX PROBLEM."**

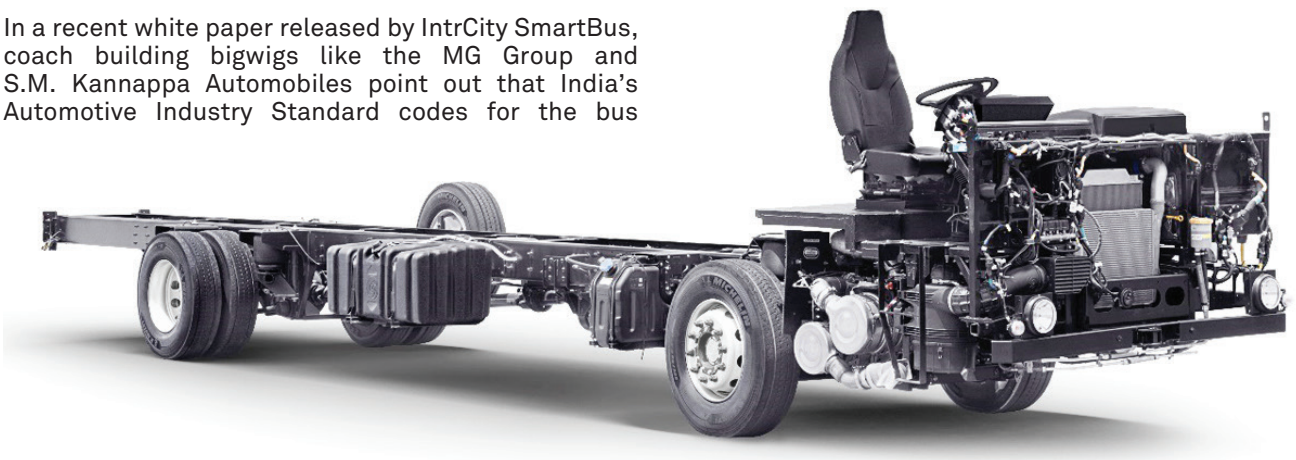
But the gulf lies in how rigorously Europe enforces its rules across every bus, every design variation, every fitment, and every operator. In contrast, enforcement and implementation remain uneven, inconsistent, and worryingly easy to bypass in India.

And this lack of alignment becomes glaringly visible when the system comes under pressure particularly during cases that make national headlines.

How Responsible Are Operators? More Than They Admit, Less Than They're Blamed For

When a bus accident makes the news, public attention almost always turns to the operator. It is the name on the vehicle, the brand the passenger remembers, and therefore the easiest point to blame. But the truth is far from straightforward. Operators do shoulder responsibility — but not all of it is theirs.

Operators do make choices that directly affect passenger safety. And one of the most critical choices is where they build their buses.



"Unauthorised bus body-building continues to plague the industry, with flammable materials, substandard wiring, structural deviations and inadequate emergency exits compromising safety at every level," states **Dr. Harish Sabharwal,** National President, All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC).

The reason is simple — the cost difference. In a business with volatile demand and thin margins, the lowest quote often looks like the most practical decision.

But the trade-off is severe.

Non-standard builders frequently bypass AIS norms. They use cheaper wiring, flammable materials, unstable layouts, and undersized components that save money upfront but compromise safety in the long run.

ABHIJEET KONDUSKAR,
CEO, KONDUSKAR TRAVELS PVT. LTD.

> **"NON-CERTIFIED TECHS OFTEN IGNORE OEM CURRENT SPECS AND WIRE GAUGES, INSTALLING UNDERSIZED CABLING THAT OVERHEATS, MELTS INSULATION, AND TRIGGERS SHORT CIRCUIT."**

But it doesn't just end there. Operators often add aftermarket modifications that strain the electrical system further. These changes, often made for passenger convenience or aesthetics, become major ignition points.

"Non-certified technicians don't fully understand OEM-specified current load and wire gauge requirements. They install cheaper, undersized wiring. The cables overheat, the insulation melts, and a short circuit becomes inevitable," states **Abhijeet Konduskar**, CEO of Konduskar Travels Pvt. Ltd.

And then there is cargo, a problem the industry has long known but rarely confronted publicly. Roof loads, underbelly consignments, and flammable goods piled into sleeper coaches destabilise the vehicle and raise the risk of rollovers, brake failures, and high-impact accidents. Several operators acknowledged that this one practice, often driven by competitive pressure, significantly heightens both fire and rollover risks.

Dr. Sabharwal explains, "Additional height and instability caused by roof loads make it more likely for vehicles to come into hazardous proximity with electrical infrastructure, amplifying the risk for catastrophic fires and severe casualties."

The fire risk multiplies when the cargo itself is flammable. The Kurnool tragedy showed this with brutal clarity. The smartphone consignment carried inside the bus intensified the blaze, turning an already severe incident into a deadly inferno.

The System Fails Before the Bus Moves

To be honest, the responsibility for safety begins much earlier, long before a bus ever reaches an operator's depot. And this is where the conversation needs far more honesty.

ANKUSH AGGARWAL,
CMD, LAXMI HOLIDAYS

> **"ENSURING THAT BUSES ARE BUILT BY CERTIFIED, AIS-COMPLIANT BODY BUILDERS IS ESSENTIAL. COMPLIANCE IS FAR MORE THAN A REGULATORY FORMALITY, IT IS A CRITICAL SAFEGUARD FOR PASSENGER SAFETY."**

Non-standard builders frequently bypass AIS norms. They use cheaper wiring, flammable materials, unstable layouts, and undersized components that save money upfront but compromise safety in the long run.

Technically, bus body builders are the ones technically responsible for constructing buses that meet government-prescribed safety codes. This responsibility is underlined by the simple fact that the bus body builder is the entity that applies for, receives, and maintains AIS certification. And they are the ones expected to ensure that every bus they fabricate matches the approved design and not a cheaper, diluted version of it.

When bus body builders deviate from these standards, the compromise is not financial. It is life-threatening.

But the accountability does not end here either.

If a bus body is non-compliant, it should never reach the road in the first place. That is the role of transport authorities — registration officials, fitness inspectors, and enforcement teams who serve as the final gatekeepers. They are expected to verify that the bus matches the approved design and carries the correct certifications. They are responsible for ensuring that a structurally weak, electrically unsafe, or non-compliant bus is rejected long before it carries passengers.

PC: SM Kannappa Automobiles

Yet the reality we see on the roads tells a very different story.

Buses that fall short of prescribed safety standards routinely secure registration certificates and fitness approvals. They pass through checkpoints. They operate across state borders. And they do so because procedural lapses, inconsistent inspections, and weak oversight create gaps wide enough for unsafe vehicles to slip through.

Until this systemic gap is addressed, the gap between what is certified on paper and what is allowed on the road, India will continue to see tragedies that could have very well been prevented.

And this is why simply penalising operators after a fire or accident is not a sustainable solution. It punishes the last person in the chain, while the failures that allowed the unsafe bus to exist in the first place remain unchallenged.

Until the gap between what is certified on paper and what is allowed on the road is addressed, India will continue to see tragedies that could have very well been prevented.

Dr. Sabharwal calls it what it is. “It is a systemic failure where weak regulation and poor enforcement make cutting corners easy. Non-compliant buses still receive fitness certificates. Several States have failed to implement and enforce standards effectively. Attributing blame solely to the operator is an over-simplification of a complex problem.”

The Road Ahead: What Must Change

India’s bus industry is standing at a crossroads. The fires of the past month have exposed every weak link in the chain, but they’ve also made one thing clear — the path to safer mobility already exists. The industry just needs to walk it together.

PC: MG Group

The first step is enforcement. Not new rules, not fresh codes but enforcement. All buses built in India must be built according to the amended Automotive Industry Standard (AIS) formulated by the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH).

"Accidents may be unavoidable, but the severity of their impact isn't. As operators, it's our duty to work only with certified body builders who follow the latest AIS norms. Compliance isn't a checkbox, it's a life-saving responsibility," says **Ankush Aggarwal**, CMD, Laxmi Holidays.

Second, bus body builders must be held accountable for compliance. Certification has to be transparent, standardised, and corruption-free.

And finally, the industry must invest in its people: better driver training, mandatory rest hours, stronger staff welfare, and real safety communication before every trip

If India gets these steps right, the impact will be immediate and measurable. Fewer fires. Fewer accidents. More accountability. More trust. A safer, stronger intercity mobility network that lives up to its promise.

What the industry needs now is alignment, consistency and discipline. And a willingness to enforce the rules with the seriousness they deserve.

Rebuilding Trust Begins Now

The past month has forced the industry to confront a reality it could no longer ignore. Fires didn't just destroy buses. They damaged public trust. And in the intercity mobility business, trust is everything.

But crises also bring clarity. They expose what's broken. They show what must change. And they remind every stakeholder that safety isn't a box to tick. It's a responsibility shared across the entire chain.

India has the standards. It has the engineering capability. It even has the technology. What it needs now is alignment, consistency and discipline. And a willingness to enforce the rules with the seriousness they deserve.

The industry has reached its turning point. The question is no longer "Who is to blame?" but "Who will step up?" If every link in the chain strengthens its part, and works with the rest, India can set a new benchmark for safe, modern intercity travel.

Rebuilding trust begins now. And if the industry chooses to, this moment of crisis can become the moment India's buses finally turn a corner.

PC: MG Group

Intercity Bus Travel Surges 25% as India Logs 140 Million Passengers in Six Months

BY **SAMIRAN BORA**

As per the recently released BusTrack Report from redBus, India's intercity bus sector carried 140 million passengers between April and September 2025 — a robust 25% increase compared to the same period last year.

This surge in travel demand generated a ticketing value of ₹132 billion, supported by more than 6,000 private bus operators active on the platform.

The report highlights not only the growth in numbers but also emerging trends in passenger preferences, booking patterns, and regional performance across the country.

Passengers Prefer Comfort

The report shows a clear shift toward more comfortable travel. Around 85% of trips were made on sleeper or hybrid buses, while 71% of seats sold were on AC buses. This indicates that passengers are increasingly willing to pay extra for comfort, especially on longer intercity journeys.

Expanding Routes and Longer Journeys

India's intercity bus network continues to expand rapidly. Over 670,000 unique routes connected more than 11,000 towns, showing that bus travel is reaching deeper into the country. Nearly two-thirds of these routes were longer than 250 km, reflecting a rise in long-distance, cross-regional journeys.

On a national level, buses operated at an average 76% seat occupancy. The highest utilization was seen in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana at 84%, while Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh recorded lower occupancy at 63%, suggesting regional variations in demand.

Regional Distribution of Bookings

A few states dominated ticket bookings during the six months. Maharashtra and Goa together accounted for 16% of all bookings, followed by Tamil Nadu (15%), Andhra Pradesh & Telangana (12%), and Karnataka (11%).

Maharashtra registered an average ticket price of ₹1,066, higher than the national average. Buses in the state were 79% full on average, with 67% of travel being intrastate, indicating strong local demand alongside intercity travel.

Who is Travelling?

Young adults are driving the market. Passengers aged 18–36 made up nearly two-thirds of all bookings, while 65% of travellers were male.

Interestingly, most of the growth is coming from non-metro regions, with smaller cities and towns generating 61% of bookings. The top six metro cities contributed 33%, while other state capitals added another 6%.

Sangam also noted that the report now covers a semi-annual period, blending the quieter April–June months with the busier July–September quarter to give a more balanced view of trends throughout the year.

redBus is the world's largest bus-ticketing marketplace by volume and today connects nearly 10,000 cities, towns, and villages across 420,000+ routes. The platform partners with 4,500+ private operators along with 26 State Road Transport Corporations, and has sold over 466 million tickets worldwide.

Why the Market is Growing

According to Prakash Sangam, CEO of redBus, the growth is driven by multiple factors:

- Existing operators are adding more buses to meet demand.
- New operators are entering popular routes.
- Digitisation is making ticketing easier for smaller operators and less-connected towns.
- Passenger preferences are shifting toward AC travel, boosting demand for comfort-focused buses.

"THE MARKET HAS WITNESSED A 25% INCREASE FROM 112 MILLION SEATS LAST YEAR TO 140 MILLION THIS APRIL TO SEPTEMBER. THE GROWTH IS DRIVEN BY MORE BUSES, NEW OPERATORS, DIGITISATION ACROSS LONG-TAIL AND EMERGING CORRIDORS."

PRAKASH SANGAM,
CEO OF REDBUS

ATLS-Based Emergency Preparedness for Bus Accidents: Practical Life-Saving Protocols

Even without medical training, bus staff can follow basic ATLS principles to save lives during emergencies.

BY **DR. AKASH PRAKASHRAO DATIR**

Bus accidents are unpredictable and stressful situations where the first few minutes decide who survives. Many of the injuries seen in such crashes are entirely survivable if the right steps are taken immediately, and most of these steps do not require medical training.

Modern trauma care, especially the ATLS (Advanced Trauma Life Support) framework, provides simple principles that anyone can follow. When adapted for buses, these principles can help drivers, conductors, and even passengers prevent avoidable deaths.

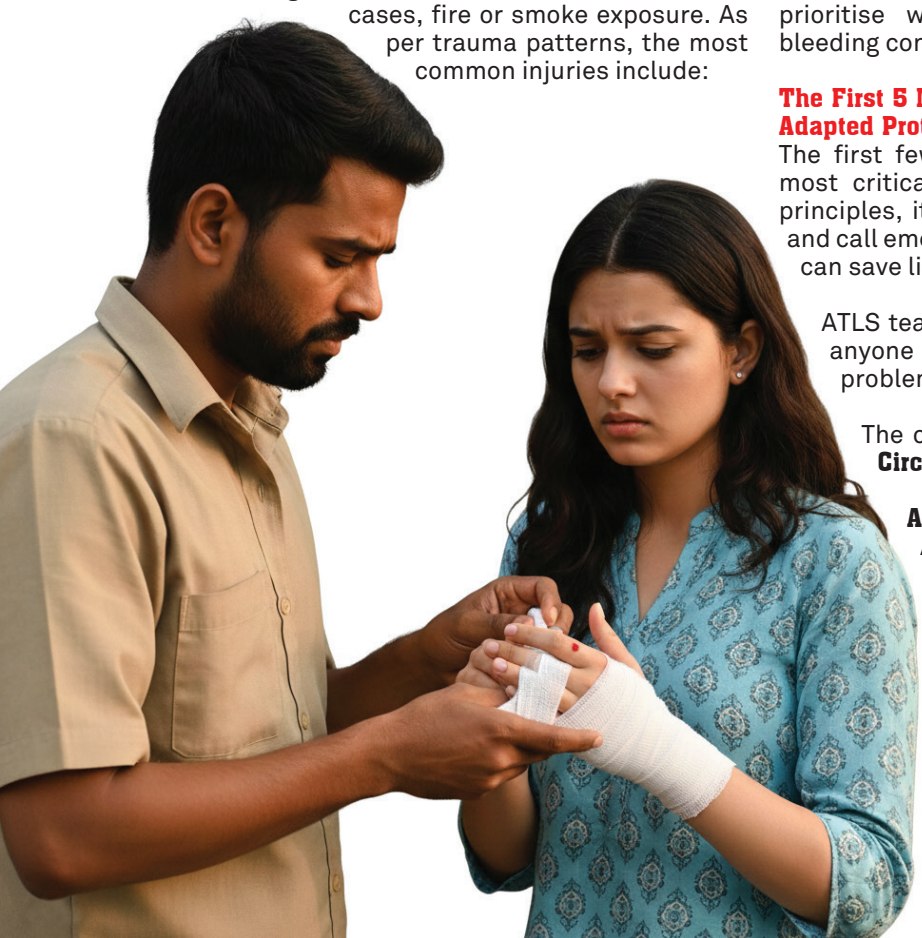
It is crucial for bus operators to train their staff in basic accident preparedness, just as is done in developed countries. With proper training, staff can respond confidently and effectively in emergencies, dramatically reducing preventable deaths and injuries on our roads.

This guide explains those life-saving steps in clear, practical language. Each section includes easy-to-follow pointers so bus crew members know exactly what to do, whether it involves controlling bleeding, managing fractures, or responding to fire and smoke.

With the right awareness and training, every person on a bus can play a role in protecting lives until professional help arrives.

Common Injuries in Bus Accidents

Bus accidents typically involve high-energy impacts, sudden braking, falls inside the cabin, and in some cases, fire or smoke exposure. As per trauma patterns, the most common injuries include:



1. Head Trauma
These occur when passengers hit windows, poles or the seat in front of them. Injuries can range from mild concussion to serious brain trauma.

Warning Signs: Vomiting, confusion, drowsiness, unequal pupils or unusual behaviour.

2. Chest and Abdominal Injuries
Hard surfaces and metal parts can injure the ribs, lungs or organs in the abdomen.

Common Symptoms: Chest pain, difficulty breathing or stomach pain

3. Fractures
Arms, legs, collarbones and the pelvis are common sites for fractures.

Common Symptoms: Visible deformity, swelling, difficulty moving, severe pain.

4. External Bleeding
Cuts from glass or sharp edges are common. Scalp wounds may bleed heavily, but the bleeding is usually controllable with firm pressure.

5. Burns and Smoke Inhalation
In the rare situation of a bus fire, inhalation injury can threaten life within minutes. Burns may be from flames or scalding hot fluids.

Understanding these injuries helps responders prioritise what matters most: airway, breathing, bleeding control, and safe evacuation.

The First 5 Minutes: What Bus Staff Should Do (ATLS-Adapted Protocol)

The first few minutes after a bus accident are the most critical. Before applying emergency response principles, it is essential to ensure the scene is safe and call emergency services immediately. Early action can save lives and prevent further injuries.

ATLS teaches a simple, step-by-step method that anyone can follow to address life-threatening problems quickly.

The core principle is **ABC – Airway, Breathing, Circulation.**

A – Airway
Ask the injured person to talk. If they can talk, their airway is open.

If the person is unconscious:
- Gently lift the chin forward.
- Avoid tilting the head back if you suspect a neck injury.
- Clear the mouth of visible obstructions such as vomit or loose dentures.

B – Breathing
Check whether the person is breathing normally.
- Look for chest movement.
- Listen for breathing sounds.
- Feel for air movement.

If there is no breathing, start hands-only CPR with firm chest compressions in the centre of the chest. If difficulty in breathing is due to smoke in case of a bus fire:
- Move the person to fresh air.
- Loosen tight clothing.
- Keep them sitting upright.

C – Circulation and Bleeding
Uncontrolled bleeding can kill within minutes. If anyone is bleeding profusely:
- Press firmly on the bleeding area using cloth or bandages.
- Do not remove soaked bandages - add more layers on top.
- If trained and available, use a tourniquet only for severe limb bleeding.

First-Aid Steps Anyone Can Perform (Safe, Effective, ATLS-Based)

Even without medical training, anyone on the bus can perform basic first-aid to prevent injuries from getting worse. The goal is to stabilize the victim until professional help arrives.

Fracture Care
- Do not straighten or move the injured limb.
- Support it with a sling, folded cloth, or triangular bandage.
- Immobilize the joints above and below the fracture.
- Keep the person calm and still.

Head Injuries
- Keep the person awake and talking.
- Do not give food, water, or painkillers.
- Monitor for vomiting, confusion, or seizures. Any of these require urgent hospital care.

Modern trauma care's ATLS principles are simple enough that even non-medical professionals can act decisively in the critical moments after an accident.

Unconscious Passenger
- If the person is breathing and there is no suspected spinal injury, place them in the recovery position.
- If spinal injury is possible, keep them flat, support the head, and avoid any movement.

Important: You do not need to diagnose injuries. Your role is to prevent them from worsening until trained help arrives.

Essential Bus Emergency Kit Contents (And How to Use Them)

Every bus should carry a well-stocked and regularly checked emergency kit. The right tools can make the difference between life and death in the first few minutes after an accident.

First-Aid Materials
- **Sterile gauze** – for controlling bleeding
- **Trauma dressings** – for large wounds
- **Adhesive bandages** – for minor cuts
- **Roller bandages** – for securing dressings or splints
- **Triangular bandage / sling** – for immobilizing limbs
- **Sterile gloves** – to prevent infection
- **Tourniquet** – only for severe limb bleeding
- **Antiseptic wipes** – for cleaning wounds
- **Clean cloths or absorbent pads** – for controlling bleeding and covering burns

Emergency Tools
- **Fire extinguisher (ABC type)** – for small fires
- **Seat-belt cutter** – to release trapped passengers quickly
- **Glass-breaking hammer** – for emergency exits
- **Flashlight** – for visibility in dark or smoky conditions
- **Thermal blanket** – to prevent shock
- **Smoke mask (optional but recommended)** – for protection during fire or smoke exposure

Documentation
- Contact numbers for local hospitals and ambulance services enroute.
- Standard accident reporting form
- Bus operator's emergency response SOP

How Bus Crew Can Assist Until Help Arrives

Even after calling emergency services and applying first aid, bus staff play a crucial role in keeping passengers safe and stable until professional help reaches the scene.
- Keep victims warm, shock increases with cold.
- Recheck ABC (Airway, Breathing, Circulation) every few minutes.

- Speak calmly and reassuringly; panic increases heart rate and bleeding.
- Prevent crowding around injured individuals to avoid additional harm.
- Ensure children stay with known adults.
- Clear a path for paramedics when they arrive.
- Avoid unnecessary movement, lifting, or shifting of injured passengers.

Even simple reassurance, calm instructions, and maintaining order can stabilize frightened passengers and prevent further injuries.

Bus Fire & Smoke Response (High-Priority Guidance)

Bus fires spread quickly, and every second counts. Immediate, calm action is critical to save lives.

A. Immediate Evacuation

- Shout "FIRE – EVACUATE NOW" to alert everyone.
- Assist elderly, children, and passengers with disabilities.
- Use the nearest exit and encourage passengers to stay low.
- Move everyone at least 50–100 metres away from the bus.

B. Using a Fire Extinguisher

- Only attempt if the fire is small and manageable.
- Remember PASS:
  - Pull the pin
  - Aim at the base of the flames
  - Squeeze the handle
  - Sweep side to side
- If the fire grows or smoke thickens, stop and evacuate immediately.

C. Smoke Inhalation

Signs include coughing, noisy breathing, hoarseness, or black soot around the nose and mouth.

- Move victims to fresh air immediately.
- Loosen tight clothing and encourage slow, calm breathing.
- Give water only if the person is fully conscious.

Important: Anyone with hoarseness, burns around the mouth, or difficulty breathing must get urgent hospital care.

D. Burns First-Aid

- Cool the burn area with running water for at least 20 minutes.
- Remove jewellery early, before swelling begins.
- Do not remove melted clothing.

- Cover burns with a clean cloth or non-stick dressing.
- Never apply ice, toothpaste, ghee, or powders.

Towards Safer Bus Travel

Bus accidents are unpredictable and frightening, but the first few minutes after a crash are critical. Most injuries are preventable if bus staff are trained to respond quickly and effectively, just like in developed countries.

With proper training in emergency response, a clear understanding of first-aid principles, and well-equipped buses, operators can dramatically reduce preventable deaths and injuries on our roads. Prepared staff, aware passengers, and the right equipment can make every bus a safer place.

Investing in training and preparedness is not just a responsibility; it is the key to saving lives and ensuring safer journeys for all passengers.

About the Author

Dr. Akash Prakashrao Datir is a Critical Care Medicine Senior Resident Doctor (DrNB CCM, SR1 – Ruby Hall Clinic, Pune) with a strong foundation in Emergency Medicine (DNB EMD, Apollo Hospital). A graduate of GMC Akola, he is committed to advancing acute care, improving patient outcomes, and contributing to critical care education through research, clinical excellence, and public awareness.

How Aggregators Can Transform Intercity Safety Standards

BY **DINESH RATHI, SR. VP, INTRCITY SMARTBUS**

In the past few months, India has witnessed a series of tragic intercity bus accidents, some fire incidents and some deadly crashes, which has brought passenger safety under the spotlight. Public concern has been palpable, policymakers have issued statements, emergency meetings between stakeholders have been held, and new standards have been thrown in. All for good.

Media outlets have questioned whether the industry stakeholders are doing enough to prevent such incidents. In this moment of heightened scrutiny, many commentators have focused on vehicle design standards, regulatory gaps and the role of fleet owners a.k.a bus operators. However, I think that one critical player in the ecosystem remains under-recognised - **the aggregator or platforms.**

As highlighted in recent commentary, including IntrCity SmartBus' advocacy for stricter, uniform safety protocols, there is growing acknowledgement that the future of safe bus travel in India depends not only on vehicle engineering or regulatory enforcement but on the emergence of reliable **service-layer platforms** that connect every stakeholder in the value chain.

India has seen multiple industries transform because of such 'trust-building layers'. Food delivery, taxi services and even home maintenance witnessed radical improvements once platforms emerged that took responsibility for standardising safety, compliance and customer experience.

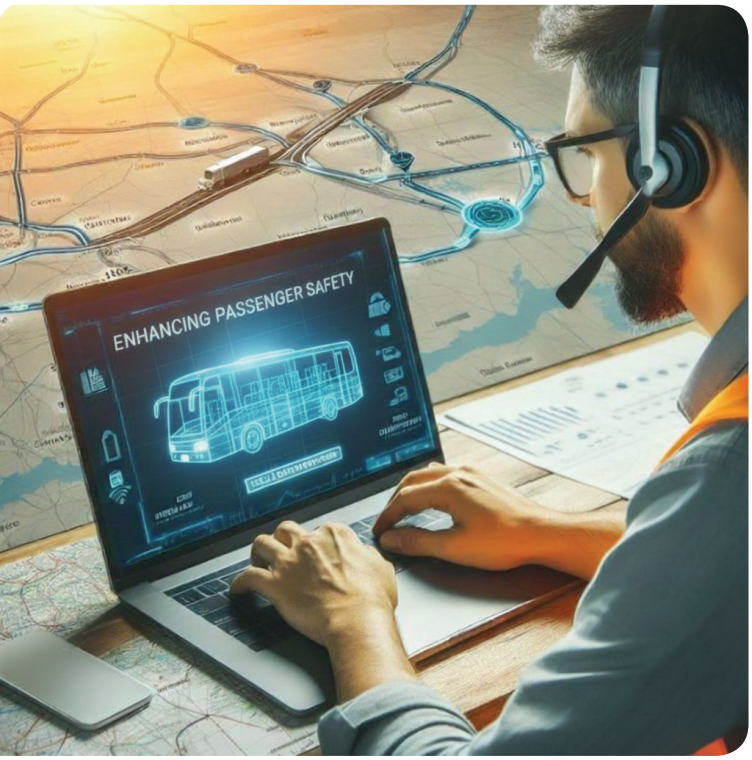
The same evolution is underway in the intercity bus sector — and it is time to appreciate how crucial this role is.

Learning from Other Industries: Platforms as Compliance Bridges

The Zomato Playbook

A decade ago, India's restaurant landscape was largely unorganised. Customers rarely knew whether a restaurant was FSSAI-compliant or following basic hygiene norms. When platforms like Zomato and Swiggy scaled, they didn't just organise delivery — they became compliance bridges between the FSSAI, state food safety departments, and restaurants.

Platforms nudged restaurants to secure licenses, maintain hygiene ratings, train staff, and follow food handling protocols. Over time, the food industry became more transparent, more accountable and significantly safer for consumers.



How Ola & Uber Made Taxis Safer

Convenience is not really the only or first thing that app-based taxi aggregators got to us. Indian taxi services had minimal standardisation. There was no uniform mechanism to ensure functioning GPS, panic buttons, documentation checks, or customer grievance channels.

Ola and Uber changed that by digitising driver verification, enabling GPS tracking, mandating panic buttons, and creating a safety-monitoring backend. They became the operational interface between taxi drivers, transport departments and the public, resulting in far greater safety, visibility and enforcement.

Urban Company and the Formalisation of Home Services

Urban Company took a deeply fragmented house-help and handyman market and introduced structured onboarding, background verification, training, and behavioural protocols.

Today, it is one of India's strongest examples of how a platform can raise service standards by sitting 'between' providers and regulators.

Like Zomato did for food or Ola/Uber did for taxis, bus aggregators can become the strongest enforcers of safety in India.

The Intercity Bus Industry: A Complex, Multi-Stakeholder Ecosystem

The intercity bus sector is far more complex than restaurants, taxis or home services. Let's take a look:

- Vehicles (Chassis) are manufactured by OEMs and are responsible for engineering, structural design and technology.
- Bus bodies are built by coach builders. They are very critical to safety as they look after structural integrity, roll-over testing, interiors, safety installations, and electrical installations.
- Routes are licensed through state RTOs with different documentation requirements, enforcement capabilities.
- Safety certifications and type approvals come from ARAI, CIRT and other national testing bodies.
- Passengers depend on ticketing aggregators to book and travel
- Registration, state taxes, and interstate permits are defined by individual states, creating a non-uniform cost structure and compliance requirements.
- MoRTH and NHAI define toll taxes and set national highway safety, operational guidelines and infrastructure.

Fire accidents are not just engineering failures, they are systemic failures caused by poor communication across the value chain.

- Fleet owners / Operators are responsible for day to day operations, scheduling, vehicle maintenance, driver training,

This fragmentation means no single entity currently oversees passenger safety end-to-end. OEMs focus on vehicle engineering; coach builders focus on fabrication; regulators focus on certifications; fleet owners focus on business economics. Passengers rarely know who is accountable.

This is where aggregators like IntrCity SmartBus play a crucial role and why they are indispensable for the next phase of India's mobility evolution. Ticketing aggregators and service layer platforms are the most visible touch point for the passengers through which they book, track, board and experience the journey.

How Service Layer platforms like IntrCity Strengthen Safety and Accountability

1. Creating a Standardised Service Layer
IntrCity has built operational SOPs across:
- Vehicle inspection checklists
- Maintenance schedules
- Driver protocols
- Onboard hygiene
- Safety equipment audits
- Emergency communication systems.

Unlike standalone bus operators, an aggregator can enforce these standards across hundreds of vehicles, creating consistency that the unorganised industry has historically lacked.

2. Real-Time Communication Between Stakeholders
When a vehicle breaks down for any reason, the first point of alert is often the IntrCity (aggregator's) control room. IntrCity's backend can:
- Flag repeated defects to OEMs
- Notify coach builders of structural issues
- Communicate safety deviations to RTOs
- Share passenger grievance data with policymakers

IntrCity, for instance, has already been participating in cross-industry discussions advocating uniform body-building standards and stringent compliance monitoring. This feedback layer is essential because regulators often lack real-time data, while OEMs and builders are far removed from day-to-day operations.

3. Raising the Baseline for Safety Infrastructure
Platforms can institutionalise safety across the fleet by mandating:
- CCTV cameras
- Fire detection and suppression systems (FDSS)
- GPS-based monitoring
- Emergency exits
- First-aid equipment
- Onboard washrooms
- Driver Monitoring and Alert System (DMAS) and Advance Driver Assistance System (ADAS)

More importantly, aggregators can audit and verify these requirements continuously — something no government department can realistically do for tens of thousands of buses.

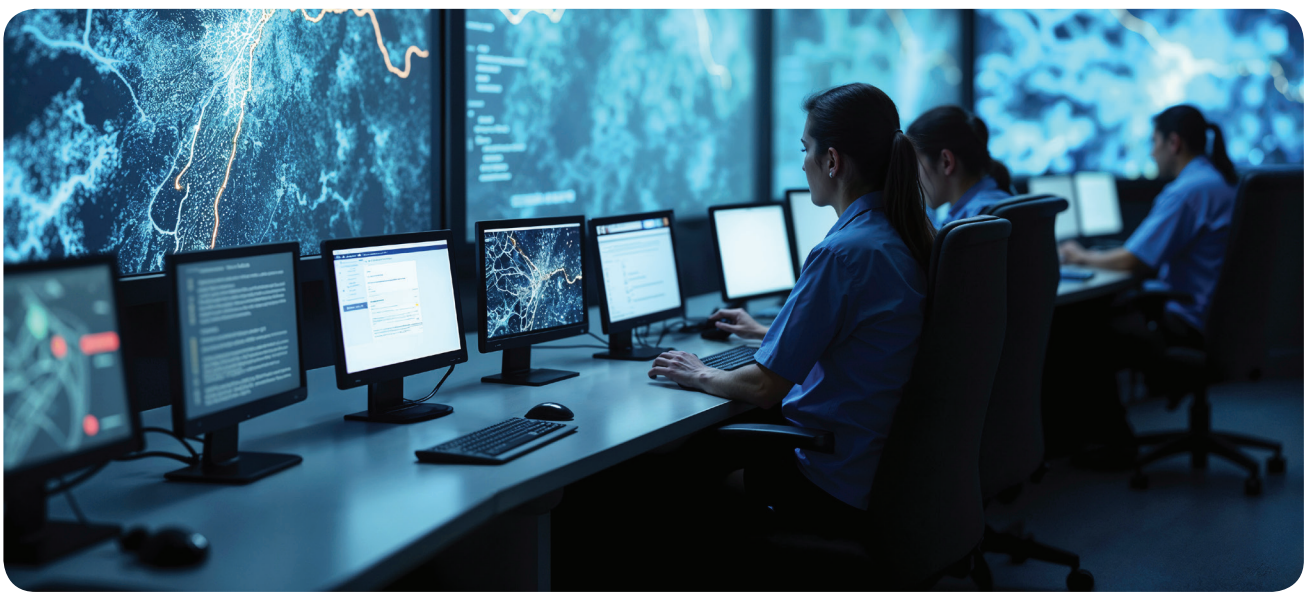
4. Centralised Driver Training and Behaviour Monitoring
Driver behaviour plays a major role in preventing fire incidents and road accidents. Aggregators allow:
- Standardised training modules
- Rest-hour enforcement
- Alcohol testing
- Speed-governor monitoring
- Reward systems for safe driving.

With telematics, aggregators can analyse patterns (idling, harsh braking, risky overtakes) and intervene quickly.

5. Acting as a Transparent Interface for Passengers
Passengers don't know OEMs or coach builders, but they do know the aggregator they book through.

This visibility allows platforms to:
- Issue safety advisories
- Publish compliance scores
- Run awareness campaigns
- Notify passengers of emergency SOPs.

That public communication layer is a crucial part of building trust.



Why Policymakers Should Collaborate More Closely with Aggregators

Government bodies like ARAI, MoRTH, SIAM, state RTOs and fire departments often work in silos. Aggregators, however, sit in the operational middle — handling real-world data, real-world passenger behaviour, and real-world vehicle conditions.

If India is to prevent the next big tragedy, policymakers must leverage aggregators as:

- Data partners (real-time defect reporting)
- Compliance partners (on-ground checks)
- Communication partners (public safety messaging)
- Standardisation partners (developing unified protocols)
- Industry feedback collectors (what fleet operators and passengers are experiencing)

Just like Zomato became a channel for food safety enforcement and Ola/Uber for taxi regulations, bus aggregators can be the single strongest enforcers of safety in a sector that desperately needs uniformity.

Conclusion: The Future of Bus Travel is a Managed Service-Layer Model

India's intercity bus sector cannot rely on fragmented accountability any longer. Fire accidents are not merely engineering failures; they are systemic failures that occur when communication breaks down between builders, regulators and operators.

The solution is not just better-built buses but better-connected ecosystems — where data flows freely, standards are consistently enforced, and customers know exactly who is responsible.

Aggregators like IntrCity SmartBus bring structure to this complexity. They operate as the safety nerve-centre of an otherwise decentralised industry. They are the eyes and ears of policymakers on the ground. And they are the trust bridge that can finally bring OEMs, coach builders, fleet owners and regulators onto the same page.

If India wants safer highways, fewer tragedies and a more dignified intercity travel experience, the country must strengthen, not sideline, the role of aggregators. They are no longer booking platforms. They are the infrastructure that makes safety possible.

About the Author

Dinesh Rathi is Senior Vice President and a founding member of IntrCity SmartBus. He defines the 'bus' as a product for which, on one hand, he works closely with the OEMs and Coach Builders and on the other, he keeps his ear to the ground listening closely to the voice of the customer. He passionately drives the journey experience, keeping safety, comfort and hygiene at the forefront.

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Raising the Safety Bar: The Critical Role of ACP Compliance in Bus Construction

BY **MOHIT GARG,** CEO & MANAGING DIRECTOR, INALCO

The recent rise in bus fire incidents across India has renewed national attention on passenger safety and the materials used in bus construction. These events have highlighted the importance of evaluating the fire performance and regulatory compliance of interior components, particularly ceiling panels, partitions, and other surfaces where fire can spread quickly.

At INALCO, we engage closely with the bus body building ecosystem as a supplier of aluminium sheets, coils, and chequered plates. We also support ACP manufacturers who supply materials to bus fabricators.

This position gives us a view into how material choices influence overall safety, and why adherence to established standards has become more important than ever.

ACP and Its Growing Role in Bus Body Construction

Aluminium Composite Panels (ACP) have been commonly used in bus interiors over the past decade. Their light weight, ease of fabrication, and clean finish make them suitable for a range of applications, including:

- Ceiling panels
- Passenger cabin partitions
- Wall lining
- Decorative interior cladding.

As a result, ACP has become an integral part of modern bus body design.

However, the safety performance of ACP depends largely on one critical parameter: the base aluminium thickness (BMT).

This specification determines the structural stability of the panel, its reaction to heat, and its behaviour during a fire. When the BMT meets prescribed standards, ACP performs reliably. When it does not, it introduces risks into the vehicle, especially in case of a fire incident.

A Concerning Trend: Thinner Aluminium Skins in ACP

In recent years, a noticeable shift has taken place within the ACP manufacturing ecosystem. To reduce costs, several products in the market now use significantly thinner aluminium skins, in some cases as low as 0.10 mm on each side.

While this may appear to offer short-term economic advantages, it introduces serious safety concerns for applications in bus interiors.

The BIS standard IS 17682:2021 clearly specifies a minimum base metal thickness of 0.25 mm (Top) and 0.25 mm (Bottom) for ACP used in such environments. A thicker, fire rated panel helps delay the advance of heat and flame, providing critical extra time for evacuation in an emergency situation.

Despite this, thinner ACP continues to be used due to cost pressures and the absence of strict enforcement. This divergence from prescribed standards reduces the panel's ability to withstand fire and compromises passenger safety.

As a result, the use of substandard ACP has become one of the material-related vulnerabilities in the bus body building ecosystem.

Non-Compliant ACP: A Hidden Risk

To strengthen material safety, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) introduced mandatory certification for ACP under IS 17682.

While the standard is now officially mandated, a significant portion of the ACP industry has yet to fully transition to compliant manufacturing. This delay has directly contributed to continued safety gaps in the bus body building sector, as non-compliant materials remain in circulation and are still installed in commercial vehicles.

Each instance of non-adherence increases the risk of unsafe products entering the supply chain. Given the high passenger density in buses, particularly in hybrid configurations with both seats

Safety Comparison: 0.15 mm vs 0.25 mm Aluminium Skin

Parameter	0.15 mm Skin ACP (FR)	0.25 mm Skin ACP (FR)
Fire Integrity	Weak - Deforms Early	Stronger - maintains barrier longer
Heat resistance	Lower	Higher
Smoke suppression	Moderate	Better (slow core exposure)
Structural strength	Weak	Strong
Impact/vibration safety	Lower	Higher
Application in buses	Not recommended	Highly recommended
Regulatory comfort	Low	High

and sleeper berths, material quality becomes more than a regulatory requirement; it becomes a critical determinant of passenger safety.

Recommendations for Bus Body Builders

To strengthen safety across the bus manufacturing ecosystem, it is essential for body builders to prioritise compliant materials and proven technologies. Based on current standards and observed industry practices, the following steps are strongly recommended:

1. Use ACP that meets IS 17682:2021

This includes adherence to the minimum base metal thickness of 0.25 mm (Top) and 0.25 mm (Bottom). Compliant ACP offers better fire performance, improved durability, and greater resistance to structural degradation.

2. Consider Pre-Painted Solid Aluminium Panels

In applications where safety and long-term performance are critical, solid aluminium panels serve as a reliable alternative. They offer:

- Improved fire resistance
- Higher structural strength
- No risk of delamination
- Uniform and predictable material behaviour

Because they do not rely on adhesives or composite cores, solid aluminium sheets provide an additional layer of safety in fire-sensitive areas.

A Call for Stronger Enforcement and Industry Awareness

Improving bus safety in India requires collective responsibility across the full ecosystem. Bus manufacturers, ACP suppliers, regulatory agencies, and government testing bodies each play a critical role in ensuring that only compliant materials enter the supply chain.

Strengthened enforcement, supported by consistent inspections and clear accountability, is essential to eliminating substandard products from the market.

With millions of passengers relying on intercity buses every day, including sleeper coaches where emergency evacuation time is limited, material quality becomes a central factor in protecting lives. The adoption of certified and compliant materials should not be viewed as an optional choice, but as a fundamental requirement for safe mobility.

At INALCO, we remain committed to working with industry partners and regulatory institutions to help raise safety standards and promote the use of approved materials. The path to safer bus travel begins with awareness, adherence to standards, and a shared commitment to prioritising passenger safety in every stage of bus construction.

About the Author

Mohit Garg is the CEO & Managing Director of Inalco and a recognised leader in India's aluminium sector. With over a decade of experience across ferrous and non-ferrous industries, he drives the company's strategic growth and industry influence. Known for his clarity of vision and decisive leadership, Mohit is shaping Inalco's role in the future of aluminium manufacturing.

IntrCity Launches SmartBus.AQI India's First Fleet of Air-Purified Intercity Buses

IntrCity SmartBus has introduced India's first fleet of air-purified intercity buses, setting a new benchmark for passenger health and safety at a time when air pollution levels across major corridors continue to rise. Branded **SmartBus.AQI**, the new service brings continuous air purification and real-time air-quality monitoring directly inside long-distance buses — a feature previously unseen in India's intercity mobility sector.

The idea emerged after IntrCity conducted a series of in-cabin air-quality tests across multiple routes. The findings revealed a concerning pattern: pollution levels inside buses were often two to three times higher than the WHO's recommended safe limits. Frequent door openings, long stoppages, and high-traffic stretches contributed to the sharp spikes in particulate matter, highlighting a problem that had largely gone unnoticed in intercity travel.

To address this, IntrCity partnered with Respirer Living Sciences, a ClimateTech company known for advanced air-quality intelligence. Together, they developed a system designed to keep in-cabin air consistently clean during long trips.

A New Standard in Bus Air Quality

Each SmartBus.AQI vehicle is equipped with high-efficiency purifiers that target PM2.5, carbon dioxide, smoke, dust, and other harmful pollutants. The filtration system uses AI-powered monitoring and a patent-pending, demand-controlled energy-recovery setup that maintains optimal air quality without compromising energy efficiency.

Pilot runs showed impressive results: PM2.5 levels stayed around 15 µg/m³ for more than 90% of the journey, matching WHO's 24-hour safe limit. This marks a significant improvement over both outdoor air quality and typical conditions inside standard intercity buses.

Passengers can monitor AQI levels in real time through onboard display screens or directly via the IntrCity mobile app.

The first phase covers some of North India's most polluted routes, including Lucknow, Kanpur, Katra, and Pathankot. Buses featuring this new system can be identified by the ".AQI" label on the IntrCity app and website.

With SmartBus.AQI, IntrCity positions itself as a pioneer in health-focused intercity mobility, setting a new standard for the industry.

IVECO BUS Secures Framework Agreement for Up to 4,000 Clean-Energy Buses in Île-de-France

Île-de-France Mobilités has signed three long-term framework agreements with IVECO BUS for the supply of up to 4,000 clean-energy buses and coaches through 2032, marking one of the largest zero- and low-emission fleet commitments in Europe.

The contracts, concluded via the Public Transport Procurement Organization (CATP), cover a full mix of technologies tailored to the region's decarbonisation roadmap. The agreements are divided into three lots: 12-metre standard electric buses, 12- and 18-metre biogas-powered buses, and 12-metre interurban biogas coaches. These vehicles will operate across the metropolitan region outside Paris, serving both dense urban corridors and intercity routes.

Deliveries are set to begin in 2026, with the initial tranche comprising 154 GX 337 ELEC buses and 415 URBANWAY CNG biogas units. The models selected reflect Île-de-France Mobilités' strategy of combining zero-emission urban transport with renewable biogas solutions for longer-distance and high-capacity applications.

For IVECO BUS, the agreements reinforce its position as a major supplier in the French and European clean-mobility market. The deal also supports local industrial capacity, with production expected to draw on the company's established French manufacturing base.

Valérie Pécresse, President of Île-de-France Mobilités, said the commitment brings the region close to completing its goal of fully transitioning its buses and coaches to clean energy. She emphasised that the partnership also strengthens France's domestic industrial ecosystem.

With this multi-year procurement programme, Île-de-France advances one of Europe's most ambitious green-fleet transitions, setting a benchmark for large-scale, technology-diverse deployment of clean public transport solutions.

Irizar Secures Multiple E-Bus Orders Across Poland as Operators Accelerate Fleet Electrification

Irizar e-mobility has strengthened its presence in Central Europe with a series of new electric bus contracts from public transport operators across Poland, underscoring the country's rapid transition toward zero-emission mobility.

In Warsaw, the manufacturer has signed a fresh agreement with MZA Varsovia for 10 ten-metre electric buses, scheduled to begin service by the end of 2026. The contract includes an option for 10 additional units, each equipped with more than 1 kW of roof-mounted solar panels to enhance onboard energy efficiency.

In Kraków, Irizar will deliver 22 new 12-metre buses to MPK Cracovia in mid-2026. Once deployed, the operator's Irizar fleet will increase to 26 vehicles, complementing the four units introduced in 2023 and reinforcing the city's strategy to expand sustainable urban mobility.

Further south, Bielsko-Biała's municipal transport authority has ordered 12 new 12-metre vehicles, slated for delivery in the first half of 2026. These additions will modernise and electrify the city's core routes.

A major contract has also been secured with GZM Katowice, which has placed an order for 31 buses. The fleet will consist of 16 articulated 18-metre vehicles and 15 standard 12-metre models, supporting operations across several cities including Katowice, Sosnowiec, □wierklaniec and Gliwice.

Rounding off the series of wins, MPK Nowy S□cz has contracted Irizar for five ten-metre buses that will enter service in early 2026.

Together, these orders signal growing confidence in Irizar's technology and highlight Poland's accelerating investment in zero-emission public transport.

Karsan Expands Timişoara's Electric Bus Fleet with 30 New e-ATA Vehicles

Karsan has strengthened its position in Romania's public transport landscape with a new contract to supply 30 ten-metre e-ATA electric buses to the city of Timi□oara, alongside the installation of 45 charging stations. Valued at approximately 17 million EUR, the order marks another significant step in the city's fleet electrification strategy. Deliveries are scheduled for completion by 2026.

The new buses will complement Timi□oara's existing fleet of 44 e-ATA 18-metre articulated buses already in operation, reinforcing the municipality's commitment to sustainable mobility. With this latest order, Romania now operates more than 450 Karsan electric buses, reflecting the manufacturer's strong foothold in the region.

Karsan CEO Okan Baş noted that Timişoara's repeat order demonstrates the city's confidence in the company's technology and service capabilities. He added that the incoming 10-metre models will deepen the city's transition to clean transport and contribute directly to Romania's broader sustainability goals.

Karsan's e-ATA 10-metre variant, the largest in its offering, features a 400 kWh battery pack and a fully low-floor architecture, supporting accessibility and efficient passenger flow. The model is engineered for metropolitan routes, offering high energy capacity and modern design suited to intensive daily operations.

With expanding partnerships across multiple Romanian cities, Karsan continues to play a central role in the country's shift toward electric public transportation, backed by a growing national fleet and increasing municipal adoption.

Karsan Strengthens Turkey's E-Bus Transition with New Fleet Delivery in Mersin

Karsan has delivered 17 units of its 12-metre e-ATA electric buses to the Mersin Metropolitan Municipality, marking a major boost to the city's ongoing shift toward clean and modern public transport. The delivery is part of a joint project between the European Union and the municipality under the EU-funded IPA II programme.

The handover ceremony took place at the MEŞOT Public Transportation Complex, attended by Mersin Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Vahap Seçer, senior officials from the EU Delegation to Turkey, representatives from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Karsan leadership including Domestic Sales Deputy General Manager Muzaffer Arpacıoğlu.

Arpacıoğlu highlighted the alignment between Mersin's urban mobility vision and Karsan's ambition to stay ahead in next-generation transport. He also noted that Karsan accounts for 84 percent of Türkiye's electric bus exports to Europe, but added that leading the electrification journey domestically remains the company's proudest achievement.

The 12-metre e-ATA is one of Karsan's flagship electric models. Equipped with a 396 kWh battery, it delivers a range of up to 400 kilometres and can be fully charged in roughly 2.5 to 3 hours. The bus features a fully low-floor architecture, offers capacity for up to 70 passengers, and is designed to support high-frequency, high-demand urban routes.

With this deployment, Mersin strengthens its position as one of Türkiye's most forward-looking cities in sustainable mobility. The new fleet is expected to enhance passenger comfort, reduce emissions, and support long-term transport modernisation across the metropolitan region.

Carousel Buses Expands Fleet with Nine New Alexander Dennis Enviro200 Single Deckers

Carousel Buses, part of the Go-Ahead Group, has taken delivery of nine new Alexander Dennis Enviro200 vehicles, strengthening regional services across Buckinghamshire and Berkshire. The order includes six 8.9-metre midibuses and three 11.8-metre single deckers, seating up to 30 and 43 passengers respectively.

All vehicles feature dedicated spaces for wheelchair users and buggies, along with modern accessibility tools such as audio-visual next-stop announcements. The new additions also incorporate USB charging ports and updated passenger information systems to enhance the travel experience.

Four of the shorter 8.9-metre buses have been finished in a custom purple livery for Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead-supported routes 3, 3A, 4 and 9, serving communities in and around Maidenhead. The three larger 11.8-metre buses will be deployed on routes 37 and 10/10A, connecting the Borough with High Wycombe and Staines. The remaining two midibuses, delivered in Carousel's standard red livery, will operate across the operator's Carousel County network.

Each Enviro200 is equipped with Alexander Dennis's SmartPack efficiency technology, combining stop-start operation, e-cooling and smart auxiliary load management to reduce emissions and improve fuel performance.

Mark Ballam, National Account Manager at Alexander Dennis, highlighted the ongoing collaboration with the Go-Ahead Group, noting that 74 low-emission buses have been delivered to the operator this year. He added that the new Enviro200 models offer state-of-the-art comfort for passengers and ease of operation for Carousel's drivers and engineering teams.

The fleet upgrade forms part of Go-Ahead's wider investment in modern, low-emission vehicles across its UK operations.

Mexico Orders 53 Volvo Electric Buses Ahead of 2026 FIFA World Cup

Guadalajara is set to significantly expand its electric bus fleet, with the state of Jalisco placing an order for 53 Volvo electric buses to be deployed by December 2025. The move comes as the region prepares for increased international travel during the 2026 FIFA World Cup, where Mexico will serve as one of the host nations.

The order features a mix of high-floor, low-floor, and articulated buses built on Volvo's latest electric platforms. It includes 31 Luminus high-floor buses on the Volvo BZR chassis, 12 Luminos low-floor models on the BZL platform, and 10 Volvo 7800 Electric articulated units. All buses will be manufactured locally in Mexico.

The vehicles are designed primarily for overnight charging, with daytime top-up capability via CS2 connections. While this project focuses on vehicle supply rather than a turnkey package, Volvo will provide nationwide maintenance and uptime support through its service network.

Mexico's shift toward clean mobility is accelerating, driven by its commitment to allow only zero-emission bus and truck sales from 2040. According to E-Bus Radar data from September 2025, Mexico operates 849 electric buses, with Yutong holding a dominant market share.

Volvo has a longstanding presence in Guadalajara, having supplied the articulated fleet that launched the city's first BRT corridor 15 years ago. For the new project, extensive field tests were conducted, with Volvo's electric models demonstrating superior efficiency and range compared to competitors.

Rafael Kisel, Managing Director, Volvo Buses Mexico, said the project reinforces Guadalajara's position as a leader in electromobility and highlighted the role of Volvo's proven product durability and service network in securing the order.

BasiGo Expands Nairobi EV Charging Network with Three New Depots

BasiGo has strengthened Nairobi's electric bus ecosystem with the launch of three new charging depots in partnership with Kenya Power. The sites, located in Taj Mall (Pipeline), Komarock, and Riruta, significantly increase the city's e-bus charging capacity. A fourth location in Juja is expected to go live by the end of December.

Each depot is outfitted with high-capacity DC fast chargers equipped with GB/T and CCS2 connectors. With sequential charging capabilities, the facilities can support up to 100 buses per day, reducing downtime for operators and enabling consistent service delivery during peak hours. All sites utilize the national e-mobility electricity tariff and tap into surplus nighttime grid capacity, supporting Kenya's broader demand-management strategy.

BasiGo has also opened a dedicated service and customer support centre at the Taj Mall depot. The facility will provide maintenance for buses equipped with CATL batteries and offer on-ground technical assistance, ensuring improved fleet uptime as more electric buses enter operation.

Moses Nderitu, Managing Director, BasiGo Kenya, said the expansion marks a major step in building the backbone of Kenya's future public transport infrastructure. The increase in depot capacity, he noted, gives operators the assurance needed to shift to electric mobility at scale.

Kenya Power's Managing Director and CEO, Dr. Joseph Siror, emphasized that the utility is preparing the national grid to meet rising EV demand. He said the collaboration with BasiGo demonstrates how coordinated action can accelerate Kenya's clean-mobility transition.

With these additions, BasiGo continues to operate the largest dedicated DC fast-charging network for electric buses in Kenya, supporting East Africa's most advanced e-bus fleet.

Hyundai Motor Selected as First Electric Bus Operator in Bali

Hyundai Motor has won a major contract to supply electric buses to the Indonesian island of Bali, marking the first international deployment of its County Electric model. The order follows a competitive tender issued by the Global Green Growth Institute on behalf of the Indonesian government, reinforcing the country's push toward cleaner public transport systems.

The County Electric, introduced in 2020, has until now operated exclusively in South Korea. The mini bus platform accommodates between 15 and 33 passengers and is equipped with a 128 kWh battery offering a range of up to 303 kilometres. Hyundai states that the battery can be fully recharged in approximately 72 minutes using a DC fast charger, supporting high availability for daily urban operations.

The new fleet will be integrated into Bali's public transport network, one of Indonesia's busiest tourist corridors. Hyundai views the deployment as a strategic step in expanding sustainable mobility in Southeast Asia.

"It is meaningful that we will provide electric buses to Bali, a destination visited by many tourists from around the world. We plan to help build environmentally friendly transportation systems in major cities across Indonesia," said Kim Sung-nam, Head of Hyundai Motors Asia-Pacific HQ.

Hyundai's footprint in Indonesia has been expanding steadily. The automaker supplied County Electric buses to Surabaya in late 2024 and has partnered with multiple charging operators to deploy more than 400 EV chargers across the country.

The Bali project further strengthens Hyundai's position as Indonesia accelerates electrification of public mobility across key cities and tourist hubs.

Wrightbus Confirms Plans for Hydrogen Bus With 1,000 km Range

Wrightbus has reaffirmed its plans to enter the long-distance zero-emission segment with a new hydrogen fuel-cell coach, now under development at its Ballymena headquarters. The company expects to launch the tri-axle model within the next 18 months, positioning it as a high-range alternative to diesel coaches.

Engineered for intercity and long-haul applications, the hydrogen coach is projected to deliver a range of around 1,000 kilometres on a single fill. This places its operational capability on par with conventional diesel vehicles, addressing a key limitation of battery-electric coaches in markets where charging infrastructure or turnaround time restricts deployment.

The announcement follows Wrightbus' renewed push into the coach market through the Contour platform. Earlier this year, Bus Éireann ordered 39 Contour units for school and urban transport, signalling strong institutional demand for the brand's expanding product range.

Hydrogen development at Wrightbus is supported by its partnership with Symbio, the fuel-cell technology specialist. Symbio has supplied four 75 kW StackPacks for the manufacturer's 300 kW hydrogen coach demonstrator showcased at the Cenex Expo. This collaboration underpins the powertrain architecture for the upcoming production model.

Wrightbus Unveils Second-Generation Electroliner with Major Efficiency Gains

Wrightbus has launched the second generation of its Electroliner battery-electric bus, introducing significant upgrades in efficiency, range, safety and lifecycle performance. The new model is the result of a multi-million-pound development programme and delivers an estimated 11% reduction in total cost of ownership compared to the first generation.

The Generation 2 Electroliner is now recognised as the world's most efficient electric bus, reclaiming the title previously taken by Alexander Dennis. Wrightbus has already secured orders for more than 900 units, with nearly 1,100 expected to be in service across the UK and Ireland by the end of 2026.

Available in two formats, the single-deck Electroliner Kite and the double-deck StreetDeck Electroliner, the new models feature CATL's latest LFP battery technology. The single-deck variant can be specified with either a 528 kWh or 442 kWh battery, while the double-deck uses the 442 kWh pack. Ranges reach up to 375 miles for the single deck and around 275 miles for the double deck. Fast-charging capability of up to 380 kW enables charging times as low as 75 minutes, and the battery warranty has been extended to 15 years.

The upgraded Voith VEDS1.5 driveline and revised HVAC system improve energy efficiency and meet Transport for London's latest standards. Safety performance has been enhanced through compliance with GB38032-2020 thermal stability requirements, addressing fire and explosion risks associated with thermal runaway.

With enhanced engineering, lower running costs and high operational range, Wrightbus expects the Generation 2 platform to support its ambition of capturing 38% of the UK and Irish bus market by 2026.

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