

A More Connected Washington: Let's Keep Investing in Our Intercity Bus Program



Transportation Choices

Connecting Rural Communities

All Washingtonians deserve to be able to get where they need to go. However, many residents in rural areas, particularly seniors, and people with disabilities, are unable to drive. That's where intercity buses come in. **The Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program links small towns and rural areas to local bus networks and cities. It helps people travel to see friends and relatives, access vital health services at major hospitals, and even commute to work.**

The Travel Washington Program Today



Established in 2007, Travel Washington is a partnership between the Washington State Department of Transportation and private transportation companies. The program offers

four regionally branded routes: the Apple Line (Omak to Ellensburg), the Dungeness Line (Port Angeles to Seattle), the Gold Line (Kettle Falls to Spokane), and the Grape Line (Walla Walla to Pasco). These routes, operated through a four-year contract with WSDOT, provide over 30,000 essential transportation trips per year for rural communities in the state.

Beyond these four routes, Washington's intercity transportation network is interwoven with services provided by Greyhound, FlixBus, Amtrak, the Washington State Ferries, local transit agencies, and non-profit mobility providers, although private services have declined since the pandemic.



76% of Washingtonians live within 10 miles of an intercity bus stop, but only 40% have access to frequent local transit to reach those routes.

We must invest in both intercity buses *and* rural mobility.



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Seizing the Moment for Better Intercity Bus Service

Half of our state's residents rely on public transportation, and a quarter lack driver's licenses. In light of flat federal support and private operators exiting the market, **state-supported intercity bus programs are vital for connecting rural communities to essential services and opportunities.**

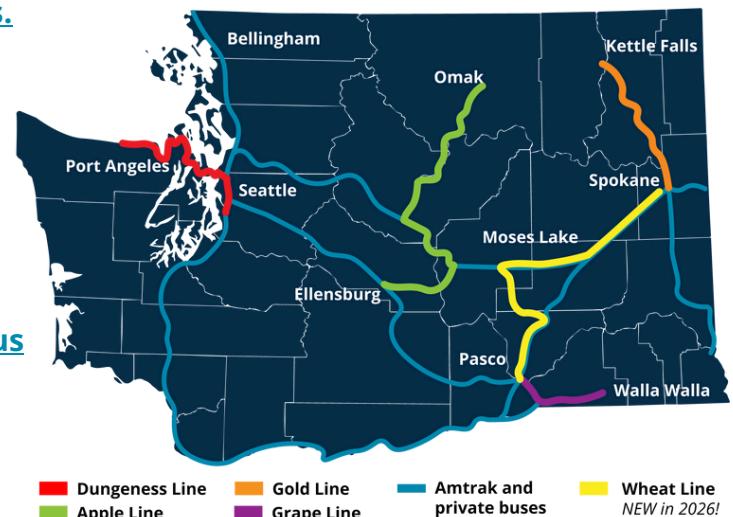
To better understand where investment could make the greatest impact, WSDOT updated its intercity bus study in 2024. Top priorities for increased funding included new routes from Ellensburg to Pasco and Pasco to Spokane, along with increased frequency and/or extensions for existing services.

Building on this planning work, the Legislature took a meaningful step forward in 2025 by approving \$5 million in one-time state funding, tied to World Cup-related travel, to strengthen intercity bus service. **This one-time state investment is already making a difference, boosting frequencies, stabilizing service, and launching the new Wheat Line from Pasco to Spokane via Moses Lake.**

Washington is well-positioned to keep expanding its network and lead the nation in intercity bus transportation. Investing in our intercity buses would support state priorities, including enhanced mobility for seniors and improved access to healthcare, as well as address demographic shifts such as rural migration. As privately operated routes become less reliable, Washington's state-run program would offer a much-needed alternative.

Implementing WSDOT's priority recommendations for expanding Travel Washington would benefit an estimated 68% more households without a car in the state, and it could increase ridership on Washington's intercity travel network by 1.56 to 1.75 times. The time to act is now.

WASHINGTON'S INTERCITY BUS NETWORK



What We Need

We're advocating for a sustained state investment of \$10 million per biennium to expand and improve our intercity bus programs to serve more people in rural Washington. This vital funding would cover WSDOT's contract management, safety and accessibility improvements, facility upgrades, data collection, service planning, and a dedicated staff position to manage the program. In the coming legislative session, Transportation Choices Coalition will work with our elected leaders to prioritize sustained investment in our intercity bus program.

Learn more and take action at transportationchoices.org/intercitybus

Transportation Choices Coalition advocates for safe, sustainable, and equitable transportation for all residents in Washington State. For over 30 years, it has brought together businesses, labor, transit agencies, transit riders, and elected leaders to win transformative policies and funding.