

Motorcoaches are the 17-Cent Solution

Protecting an investment in mobility—it's only common sense.

At a time when multi-billion dollar bailouts of Wall Street financial institutions and other industries have dominated headlines, bus operators should be excited about the prospect of telling their Members of Congress that 17 cents goes a long way with motorcoaches.

The current 17-cents-per-gallon partial federal fuel tax exemption is more aptly termed an investment. Maintaining it as part of the 2009 Highway Bill is critical to expanding the role of independent bus operators in helping to complete the transportation network.

It allows bus operators to fill in mobility gaps across the country. It helps us to provide bus service that links to other intermodal transportation connections. It pays priceless societal dividends by removing cars from the road, reducing energy consumption and slashing carbon dioxide emissions. Each full motorcoach has the potential of removing 55 autos from the highway.

Motorcoaches provide 206.6 passenger miles per gallon (MPG), the highest among all modes of transportation. Commuter rail gets 92.4 passenger MPG, transit buses achieve 31.4 passenger MPG, domestic air carriers achieve 44 passenger MPG, personal automobiles averaged 27.2 passenger MPG, and hybrid cars 46 passenger MPG.

For more than 14 million rural U.S. residents, motorcoaches are the only available mode of public intercity transportation service, going where air and rail do not. There are five times as many motorcoach terminals nationwide as there are airports, and six times as many bus terminals as there are intercity rail terminals.

Persons who are mobility-impaired rely on motorcoaches for accessible transportation.

Students and seniors use motorcoaches for educational trips, sports outings, and travel to cultural and historical destinations. And business executives use motorcoaches to commute.

No wonder motorcoaches account for 751 million passenger trips annually, moving more people than the airlines do in some years and moving more people in two weeks than Amtrak does all year.

Better yet, given how motorcoaches infuse tourism dollars into everywhere they go, every state is a bus state. One motorcoach spending one night at a destination generates as much as \$11,660 for that local economy in meals, lodging, and other spending.

Motorcoach traveler and tourist demand generates more than \$55 billion annually in economic transactions. The demand for goods and services created by motorcoach travel, combined with new motorcoach sales and industry equipment purchases, generates employment for 792,700 people.

With the economic climate still uncertain and Members of Congress seeking answers on how to solve America's 21st century transportation needs without spending money the government doesn't have, the bus industry has a wonderful opportunity to show how we're available today as the cost-effective answer – ready to go anywhere there's pavement, and still the most cost-efficient way to provide mobility to those most in need.

Motorcoaches provide that cost-effective mobility to millions of Americans at virtually no cost to taxpayers, while other transportation sectors receive billions in annual federal subsidies. Motorcoaches account for a mere 6 cents in federal subsidies per passenger trip, while public transits cost taxpayers 77 cents per passenger trip, commercial air carriers cost taxpayers \$4.32 per passenger trip, and Amtrak costs taxpayers \$46.06 per passenger trip.

Motorcoaches stimulate economic development, provide mobility through a vast network of services, protect passengers as the safest surface transportation mode, and help preserve the environment as the greenest transportation choice. The partial federal fuel tax exemption of 17 cents per gallon of diesel fuel for motorcoaches is an investment that produces benefits for society yielding a far greater return than it costs.

The partial fuel-tax exemption is an investment in moving America. Motorcoaches are the travel solution available today. A dime, a nickel and two pennies are an investment with far greater return in total benefits to society. The motorcoach fuel tax partial-waiver investment is 17 cents of common sense. ■

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