

Top 100 Transit Bus Fleets Survey: Fleets Focus on Attracting Riders with Service Enhancements



King County Metro

While ridership continues to grow across the industry, many transit agencies are focused on ways to grow millennial usage, including the addition of USB charging stations, Wi-Fi, and real-time bus arrival technologies, as well as targeted advertising and marketing campaigns.

BY ALEX ROMAN, Managing Editor

With public transportation usage growing around the nation, many agencies are looking at ways to attract millennials, who are looking for more options and driving less and less, according to respondents of *METRO*'s Top 100 Bus Fleets survey.

The **Metropolitan Transportation Authority's (MTA) New York City Transit/MTA Bus Co.** tops this year's list with 5,759 total vehicles. Showing some movement this year, the **Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority** (2,378), **New Jersey Transit** (2,233), **Seattle's King County Metro Transit** (1,882) and the **Toronto Transit Commission** (1,869) round out this year's top five, which collectively totals 14,121 vehicles, or 21% of this year's overall 66,056 total vehicles — down slightly compared to 2014, although last year's list ranked the Top 110 bus fleets.

With 404 total vehicles, **Halifax Metro Transit** lands right in the center at No. 50, while Massachusetts' **Pioneer Valley Transit Authority** rounds out the Top 100 with 183 total vehicles reported. Although there are technically no new additions to this year's list, **Oceanside, Calif.'s North County Transit District** (No. 92) and **Concord, Calif.'s Central Contra Costa Transit Authority** (No. 98-Tie) make their way from the Top 110 last year to this year's Top 100.

SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVES

Despite less transit agencies participating than last year, this year's alternatively-fueled vehicle totals increased by 393 to 17,357 vehicles, with natural gas still being the go-to fuel, followed closely by hybrid-electrics, making up 53% and 43% of the total vehicles reported, respectively.

When asked which sustainable sources they are looking at down the road, transit agencies are reporting they are interested in vehicles using either electricity or hydrogen to add to their fleets.

Meanwhile, public transportation agencies continue to take the lead in sustainability in the communities they serve, with several launching new alt-fuel vehicle initiatives.

In Santa Monica, Calif., No. 95 **Big Blue Bus (BBB)** became one of the country's first municipal transit authorities to convert its fleet to renewable natural gas. Launching in July, BBB worked with **Clean Energy Fuels Corp.** to transition its supply of liquefied natural gas (LNG) to the company's Redeem™ renewable LNG, which is non-fracked methane harvested from organic waste in landfills.

With the announcement, BBB >>>

unveiled a new bus ad campaign called “Bigger, Bluer, Skies” to emphasize the lower emissions and sustainability of their new fuel type.

Indianapolis’ **IndyGo** (No. 85) found an interesting way to introduce electric vehicles to its fleet, by contracting with **Complete Coach Works** to add 21 refurbished electric buses by the end of this year, featuring the company’s Zero Emission Propulsion System, which will make it the largest electric bus fleet in the industry.

The first of the new electric vehicles began running in early June, with performance exceeding 130 miles on a single four-hour charge of the buses’ 12 Lithium-Ion batteries.

In addition to the electric buses, **IndyGo** is currently installing a one megawatt solar panel system on its garage roof, thanks to a \$3 million State of Good Repair Grant. Once installed, the solar panels will help offset the cost to charge the electric buses, further reducing operating costs.

Meanwhile, King County Metro introduced its first completely new, state-of-the-art **New Flyer** electric trolleys in nearly 30 years in August.

The first five of 174 replacement trolley buses went into service August 19,

with the remaining trolleys phased in over the next two years. The new trolleys will use up to 30% less electricity than the current fleet and will significantly reduce operating costs.

Additionally, King County is expecting delivery of three 40-foot prototype heavy-duty **Proterra** electric buses with fast-charging batteries in the next four to six months.

ADDING MILLENNIALS

The millennial generation, those born between 1982 and 2004, are the largest generation in history and the most diverse. This generation is having a great impact on today’s and tomorrow’s local transportation system because they are driving less and open to exploring multiple transportation options, according to several reports.

When asked what they are doing to get more millennials on-board their transit systems, many agencies reported adding Wi-Fi and USB charging stations, as well as real-time bus information, which is available via the agency’s website or apps like **NextBus**. Many are also engaging riders via social media, via **Twitter** and **Facebook**, to provide information on delays or other issues the agency may be experiencing throughout the day.

In Washington state, **Spokane Transit** (No. 77) reported that they are tailoring radio and television ads for both the millennial and Baby Boomer generations, as well as holding events downtown targeted at each, including concerts, live painting demonstrations and barber shop quartets. The agency is also working with local schools to promote bus ridership, with efforts including demonstrations on both how to use the transit system and how to load bikes onto the vehicles.

Many other agencies, including N.Y.’s **Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority** (No. 46) and West Covina, Calif.’s **Foothill Transit** (No. 63-Tie), report that working with local colleges and universities to provide either free or discounted rides in and around campus has been a beneficial way to grow millennial ridership.


Other initiatives reported include rebranding to increase visibility in the communities they serve and exploring relationships with Transportation Network Companies, including **Uber** and **Lyft**.

THE NUMBERS

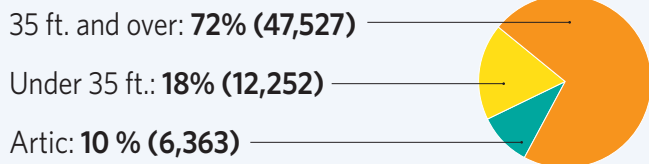
A closer look at the numbers reveals 47,527 buses are 35 feet or longer, making up 72% of the total vehicles reported, with 12,252, or 18%, of vehicles 35 feet and under.

Nearly 79% of the vehicles reported are fixed-route, with 13% of that number contracted, while demand-response vehicles make up nearly 15% of the total, with 66% of that number contracted.

Overall, this year’s respondents report that they intend to order 5,492 vehicles in the next year, down slightly from last year’s number. A good number of those planned purchases include electric buses, though on a small scale. When asked who those new purchases will be with, **New Flyer**, **Gillig**, **BYD** and **Proterra** were the suppliers most mentioned.

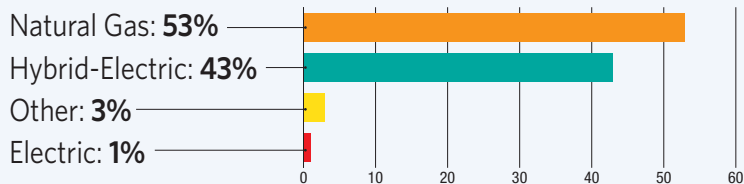
With all the budget and staff cuts going on around the nation, **METRO** would especially like to thank all of the transit agencies for participating this year. If you know a fleet that belongs on this list or have suggestions on how to improve our future lists, please let us know. 

FLEET MIX



Buses 35 feet and over remain the most popular choice, with 47,527 total buses, followed by buses 35 feet and under and articulated vehicles, with 12,252 and 6,363, respectively. This year’s numbers are very similar to last year’s, with articulated vehicles reported growing by 508 vehicles and the number of under 35-foot vehicles shrinking by 1,958 vehicles.

ALTERNATIVE FUELS



With 9,220 vehicles, natural gas is the environmentally-friendly fuel of choice, followed closely by hybrid-electric vehicles with 7,493 vehicles. While cited as the most popular alternative in the future, all-electric vehicles make up only 1% of the total vehicles reported, with other fuel types, including biodiesel and propane, collectively making up 3% of the total.

TOP 100 Transit Bus Fleets

2015	2014	Agency	35 ft. and under	Over 35 ft.	Artic.	2015 Total	2014 +/-
1	1	MTA New York City Transit/MTA Bus Co. New York City	0	4,960	799	5,759	-1023
2	3	Metro Los Angeles	50	1,975	353	2,378	18
3	2	New Jersey Transit Corp. Newark, N.J.	39	2,109	85	2,233	-275
4	8	King County DOT/Metro Transit Seattle	481	500	901	1,882	47
5	6	Toronto Transit Commission Toronto	0	1,735	134	1,869	19
6	4	Pace Suburban Bus Chicago	1433	424	0	1,857	-103
7	7	Coast Mountain Bus Co. Vancouver, B.C.	505	1,094	251	1,850	7
8	9	Chicago Transit Authority Chicago	0	1,523	306	1,829	-
9	10	Societe de Transport de Montreal Montreal	102	1,464	257	1,823	-2
10	11	Washington Area Metropolitan Transit Authority Washington, D.C.	41	1,419	65	1,525	-20
11	5	Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority Philadelphia	40	1,248	174	1,462	-358
12	13	Metropolitan Transit Authority of Harris County Houston	202	1,163	70	1,435	37
13	12	Regional Transportation District Denver	479	816	126	1,421	20
14	14	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Boston	0	989	101	1,090	-
15	16	Valley Metro Phoenix	284	676	101	1,061	10
16	15	BC Transit Victoria, B.C.	407	645	0	1,052	-
17	17	OC Transpo Ottawa, Ontario	88	577	359	1,024	-
18	18	Calgary Transit Calgary, Alberta	155	765	91	1,011	8
19	19	San Francisco Municipal Railway San Francisco	112	648	183	943	-
20	20	Edmonton Transit System Edmonton, Alberta	49	847	33	929	8
21	21	Metro Transit Minneapolis	0	736	169	905	-14

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2015	2014	Agency	35 ft. and under	Over 35 ft.	Artic.	2015 Total	2014 +/-
22	28	Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada Las Vegas	425	283	125	833	97
23	22	Miami-Dade Transit Authority Miami	77	713	25	815	-
24	24	Orange County Transportation Authority Orange, Calif.	267	501	36	804	-
25	26	MTS Bus Operations San Diego	240	557	86	797	15
26	25	Maryland Transit Administration Baltimore	0	750	42	792	-
27	29	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority Atlanta	279	502	0	781	62
28	27	Dallas Area Rapid Transit Dallas	111	645	0	756	1
29	30	Port Authority of Allegheny County Pittsburgh	44	544	126	714	13
30	23	Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District Portland, Ore.	35	620	0	655	-157
31	34	Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transportation Detroit	493	142	2	637	92
32	31	Utah Transit Authority Salt Lake City	214	395	0	609	-
33	33	Winnipeg Transit System Winnipeg, Manitoba	34	540	14	588	18
34	32	AC Transit Oakland, Calif.	104	396	85	585	9
35	47	Broward County Transit Pompano, Fla.	241	301	31	573	144
36	37	CTTRANSIT Hartford, Conn.	73	430	51	554	74
37	35	Delaware Transit Corp. Wilmington, Del.	359	172	0	531	9
38	38	Department of Transportation Services Honolulu	36	372	111	519	-
39	40	GO Transit Toronto	0	510	0	510	44
40	46	Capital Metro Austin, Texas	196	261	22	479	49
41	38	VIA Metropolitan Transit San Antonio	0	460	16	476	-
42	39	Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority Cleveland	88	345	41	474	-

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43	41	MiWay Mississauga, Ontario	36	358	69	463	
44	43	Detroit Department of Transportation Detroit	0	445	0	445	-
45	45	Reseau de transport de Longueuil Longueuil, Quebec	0	413	29	442	11
46	42	Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority Rochester, N.Y.	187	223	30	440	-16
47	44	Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority San Jose, Calif.	67	331	40	438	-
48	49	Milwaukee County Transit System Milwaukee	8	407	0	415	-
49	53	Nassau Inter-County Express Garden City, N.Y.	100	310	0	410	15
50	59	Halifax Metro Transit Halifax, Nova Scotia	63	299	42	404	58
51	51	South West Ohio Regional Transit Authority Cincinnati	55	343	5	403	2
52	50	Charlotte Area Transit System Charlotte, N.C.	129	272	0	401	6
52	51	Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority Buffalo, N.Y.	91	310	0	401	-
54	55	Metro St. Louis	103	273	15	391	12
55	57	Brampton Transit Brampton, Ontario	0	338	48	386	27
56	56	Sun Tran Tucson, Ariz.	132	242	0	374	7
57	54	COTA Central Ohio Transit Agency Columbus, Ohio	96	261	0	357	-23
58	58	Los Angeles Department of Transportation Los Angeles	253	103	0	356	4
59	60	Montgomery County Transit Rockville, Md.	190	153	0	343	2
60	61	Societe de Transport de l'Outaouais City Gatineau, Quebec	31	308	0	339	-
60	61	Community Transit Everett, Wash.	67	108	164	339	-
62	66	Suffolk County Transit Yaphank, N.Y.	318	19	0	337	38
63	63	Foothill Transit West Covina, Calif.	15	285	30	330	-1

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2015	2014	Agency	35 ft. and under	Over 35 ft.	Artic.	2015 Total	2014 +/-
63	64	Westchester County Department of Transportation Mt. Vernon, N.Y.	21	231	78	330	-
65	65	Transit Authority of River City Louisville, Ky.	132	193	0	325	6
66	65	LYNX Orlando, Fla.	68	221	10	299	-
67	68	San Mateo County Transit District San Mateo, Calif.	4	237	55	296	-
68	71	Fairfax Connector, FCDOT Fairfax, Va.	79	204	0	283	5
69	74	Jacksonville Transportation Authority Jacksonville, Fla.	155	127	0	282	14
70	48	Sound Transit Seattle	0	123	157	280	-136
70	70	Metropolitan Bus Authority San Juan, P.R.	43	237	0	280	-
72	69	Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority Dayton, Ohio	93	186	0	279	10
73	78	Kansas City Area Transportation Authority Kansas City, Mo.	103	166	0	269	13
74	72	Omnitrans San Bernardino, Calif.	98	156	14	268	3
74	74	Hampton Roads Transit Hampton, Va.	150	118	0	268	-
76	76	Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority Nashville, Tenn.	107	116	42	265	-
77	80	Spokane Transit Authority Spokane, Wash.	149	96	13	258	7
78	79	Sun Metro El Paso, Texas	110	144	0	254	-
79	73	Capital District Transportation Authority Albany, N.Y.	49	201	0	250	19
80	83	Long Beach Transit Long Beach, Calif.	0	236	13	249	12
81	81	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority Providence, R.I.	30	210	0	240	-
81	81	GRTC Transit System Richmond, Va.	104	136	0	240	-
83	77	Central New York Regional Transportation Authority Syracuse, N.Y.	83	154	0	237	25
83	83	Durham Region Transit Whitby, Ontario	39	198	0	237	-

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2015	2014	Agency	35 ft. and under	Over 35 ft.	Artic.	2015 Total	2014 +/-
85	86	Indianapolis Public Transportation Corp. (IndyGo) Indianapolis	75	142	17	234	6
86	85	Madison Metro Transit Madison, Wis.	17	215	0	232	1
87	88	ABQ Ride Albuquerque	70	133	24	227	-
88	90	Hamilton Street Railway Hamilton, Ontario	0	196	25	221	-
89	86	Metro Regional Transit Authority Akron, Ohio	106	108	6	220	8
89	89	Sacramento Regional Transit District Sacramento, Calif.	21	199	0	220	-5
91	94	Hillsborough Area Regional Transit Authority Tampa, Fla.	26	191	0	217	22
92	105	North County Transit District Oceanside, Calif.	87	120	0	207	46



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2015	2014	Agency	35 ft. and under	Over 35 ft.	Artic.	2015 Total	2014 +/-
93	91	Regional Transit Authority New Orleans	97	93	16	206	-
94	92	Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority Clearwater, Fla.	82	123	0	205	2
95	94	Big Blue Bus Santa Monica, Calif.	22	153	28	203	8
96	96	London Transit London, Ontario	4	184	10	198	6
97	100	Fort Worth Transportation Authority Fort Worth, Texas	77	107	8	192	14
98	98	Mass Transportation Authority Flint, Mich.	53	131	0	184	-
98	101	Central Contra Costa Transit Authority Concord, Calif.	101	83	0	184	9
100	99	Pioneer Valley Transit Authority Springfield, Mass.	73	106	4	183	-

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