

BULLETIN October 2006

Many transportation reformers, especially in areas with little or no public or private transit, believe that better bus service makes more sense (especially economically) than Light Rail or Streetcar transit. Their concerns are centered around the up front cost of laying tracks in the street, and the political difficulties they fear from same.

We call this the Bus Trap.

Following are some reasons we consider Rail Superior to Bus for all but connector, special event, neighborhood, rural and wilderness service – and sometimes for these too:

- Greater – several times greater – fuel/energy economy per passenger-mile, with proportional reductions in pollution and grime. Add to this the fact that roads, unlike rails, are themselves made in part from petroleum products
- More versatile interlock with renewably generated energy
- Freedom from most traffic snarls, leading to greater on-time performance and peace of mind
- No tire-disposal problems (this one's bigger than you think)
- Promotion of “Smart Growth” and Transit Oriented Development through a sense of right-of-way permanence. This leads to a reduction in sprawl and big savings in the cost of infrastructure components per person or business
- A smoother and quieter ride
- More efficient use of land and materials per passenger mile; in other words, you need much less of each
- More efficient use of personnel. One train driver can haul a lot more people than can one bus driver
- Better security. No town or city can afford to put an officer on every bus, but they can put one on every train, freeing the operator to concentrate on running said train

- Rail lines and rolling stock require less maintenance and last much longer than do roads and road vehicles
- Rail tends to promote the increased use of neighborhood transit (lots of little busses) and other non-automotive forms of transportation
- People just like trains

Busses and vans are important, but are the smaller bones. Trains in all their forms are the spine and limbs. The notion of up front cost is irrelevant except in terms of return on investment. Bite the bullet once, get those tracks in, and the results will pay us back over and over for generations to come.

We at Rails Inc are not anti-bus. We're anti-bus-only.

[Contact us](#) for more information.

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