






National Transit Database Modes of Service



Mode	Explanation
<p>Aerial Tramway (TR)</p> 	<p>Rail: No Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Aerial Tramway is a system of aerial cables with suspended vehicles. The vehicles are propelled by separate cables attached to the vehicle suspension system and powered by engines or motors at a central location not on board the vehicle.</p>
<p>Alaska Railroad (AR)</p> 	<p>Rail: Yes Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>The Alaska Railroad is a public transportation system in Alaska that shares vehicles and facilities with freight rail operations.</p>
<p>Bus (MB)</p> 	<p>Rail: No Fixed Guideway: Possible</p> <p>Bus is a transit mode using rubber-tired passenger vehicles operating on fixed routes and schedules over roadways. Vehicles are powered by a motor, and fuel or electricity stored on board the vehicle. Transit agencies must report any route-deviated or point-deviated service as MB.</p>

Mode	Explanation
<p>Bus Rapid Transit (RB)</p> 	<p>Rail: No Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Bus Rapid Transit is a fixed-route bus system that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operates over 50 percent of its route in a separated right-of-way (ROW) dedicated for transit use during peak periods; • Has defined stations that are accessible for persons with disabilities, offer shelter from the weather, and provide information on schedules and routes; • Uses active signal priority in separated guideway and either queue-jump lanes or active signal priority in non-separated guideway; • Offers short headway,² bidirectional service for at least a 14-hour span on weekdays and a 10-hour span on weekends; and • Applies a separate and consistent brand identity to stations and vehicles.
<p>Cable Car (CC)</p> 	<p>Rail: Yes Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Cable Car is a type of railway propelled by moving cables located beneath the street. While popular at the turn of the last century, currently the only operational system is in San Francisco.</p>

² Short-headway service on weekdays consists of maximum headways that are either




1. 15 minutes or less throughout the day, or
2. 10 minutes or less during peak periods and 20 minutes or less at all other times.

Short-headway service on weekends consists of maximum headways that are 30 minutes or less for at least 10 hours a day.

Mode	Explanation
<p>Commuter Bus (CB)</p> 	<p>Rail: No Fixed Guideway: Possible</p> <p>Commuter Bus is local,³ fixed-route bus transportation that primarily connects outlying areas with a central city and operates predominantly in one direction during peak periods. It has limited stops in outlying areas, limited stops in the central city, and at least five miles of closed-door service.</p>
<p>Commuter Rail (CR)</p> 	<p>Rail: Yes Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Commuter Rail is an electric- or diesel-propelled railway for urban passenger train service consisting of local travel which operates between a central city and outlying areas. Service must be operated on a regular basis by or under contract with a transit operator for transporting passengers within UZAs or between urbanized areas and outlying areas.</p> <p>CR is generally characterized by multi-trip tickets, specific station-to-station fares, railroad employment practices, relatively long distances between stops, and only one to two stations in the central business district.</p> <p>Note: Intercity rail service is excluded from CR except for the portion of service that is operated by or under contract with a public transit agency for predominantly local commuter services (see footnote 3). CR services provided by Amtrak are considered intercity rail.⁴</p>





³ Local transportation means that 50 percent or more of the passengers boarding at each key bus stop or rail station over the full route must make a same-day return trip; otherwise, the service is intercity service. A key stop/station is at the end of a line or a major transfer point or otherwise accounts for a substantial portion of the boardings.


⁴ “Provided by Amtrak” means any service that uses one or more of the following: Amtrak branding, Amtrak schedules, Amtrak tickets, Amtrak’s customer loyalty program, or Amtrak’s priority access to Class I railroads. Services provided pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 24702 are also considered to be provided by Amtrak, whereas services provided pursuant to 49 U.S.C. 24101(a)(6) and 24104(f) are not. However, Footnote continued on next page.

Mode	Explanation
<p>Demand Response (DR)</p> 	<p>Rail: No Fixed Guideway: No</p> <p>Demand Response is a transit mode operating on roadways in response to requests from passengers or their agents to the transit operator, who groups rides together when possible and dispatches a vehicle to provide the rides. Vehicles do not operate over a fixed route or on a fixed schedule unless temporarily satisfying a special transit need. Many transit systems operate DR service to meet the requirements of the ADA.</p>
<p>Ferryboat (FB)</p> 	<p>Rail: No Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>This mode carries passengers over a body of water.</p>
<p>Heavy Rail (HR)</p> 	<p>Rail: Yes Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Heavy Rail is an electric railway that operates service in exclusive ROW. The service is often provided by long trains of six to eight cars or more that travel relatively short distances between stops within a city and the immediate suburbs. The Nation's traditional subway systems are classified as Heavy Rail.</p>

services that were reported to the NTD as of RY 2012, but which are excluded from the definition of Commuter Rail, may continue to report to the NTD, and their data will continue to be treated for purposes of the apportionment of, and eligibility for, FTA's formula grant programs.

Mode	Explanation
<p>Hybrid Rail (YR)</p> 	<p>Rail: Yes Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Hybrid Rail systems primarily operate routes on the national system of railroads but do not operate with the characteristics of Commuter Rail. This service typically operates Light Rail-type vehicles as diesel multiple-unit trains (DMUs).</p>
<p>Inclined Plane (IP)</p> 	<p>Rail: Yes Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Inclined Plane is a railway that operates on steep slopes and grades with vehicles powered by moving cables.</p>
<p>Jitney (JT)</p> 	<p>Rail: No Fixed Guideway: No</p> <p>Jitney is a unique form of bus service on fixed routes where multiple companies share the operation of the service.</p>
<p>Light Rail (LR)</p> 	<p>Rail: Yes Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Light Rail is an electric railway that operates in mixed traffic or intersects with roadways at grade crossings. The service is characterized by short trains of one to four passenger cars that travel relatively short distances between stops within a city and the immediate suburbs, low or high platform loading, and vehicle power drawn from an overhead electric line via a trolley or a pantograph.</p>

Mode	Explanation
<p>Monorail/Automated Guideway (MG)</p> 	<p>Rail: Yes Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Monorail/Automated Guideway is an electrically powered mode that operates in an exclusive guideway. The service is characterized by either Monorail systems with automated or human-operated vehicles straddling a single guideway or by people mover systems with automated operation over relatively short distances.</p>
<p>Público (PB)</p> 	<p>Rail: No Fixed Guideway: No</p> <p>Públicos are comprised of passenger vans or small buses operating with fixed routes but no fixed schedules in Puerto Rico. Públicos are a privately owned and operated public transit service.</p>
<p>Streetcar Rail (SR)</p> 	<p>Rail: Yes Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Streetcar Rail systems predominantly operate routes on streets in mixed traffic. This service typically operates with one- or two-car trains powered by overhead catenaries and has frequent stops.</p>
<p>Trolleybus (TB)</p> 	<p>Rail: No Fixed Guideway: Yes</p> <p>Trolleybus is a fixed-route service that uses manually steered, rubber-tired passenger vehicles powered by electric current from overhead wires using trolley poles. Rubber-tired replica trolleys or historic trolleys powered by an onboard motor are not included in this mode.</p>

Mode	Explanation
<p data-bbox="199 638 399 674">Vanpool (VP)</p> 	<p data-bbox="613 327 922 401">Rail: No Fixed Guideway: No</p> <p data-bbox="613 428 1336 590">Vanpool operates as a ride sharing arrangement, providing transportation to a pre-arranged group of individuals. To be considered public transportation, Vanpool programs must</p> <ul data-bbox="634 617 1422 1094" style="list-style-type: none"> • Use vehicles with a minimum seating capacity of seven people, including the driver; • Use vehicles for which 80 percent of the yearly mileage come from commuting; • Be open to the public (any vans that are restricted by rule to particular employers are not public transportation); • Be actively engaged in advertising the Vanpool service to the public and in matching interested members of the public to vans with available seats; and • Be publicly sponsored.⁵ <p data-bbox="613 1121 1373 1276">Transit agencies adding Vanpool service to their NTD report must complete and submit to FTA a questionnaire. You can find the questionnaire in Appendix D.</p>

Bus and Commuter Bus Services

Some transit agencies operate both MB and CB services. Data for these two modes should be reported separately if the services meet the following two guidelines:

- **There is limited mixing of vehicles between modes.** When vehicles are shared, they are used primarily to respond to vehicle breakdowns.

⁵ Publicly sponsored service is:

- Directly operated by a public entity;
- Operated by a public entity via a contract for purchased transportation service with a private provider;
- Operated by a private entity as a grant recipient or subrecipient from a public entity; or
- Operated by an independent private entity with approval from a public entity that certifies that the Vanpool program is helping meet the overall transportation needs of the local urbanized area.