



The National Network: A Foundation for American Mobility

Amtrak's National Network forms the foundation of passenger rail service in the U.S., connecting congested urban areas and bringing economically viable mobility to rural areas and small towns, where it's needed even more. It is important to note that many of these areas are becoming more isolated from major cities as regional airline and intercity bus service disappears. Their importance has been proven by their resilience in the face of aging equipment and limited service, with Amtrak's Long-Distance Routes seeing steadily increasing ridership, **despite equipment reductions and sold-out sleeper cars drastically limiting capacity.**

- **39 states** are served by long-distance trains
- **23 states** where long-distance trains are the only Amtrak service
- Carried an estimated **4.45 million passengers** in Fiscal Year 2025—a 4.2 percent increase year-over-year increase

Of Amtrak's 15 long-distance trains, most have just one daily round-trip and two have just three each week. Nonetheless, these routes are heavily used. They would carry even more passengers if Amtrak had more equipment, greater frequencies, and more connections. Lack of service, not lack of demand, limits usage.

Long-distance passenger train routes are ideal for connecting major urban areas with each other and with smaller cities and communities—many in rural areas—which are becoming more isolated as regional airline and intercity bus services disappear.

Long-distance trains generate high volumes and load factors by:

1. Providing a single-seat ride in many overlapping city pair markets;
2. Combining many small markets to generate economic volumes.

These routes function as connected and overlapping corridors. Many passengers transfer between or among other Amtrak short-distance and long-distance routes. The utility and effectiveness of individual routes grow significantly when they become part of an integrated system.

Rural Mobility in America

Connecting Millions with Appropriate Access to Public Transit

Amtrak's National Network, with its 15 long-distance routes connecting a series of state-supported services, has proved to be an essential transportation service to the 40 percent of the nation's small and rural communities that it serves, establishing a vital link between Small Town and Big City America. 62 million people live in this so-called "flyover country," a quarter of whom are veterans and another quarter are senior citizens over the age 65. With few alternatives, driving plays an outsized role, and it does so at a cost in health and in lives lost.

Increasing Safety for Rural Americans

19% - The percentage of Americans who live in rural communities.

33% - How many more miles rural residents drive than urban residents.

49% - The percentage that rural fatalities accounted for out of the total number of traffic fatalities nationwide.

Case Study: Amtrak's Empire Builder

- Runs 2,200 miles from Chicago to Seattle/Portland with 45 intermediary stops, but only 9% travel from endpoint to endpoint.
- Is a lifeline to Native Americans, veterans, and the elderly living in the rural Northern Tier that gives them access to larger cities such as Spokane, WA and St. Paul, MN.
- Today's *Empire Builder* service supports 321 jobs each year in Montana directly, indirectly, or through induced economic activity. The combined payroll of some \$21 million helps to generate nearly \$81 million in total economic output from the train in the state of Montana alone.
- When Montana mayors were asked what the effect of losing the Empire Builder would mean, all responded: "Devastating."
- *Rail Passengers* found that the second Amtrak train between Chicago and Minneapolis/St. Paul brings \$25 million annually for the state of Minnesota—8-10x the cost to operate the new service.
- *Rail Passengers* also found that the overall economic benefit for three states of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois is \$47 million annually—a return on investment of better than seven-to-one—much of which flows to small towns along the route.

Rural Success Stories

How Public Transportation Can Transform Rural Communities

- **Meridian, MS**, with 39,000 residents on the Mississippi/Alabama line, invested \$7.5 million in a new Amtrak Intermodal Station. Over \$200 million has been invested within 3 blocks of the station in the last 20 years.
- **Normal, IL**, a town of 59,000, invested \$49.5 million as part of the first TIGER project in the U.S. Investment since 2004 in Normal and Bloomington has exceeded \$220 million.
- **Long Distance Routes:** Amtrak's existing group of daily long-distance trains (excluding the Auto Train) collectively produce some \$4.7 billion* in economic benefits which are widely distributed throughout America's heartland.

	Kansas	North Carolina	North Dakota	Missouri
Direct Benefits	\$5,026,437	\$48,050,334	\$11,566,713	\$19,116,790
Indirect Benefits	\$7,388,863	\$70,633,992	\$17,003,068	\$28,101,682
Total LDR Benefits	\$12,415,300	\$118,684,326	\$28,569,781	\$47,218,472

[*In 2019 USD. For a full breakdown of the economic benefits of long-distance routes, visit [RailPassengers.org/Reports](https://railpassengers.org/Reports) for detailed outputs across 32 states.]

For more information, please visit RailPassengers.org/Leg.Resources