Intercity Bus Stops: Essential Connectors for a Viable Rural System

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The paper is based on the assumption that reliable, secure bus stops are essential both to maintaining existing ridership and to enticing new riders either from among small town residents or from new feeder networks. The expectation is that unless adequate bus stops are provided and regularly served, potential rural riders will not feel confident to venture out to take the intercity bus. The December 1984 *Intercity Bus Terminal Study* defines an adequate bus station as one that "provides a place to purchase tickets, obtain some schedule information and wait in a sheltered area, perhaps with access to food service and/or rest rooms." Using these criteria as a guide, the current study takes another look at rural bus stops in Iowa, a state well known for its rural orientation. A telephone survey was conducted of a random sample of 43 commission agents in June 1987. Overall, it was found that the majority of agents regard their bus station activities as a type of "community service" operated in addition to another business. They served few passengers and received little financial benefit. Consequently more than 25 percent of the stops surveyed did not meet the established criteria. A fuller recognition of the importance of bus stations in the overall plans for increasing ridership in rural areas is needed.

In a day when deregulation is an accepted modus operandi and profit making is an obvious indicator of success, rural bus service appears to be an anachronism. Since the 1982 Bus Regulatory Reform Act, intercity bus companies have divested themselves of numerous rural routes and reduced the number of stops in many small communities, opting instead for the efficiency that comes with interstate highway through travel and charter service (*1–4*). At the same time, the continuing migration of rural youth toward better employment opportunities in suburbia and exurbia is leaving rural America with a dwindling and increasingly elderly population base (*5*). The majority of those who continue to live in small towns and rural areas have always equated mobility with the family automobile or pickup truck.

Nevertheless, in the face of these overwhelming trends there is a small but significant segment of the population that is not independently mobile. These residents are tied to rural America not only by tradition and sentiment but by fixed incomes and personal investment in homes with limited resale value. This group includes not only the small number of elderly residents who never did drive but also an increasing number of the very elderly who are no longer confident in driving long distances or who have lost their licenses because of physical frailty. They are joined by youth and low-income families with limited personal means of mobility (*6*, p. 9). Together these people do not constitute a sufficient market to entice private bus companies to serve them in the sparsely populated rural area. Nevertheless they do constitute a need for service. For example, a recent study conducted in the northern tier of counties in Nebraska found that 1,300 people were totally dependent on a regional intercity bus for their connection to the broader world. Unfortunately, the carrier had incurred a debt of $114,000/year in order to continue to serve them (*6*, p. 15).

How to serve the intercity travel need of these rural residents in the face of rising costs has been the focus of a number of news articles and scholarly papers, as well as of a number of public and private experiments. The news articles (*7–9*) have decried the fact that "you can't get there from here anymore," scholarly papers have been devoted to an analysis of the "new vanishing American," the captive bus rider. One recent study of the demand for intercity buses by the elderly on a route in California found that ridership by the elderly on intercity buses was low—about 3.3 percent of the passengers per vehicle-service-hour. What was surprising was not the small number but that only a tiny number of riders were "captive." The rest of the riders were indistinguishable from the elderly who did not ride the bus (*10*, p. 2). The high relative costs of providing service in rural areas have also inspired scholarly papers such as that by Hansen et al. (*11*), who assess the relative high unit costs for service in rural areas of Wisconsin.

Policy analysts who have considered approaches to bolstering the intercity system through increasing ridership have largely emphasized public-private cooperation as a means of blending both public service and private operational efficiency. Feeder systems have long been advocated as a manifestation of this type of public-private cooperation. With rural public transit services retrieving rural residents from small towns and rural areas and transferring them to intercity buses at preestablished stops, the partnership would seem to benefit both the residents' need for longer-distance transportation and the intercity buses' need for increased ridership. This is, of course, the logic behind the new Greyhound Rural Connection Service (*12*).

The Rural Connection Service, which was inaugurated shortly over a year ago, is now operating in 12 states. The program provides for a formal linkage between Greyhound and either public or private rural providers. Passengers are provided with joint ticketing, assured transfers, and the opportunity to make trips across the state or country. The cooperating rural systems benefit from commissions paid by Greyhound Lines based on the distance the respective passengers travel on Greyhound. As of December 1988 there were rural connection programs operating in Alabama, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Nebraska,

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New York, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. However, only seven of these programs have been operating for more than a few months, and it is far too soon to judge their ultimate effectiveness (*6*, p. 13; *12, 13*).

A parallel program, the Greyhound Shuttle, goes one step farther by allowing Greyhound commission agents to lease vehicles from Greyhound Lines and to operate them in rural areas or small towns as connectors to Greyhound's intercity system. The program, which is just getting under way, is currently being tried in Sandusky, Ohio (*14*). To date few of these feeder operations have yielded large numbers of additional riders, but the scattered populations in rural areas would make that an unrealistic expectation. The one feeder program that has generated large numbers of riders is the bus-train program in California where population densities are relatively higher than in other states that have tried feeder programs. In California bus-train service has continued to expand over the last 6 years, particularly in regard to the bus link. Three new routes were added in April 1986 and some earlier routes readjusted. Total ridership on these feeders is now close to 250,000 (*15, 16*).

Recognizing that intercity bus travel cannot continue to survive in rural areas unless there are major and consistent efforts to increase ridership, the author of this paper has focused on a frequently overlooked but fairly basic factor in generating ridership for intercity buses—adequate bus stations. The paper is based on the assumption that reliable, secure bus stops are essential both to maintaining existing ridership and to enticing new riders either from among small town residents or from feeder networks. The expectation is that unless adequate bus stops are provided and regularly served, potential rural riders will not feel confident to venture out to take the intercity bus. Similarly, feeder systems without well-publicized connecting points are doomed to be underused. This point was demonstrated by a 1985 UMTA-sponsored 4-I project in Iowa. This program involved five different forms of feeders ranging from taxi to connecting bus service. All linked with Jefferson Lines, a regional intercity bus operator. Over the 6 months of operation, the program did not generate a sufficient number of riders for several reasons, one of which was that potential riders did not trust the system, especially for return trips (*17*, p. 37). They were not confident where and when they would be picked up. The problem was exaggerated when one stop had to be changed three times in 6 months.

A bus route, like any other type of system, must have connectors in order to function. Yet too often the focus has been on route configuration and timing with far less attention to the means of encouraging potential riders to access the system. Fortunately, some states are beginning to recognize the importance of investing in rural bus stops. For example, the state of California has introduced a clean-up, fix-up loan program for local bus stop operators to help them improve safety and their image (*18*). The state of Michigan is also expanding its terminal building program to include building weather-protected passenger shelters in rural areas, recognizing that "dilapidated facilities can discourage the use of intercity buses" (*17*).

In December 1984 the authors of the Intercity Bus Terminal Study (*19*) reported on the need for increased attention to urban bus terminals, but advised against providing any federal assistance for constructing terminals in nonurbanized areas. This was a role to be left to the private carriers. They concluded that "in the majority of states, the private sector solution wherein a private carrier arranges for bus facilities either directly or through an agent who provides retail store space, has been considered adequate (*19*, pp. 87–88). In the study, a distinction was drawn between a terminal as a facility with the primary purpose of furnishing passengers with transportation services and a bus station that sells bus services as a secondary business while its primary business may be that of a retail store, motel, or gas station (*19*, pp. 10–11). Nevertheless, the authors did go on to provide a useful definition of an ideal bus station—one located close to the passengers' origin or destination—one that "provides a place to purchase tickets, obtain some schedule information and wait in a sheltered area, perhaps with access to food service and/or rest rooms" (*19*, p. 10). Such a station should certainly not be beyond the expectations of rural travelers.

However, in 1980 when the researchers of a U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) study, took a more in-depth look at 374 rural bus stop facilities in Oklahoma, Maryland, Oregon, and Mississippi, they found that 53 percent of the stops were unsheltered, and an additional 6 percent were sheltered but in poor condition. At flag stops they observed that prospective passengers literally got out and waved down the bus even in bad weather when visibility was limited (*20*, p. 1-13-14). Nevertheless, in this prederegulation study some positives were noted including the fact that 95 percent of the stops were within 1 mi of a community center and that most passengers had vehicles available to transport them to bus stops (*20*, p. 81-8-16).

Six years after deregulation, the author of the current study is taking another look at rural bus stops in the light of continuing cutbacks in intercity bus service and in light of the overall decline in bus ridership. The target area for this study is the state of Iowa, a state well-known for its rural orientation and a state considerably affected by the loss of stops since deregulation. Because there is no standardized source of data on rural bus stops and the passengers they serve, the approach used was to survey commission agents. This approach unfortunately excluded the review of a number of flag stops because many of these are not associated with a specific location or telephone. However, the focus was to be on bus stops that could function as "bus stations" in reassuring prospective riders and informally encouraging people to take the bus.

Names and addresses of the commission agents for two of the major bus companies serving Iowa—Greyhound and Jefferson Lines—were obtained from the *Greyhound Lines Directory of Sales Location* (*21*) and the *Jefferson Transportation Group Agency Directory* (*22*), respectively. A sample of 43 bus stations were selected randomly. However, a large number of stops were designated as "flag" by Greyhound (approximately one-third of all Greyhound stops) and had no further information listed in the directory. Consequently, the sample included a larger proportion of Jefferson Line stops. Both carriers serve several of the major centers from the same terminal. Information available from the Jefferson directory as to hours of operation, name of agent, and length of tenure as agent was recorded as were the names and addresses associated with the sample of Greyhound stops. A structured

follow-up telephone interview was then conducted with each of 37 operators who could be contacted. The telephone interview questions appear in the appendix. The study found no significant difference between the responses of Jefferson and Greyhound agents.

Repeated efforts to reach five additional stops failed even when calls were made at times when the printed schedule indicated that a bus was to stop. One other store owner noted that he had not seen the bus for 6 months, although he was still listed as commission agent. Information obtained from the schedules and printed directories was, however, included for the unattended stops to represent the full picture of bus stops in Iowa.

The population of the towns associated with the sample of stops ranged from 500 to over 20,000, thereby representing the full range of Iowa's population centers. Distribution was as follows: 0 to 500 (2.4 percent), 501 to 2,000 (23.3 percent), 2,001 to 5,000 (21.4 percent), 5,001-20,000 (16.7 percent), and over 20,000 (26 percent). The latter group included terminals in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Ames, Iowa City, and Mason City. The strong representation of larger population centers is in part a reflection of the trends associated with deregulation and in part an indication of the absence of the Greyhound flag stops in the sample. Of these stops, 33.3 percent were situated along Interstate highways with the rest along primary state and federal roads.

The type of service provided by these stops ranged from full (21.4 percent), including handling of both passengers and baggage in a dedicated facility, to flag stops, listed by Jefferson, with no ticket sales (23.8 percent). The largest proportion (42.9 percent) offered full service as a consignment in another business. Experience as a commission agent varied from 3 weeks to well over 15 years: 21.4 percent serving less than 2 years, 21.4 percent serving 2 to 5 years, 14.3 percent serving 6 to 10 years, and 19 percent serving more than 15 years. What was impressive was the overall longevity of service among the consignees. In fact, all but one of the newer consignees said that the predecessor had been in the same building. All but one of the respondents also indicated a determination to remain as a commission agent, thereby serving the public. Hence, overall, these stops represented more stability than had been anticipated, and the agents were in a position to comment effectively on changes in the bus service since deregulation.

The overwhelming majority of the commission agents (62.2 percent) reported that only one or two buses stopped a day (usually one in each direction). Thirteen percent of the stops were served by 3 to 4 buses a day—usually 2 in each direction; an additional 13.5 percent reported 5 to 9 buses a day; and 10.8 percent said that they had over 10 buses a day. The latter two categories were in the larger cities. However, the pattern is not consistent because two of the towns with a population of more than 20,000 reported only two stops a day.

The number of tickets sold by these stops is again relatively predictable. As shown in Table 1, the majority (66 percent) of the stops that sold tickets sold less than 25 tickets a week. In fact, 27.3 percent of the stops reported that they did not sell tickets because that was done on the bus. Few reported any type of peaking in sales and 28.6 percent noted a decrease in sales over the winter.

Most respondents were reluctant to share information regarding the dollar value of tickets sold. In fact, only 16 respondents were willing to suggest a figure. Of these, 18.8 percent said that ticket sales were less than $100 a month, 31.3 percent indicated sales levels at $100 to $500, and 50 percent (again in the larger population areas) indicated sales of more than $500 a month. Given the small number of responses, little can be determined from these figures except confirmation of the fact that commissions are not generally very large.

Respondents indicated that 40 percent of all travelers purchased tickets to travel within the state. An additional 53 percent, however, noted travel outside of in addition to within Iowa. In fact, half of their sales were for points outside the state. In a given week, people still travel from small towns in Iowa to Florida, Chicago, and Detroit by bus, for example.

TABLE 1 NUMBER OF TICKETS SOLD BY TOWN POPULATION SIZE

Town Population	Number of Tickets Sold per Week							Row Total
	None	0-5	6-10	11-25	26-50	51-100	Over 100	
0-500	1							1 3.0
501-2000	6	3	1	1				11 33.3
2001-5000	1	1	2	2				6 18.2
5001-20,000			1	3	2			6 18.2
Over 20,000	1			1	2	2	3	9 27.3
Totals	9 27.3	4 12.1	4 12.1%	7 21.2	4 12.1	2 6.1	3 9.1	33 100.0

A closer look at the type of customers that the intercity bus attracts in Iowa largely mirrors other national reports. Most are seniors and women. In fact, 78 percent of the stops reported primarily senior riders, and 61 percent indicated that the majority of riders were women. An indication of the level of dependency on bus travel of some residents comes from the report that 86.7 percent of the stops have regular riders.

Package handling efforts generally mirrored the low volume of ticket sales. Although 81 percent of the stops reported handling packages, 29 percent indicated handling less than one package a week. An additional 38 percent reported handling 2 to 10 packages a week. However, as is the case with the passengers, there is a small number of shippers who are reliant on bus service. Among the bus stop operators, 83.3 percent reported serving regular shippers. In fact, they were able to identify by name the local shippers relying on bus service. The products shipped are varied but include such items as auto parts, construction parts, flowers, agricultural products, medical supplies and blood, newspapers, television tapes, and bicycles. The common element is that these items are oddly shaped or perishable and need fast, reliable service. Packages also are sent primarily within Iowa as reported by 46.2 percent of the respondents. However, 19.2 percent of them reported sending packages well beyond the borders of Iowa. The rest reported shipments primarily to Iowa and its neighboring states.

The study has thus far reconfirmed the findings of others, that bus service is meeting a need for a small group of people who are familiar with it and are dependent on it for their outlet to the broader world. These people are willing to adjust their schedules and overlook inconveniences in order to travel or ship from one place to another by bus.

However, if bus companies are to become economically viable, they will need to attract new riders. Publicity campaigns like those being carried on by Jefferson Lines in which civic groups and town officials are mobilized to support continued bus service through news articles and town meetings are clearly a positive step (*6*, p. 14). Greyhound's new Rural Connection plan promises more local publicity as well. However, a more fundamental image problem needs to be addressed—the issue of the stops themselves.

Symptomatic of some of the problems encountered by potential riders is the fact that more than 10 percent of the stops listed in the respective directories were unreachable by telephone after several tries during different times of the day. At four additional stops the manager indicated that he or she knew nothing about the bus except that it stopped outside. They were not even familiar with the schedule. Thus, at 20 percent of the stops for which telephones and addresses were provided, no information on bus service would be available to potential riders. This does not even begin to account for the Greyhound flag stops for which no contact numbers are available. Approximately 55 percent of the original sample of Greyhound stops fell into this category.

As indicated above, the stops that were contacted ranged from those that would be characterized as dedicated terminals to those that would fit the definition of bus station or bus stop provided in the US DOT/Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) terminal study (*19*). The latter included motels, convenience stores, gas stations, cafes, and retail stores. The data in Table 2 indicate the proportion of respondents by type of primary business. This sample of bus stations is also compared with that included in the 1984 ICC/USDOT terminal study. Similarities between the two samples are apparent. However, this more rural sample indicates more of a reliance on convenience stores (18 percent) than on gas stations (12 percent) as bus stations. A considerable proportion (14 percent) of the more rural Iowa stations were motel lobbies. Both convenience stores and motels are logical locations for stops. They are usually located out on the highways so routes are not diverted into town and both have extended hours. In fact, convenience stores are frequently open either until midnight or for 24 hours. Motel lobby hours are similar, depending on the motel size and location. Although convenience stores typically have food available with no seating, motel lobbies have seating with no food. Cafes and other restaurants also featured more prominently in the Iowa sample. These offer food and seating but usually with shorter hours. Among all respondents

TABLE 2 TYPE OF ESTABLISHMENT SERVING AS BUS STATION

	Current Study	ICC/DOT Terminal Study
Gas Station	12%	29%
Convenience Store/Grocery	18%	5%
Motel/Hotel	14%	NA*
Retail	14%	15%
Pharmacy	2%	0%
Restaurant	12%	8%
Other		17%
Depot	28%	26%
	100%	100%

*Motel may have been included in "Other" category.

TABLE 3 SERVICES PROVIDED BY RESPONDING BUS STATIONS

Type of Service	Iowa Survey (proportion of respondents providing service)	ICC/DOT Study (proportion of respondents providing service)
Ticket sales	79%	94%
Package service	74%	92%
Seating	73%	89%
Food	38%	51%
Possibility of transfer to another bus	15%	8%
Taxi/limo service nearby	35%	60%
Free parking for travelers	78%	66%

73 percent indicated that there was a sheltered waiting area available for bus passengers, but 27 percent reported that this was not the case.

The proportions of those stations responding to the survey that provide key services are summarized in Table 3. Again a comparison is provided with the 1984 national survey (*19*). The Iowa survey represented a large number of stations in towns with populations well under 15,000, the definition for small towns in the 1984 ICC/USDOT survey. These small Iowa stations reflected both the positives and negatives of small town facilities. There was less service geared exclusively to bus passengers, but there was more free parking. The concept of bus transfer was also reflected in some of the larger cities in the Iowa sample.

Of the Iowa survey respondents, 73 percent indicated that they were open when the buses arrived. At 27 percent of the stops, however, the bus arrived after closing or before opening hours. Hence, passengers still had to wait outside. Although almost all reported that the bus is within 15 min of schedule, waiting outside would be difficult, especially in the winter. When asked how the passengers arrived at the bus stops, 78 percent of the respondents indicated that the majority of their passengers drove their own cars and parked them at the stops, and 59 percent indicated that some passengers were also dropped off by others. Usually this drop-off was by private vehicle. Only 9 percent (*3*) of the respondents noted that passengers used public transportation to reach the stops. This may be explained in part by the paucity of public transportation opportunities in most rural communities. At one stop in a larger town some passengers came by taxi, and at another they came by city bus. At only one stop were passengers reported as arriving by public van. Among the respondents only 12.5 percent observed passengers walking to the stop. These findings correspond rather closely to those of earlier studies.

Nevertheless, the considerable drop-off traffic might well be some indication of a potential market for a feeder system. In fact, the station operators were asked their opinion on whether they thought that such a system might work in their area. Among those responding, 51.7 percent said that they thought it would be worth a try because of the potential to attract more rural riders, especially in northwest Iowa where there no longer is any intercity bus service. Several commented on the long distances that passengers must travel to reach these remaining bus stops. Some respondents, however, were skeptical because of the previous experience with the Jefferson bus feeder pilot project mentioned above. They emphasized the need for publicity if any such effort were to succeed. Several also mentioned the concern that low densities would mean long trips in a feeder van, which might discourage potential riders. An opinion survey of bus stop operators is certainly not an adequate marketing tool by which to test the feeder van concept, but it is an indication of a potential market that has not yet been addressed. In fact, two of the respondents reported that they went out personally and picked up regular customers on call.

The effort to personally retrieve passengers is symptomatic of the service orientation of a large proportion of the station operators. Thirty-eight percent of the respondents noted that they were continuing as commission agents primarily because they felt that the service was needed in the community. The enthusiasm with which they greeted this service opportunity, however, varied from "I love the work" to "someone has to do it." Only one respondent indicated that she experienced any financial benefit from serving as commission agent.

It is certainly true that a bus stop is a needed service, but it can also become far more than that. It is, after all, an arm of a private company. As such, it needs to be part of the system engaged in attracting increased ridership. Where agents have assumed responsibility for assisting in attracting ridership, their efforts have frequently proven to be successful. A regular feature in *Bus Ride* magazine applauds the dedication of commission agents like Bob and Dolly Johnson who have their "hands in just about every aspect of terminal operation" (*23*, p. 62) or Jan and Jim Ward who have worked to "avoid the typical bus stop look" and "have done much to enhance the image of bus travel in their region" (*24*, p. 60). The agents featured, however, are usually associated with a dedicated bus station or terminal. On the other hand, Vermont Transit, an intercity carrier in New England, is dedicated to assist

TABLE 4 CHANGES IN RIDERSHIP BY POPULATION SIZE

Town Population	Ridership Decreased	Ridership Increased	Ridership Stayed the Same	No Response	Row Total
501-2000	3	5	1		9 30.0
2001-5000	2	4	1		7 23.3
5001-20,000	1	2		2	5 16.7
Over 20,000	3	1	2	3	9 30.0
Totals	9 30.0	12 40.0	4 13.3	5 16.7	30 100.0

agents like their Iowa counterparts—those for whom bus service is simply an additional duty in conjunction with their livelihood. They have identified two liaison agents who assist in networking time-saving ideas that have proven effective and that can benefit all of them. They also feed concerns back to the company's sales manager (*25*, p. 60). This idea of liaison agents might well be replicated elsewhere.

Fortunately, a number of the Iowa respondents noted an increase in ridership within the last 3 years. Forty-one percent of those reporting an increase were from towns with a population of between 500 and 2,000 people, and an additional 33 percent of those reporting increases were from towns with populations of 2,001 to 5,000 as indicated in Table 4. This growth in ridership would not constitute any major shift from the perspective of the bus companies involved because the total volume of ticket sales is so low. No station in a town of under 5,000 in population reported selling more than 25 tickets a week. Nevertheless the trend is encouraging. More needs to be done to move more dramatically in that direction, and bus stations can play an important part. Scheduling information must be available at the stops, and telephones must be handled so that prospective riders are reassured as to connections. Radio connections between buses and the agents can keep agents informed of late schedules. Bus companies will need to work with commission agents to ensure that not only are the stops made during reasonable times of the day but that the station is open during such stops.

Waiting areas are, of course, ideal at bus stations but difficult to arrange in convenience stores or retail shops. Nevertheless, some secure place out of the weather needs to be provided. One optional aspect in the earlier definition of the "ideal bus station" was access to food and rest rooms. The former, fortunately, is currently available within walking distance of 81 percent of the responding bus stops, and the latter is also available in all but 30 percent of the stops, the retail establishments. Motels and cafes serve these needs especially well as highway stops.

The potential for better use of bus stations to encourage ridership certainly exists. The cost for increased hours of operation and providing more consistent scheduling information would be minimal as would care in selecting convenient, reliable locations for bus agencies. Any such costs incurred would be reimbursed by increased ridership. What is needed, in the overall plans for increasing ridership in rural areas, is a full recognition of the importance of the bus station on the part of the companies and the commission agents alike.

APPENDIX: Telephone Interview

Commission Agent:
Address:

Telephone number:

1. How long have you served as a commission agent?

   If 1 year or less, where was it before?

   Do you plan to continue as a commission agent?

   Why?

   Why not?

2. How many buses stop at your location in a day?

   Has that changed within the last 2 years, or since 1983?

3. Is your establishment open when the bus stops?

   Does your station serve more than one bus company?

   Which ones?

   Is there a nearby city bus or taxi stop?

4. Is there a regular waiting area?

Is food available in the station?

Within walking distance?

Are restrooms available for passengers?

5. Within an average given week, how many tickets do you sell?

In a peak week?

During a week in winter?

Approximately what are your average ticket sales per month?

Using last week as an example, would you say the bus was usually on time?

Within 15 minutes?

Within 30 minutes?

Later?

6. Has there been a significant change in ridership within the last 2 years?

Since you have become a commission agent?

7. What type of people use the service?

Are they regular customers?

What is the average age of your customers?

Seniors? Young people?

Mostly men? Mostly women?

8. How do your customers come to the stop?

By car? If so, is there parking?

Dropped off?

Taxi?

Local public van?

Walk?

Other?

Is the stop within walking distance of the shopping area in town?

Do you know if it used to be?

There has been some talk about linking rural public vans or taxis, with regular Greyhound service in order to bring in more passengers from rural areas. Do you think that might work in your area?

Why?

Why not?

No opinion.

9. Where do people travel most often?

10. Do you handle packages?

How many in a given week?

Does this vary throughout the year?

What type of packages do you handle?

Are your regular shippers from a certain company?

Where are the packages going?

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