

## Commuters Turn to Rail and Bus as Gas Prices Hit \$4.00 a Gallon – Gas 2.0



Across the nation public transit systems are seeing a boom in business as gas prices go ever higher. Miami Florida has seen a 12% increase in public transit passengers since last year. The Rail Runner train in New Mexico has seen a 14% increase in its riders and North Carolina's bus services ridership is up by 18%.

How do we know that the rising price of gas is to blame for increased public transit use? The statistics tell an interesting story. In major cities with established public transit systems, such as New York, Boston and Chicago, there has indeed been an increase in the number of public transit riders within the city limits. Boston has even recently issued [new high capacity passenger cars](#) on some subway trains that amount to nothing more than cattle cars—no seats just poles to hold on to.

However, the major increases in public transit riders have been seen on public transit lines that services the suburbs. This is a strong indication that the high price of gas is causing commuters, who traditionally drive from the suburbs for work and then back, to forgo the use of their automobile and adopt some type of public transportation for their commute in order to ease the pain at the pump.

Further bolstering this argument is the fact that this is not the first time that high gas prices have caused an increase in the use of public transit systems. In 2008 when gas prices reached a record limit so did the number of riders for public transportation across America hitting 10.7 billion trips by the end of 2008. By comparison, Americans logged in 10.2 billion trips in 2010.

Unfortunately this increased use of public transportation is coming at a very poor time for America's rail and bus lines. Mainly caused by a drop in state and local funding due to the recession, over 84% of public transit systems have either cut services, increased fares or are considering a combination of the both. This means that some commuters get left in the lurch with no choice but to drive to work. Other travelers are forced to pay more for a ticket than in years past and must deal with poor, reduced, or interrupted service.

Despite the negative financial impacts of the recession Government funding for public transit, including what people spend on tickets, totaled \$55 billion in 2009. That dollar amount is up by 65% since 1992 even factoring in for inflation.

In the end, the amount of money that America spends on public transit is pennies when compared to the expenses of private vehicle travel. Road work, fuel, insurance, vehicle payments and other expenditures related to individual transit totaled \$1.2 trillion in 2009 alone.

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