



REPORT NO.

392

PARLIAMENT OF INDIA
RAJYA SABHA

**DEPARTMENT-RELATED PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE
ON TRANSPORT, TOURISM AND CULTURE**

THREE HUNDRED NINETY SECOND REPORT

**ENABLING INCLUSIVE, DIGITAL AND SUSTAINABLE BUS TRANSPORT:
POLICY, REGULATION AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FOR NEXT-
GEN MOBILITY**

(Presented to the Rajya Sabha on 11th August, 2026)
(Laid on the Table of Lok Sabha on 11th August, 2026)



Rajya Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi
August, 2026 / Shravan, 1948 (Saka)

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RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

August, 2026 / Shravan, 1948 (Saka)

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*To be appended

**COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE
(2025-26)**

(Constituted on 26th September, 2025)

- 1. Shri Sanjay Kumar Jha - Chairman**

Rajya Sabha

2. Shrimati Sudha Murty*
3. Shri Golla Baburao
4. Shri Mohammed Nadimul Haque
5. Shri Jaggesh
6. Shri Kesridevsinh Jhala
7. Shri S. Kalyanasundaram
8. Shrimati S. Phangnon Konyak
9. Shri Surendra Singh Nagar
10. Shri Imran Pratapgarhi

Lok Sabha

11. Shri Mian Altaf Ahmad
12. Shri Pradan Baruah
13. Shri R. K. Chaudhary
14. Shri Anil Firojiya
15. Shri Tapir Gao
16. Shri Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri
17. Shri Rahul Kaswan
18. Shrimati June Maliah
19. Shri Ajay Kumar Mandal
20. Shri K. E. Prakash
21. Shri Rajiv Pratap Rudy
22. Dr. M. P. Abdussamad Samadani
23. Kumari Selja
24. Shri Avimanyu Sethi
25. Shri Anurag Sharma
26. Shri Suresh Kumar Shetkar
27. Shri Tangella Uday Srinivas
28. Shri Devesh Chandra Thakur
29. Shri Amarsing Tisso
30. Shri Manoj Tiwari
31. Shri K. C. Venugopal

SECRETARIAT

Dr. Kushal Kumar Pathak, Joint Secretary
Shrimati Monica Baa, Director
Shri T. Kennedy Jesudossan, Deputy Secretary
Shri N. Romesh Singh, Deputy Secretary
Shri Diwakar Nautiyal, Assistant Committee Officer
Ms. Arshi, Senior Secretariat Assistant

**Nominated as Member w.e.f. 15.12.2025 in lieu of Dr. Faiyaz Ahmad*

PREFACE

I, the Chairman of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture, having been authorised by the Committee to present the Report on its behalf, do hereby present this Three Hundred Ninety Second Report of the Committee on the subject "Enabling Inclusive, Digital and Sustainable Bus Transport: Policy, Regulation and Public-Private Partnership for Next-Gen Mobility", pertaining to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

2. The Committee selected the subject for detailed examination having regard to the central place which the bus occupies in the daily movement of the people of India, and to its assessment that while vehicle standards, highway development and electric mobility have each received sustained policy attention, the bus as a service, and the passenger who depends upon it, have not been examined with corresponding rigour.

3. The Committee heard the Secretary and senior officers of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in oral evidence at its sitting held on 24th July, 2025. At the same sitting, the Committee also heard the representatives of the Bus and Car Operators Confederation of India, of inter-city bus operators and electric mobility undertakings, and of a policy research organisation engaged in the study of the inter-city bus transport system. A verbatim record of the proceedings was kept.

4. In formulating this Report, the Committee has relied upon the presentation and the background note furnished by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, the depositions made before it in oral evidence, the study material on the regulatory landscape of inter-city bus transport placed before it, the suggestions received thereafter for incorporation in the Report, and the verbatim record of its proceedings.

5. The Committee considered the draft Report and adopted the same at its sitting held on 06.08.2026.

6. For facility of reference, the recommendations of the Committee have been printed in bold letters in Chapter IV and have also been reproduced, in condensed form, at the end of the Report.

7. The Committee places on record its appreciation of the assistance rendered to it by the officers of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat attached to the Committee.

NEW DELHI

August 6, 2026

Shravan 15, 1948 (Saka)

SANJAY KUMAR JHA

Chairman,

Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture,

Rajya Sabha

ACRONYMS

Sr. No.	Acronym	Full form
1	ADAS	Advanced Driver Assistance Systems
2	AEBS	Automatic Emergency Braking System
3	AIS	Automotive Industry Standards
4	AITP	All India Tourist Permit
5	ARAI	Automotive Research Association of India
6	ATS	Automated Testing Station
7	BOCI	Bus and Car Operators Confederation of India
8	BS	Bharat Stage (emission standards)
9	CCTV	Closed-Circuit Television
10	CGD	City Gas Distribution
11	CIRT	Central Institute of Road Transport
12	CMVR	Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989
13	CNG	Compressed Natural Gas
14	DDAS	Driver Drowsiness Alert System
15	EVSC	Electronic Vehicle Stability Control
16	FDAS	Fire Detection and Alarm System
17	FDSS	Fire Detection and Suppression System
18	GVW	Gross Vehicle Weight
19	ICAT	International Centre for Automotive Technology
20	IRC	Indian Roads Congress
21	ITS	Intelligent Transport Systems
22	LDWS	Lane Departure Warning System
23	LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
24	MHI	Ministry of Heavy Industries
25	MoHUA	Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs
26	MoRTH	Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
27	MPLADS	Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme
28	MRO	Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul
29	NCMC	National Common Mobility Card
30	NHAI	National Highways Authority of India
31	NHLML	National Highways Logistics Management Limited
32	PPP	Public-Private Partnership
33	REESS	Rechargeable Electrical Energy Storage Systems
34	RTO	Regional Transport Office
35	RVSF	Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility
36	SRTU	State Road Transport Undertaking
37	UMTA	Urban Mass Transit Authority
38	VGf	Viability Gap Funding
39	VLTD	Vehicle Location Tracking Device
40	VVMP	Voluntary Vehicle-Fleet Modernisation Programme

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Subject and the Reasons for its Selection

1.1 For the overwhelming majority of Indians who travel, the journey begins and ends in a bus. The bus carries the student to college and the worker to the factory; it links the village to the tehsil and the tehsil to the State capital; it takes the pilgrim to the shrine and the tourist to the destination; and upon routes which no train serves and no aircraft will ever serve, it is not one option among several but the only one. The Committee selected the present subject in this awareness, and in the further awareness that the bus, for all its ubiquity, has seldom been examined by Parliament as a complete system, namely as a matter of policy, of regulation and of investment taken together.

1.2 The Committee also had regard to the framing of the subject itself. The words "inclusive", "digital" and "sustainable" in the title are not ornamental. They correspond to the three pillars upon which the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has organised its own framework for next-generation bus transport, and the Committee considered it its duty to test each pillar against the conditions actually obtaining on the ground. The words "public-private partnership" in the title reflect the Committee's assessment, confirmed in the course of the examination, that the transformation contemplated cannot be financed or operated by Government alone, and that the private operator, who owns the larger part of the national bus fleet, must be brought from the periphery of policy to its centre.

1.3 The Committee would further observe that its mandate spans transport, tourism and culture, and that the bus is the vehicle, in the literal sense, of all three. The examination has therefore kept the tourist and the tourist bus continuously in view, from the permit which carries the word "tourist" in its name to the maintenance, terminal and circuit infrastructure upon which the quality of travel to the country's destinations depends.

Bus Transport in the National Mobility System

1.4 The dimensions of the sector, as they emerged from the material placed before the Committee, deserve to be stated at the outset, and are set out in Table 1. According to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, there are approximately 4.4 lakh buses in the country holding valid registration and fitness certification. Of these, approximately 1.1 lakh are owned by Government, and approximately 3.3 lakh, or three of every four registered

buses, are privately owned. Within the Government-owned fleet, about 98 per cent belongs to the State Governments and about 2 per cent to the Union Government, the latter consisting mainly of vehicles held by organisations under the Ministries of Home Affairs and Defence.

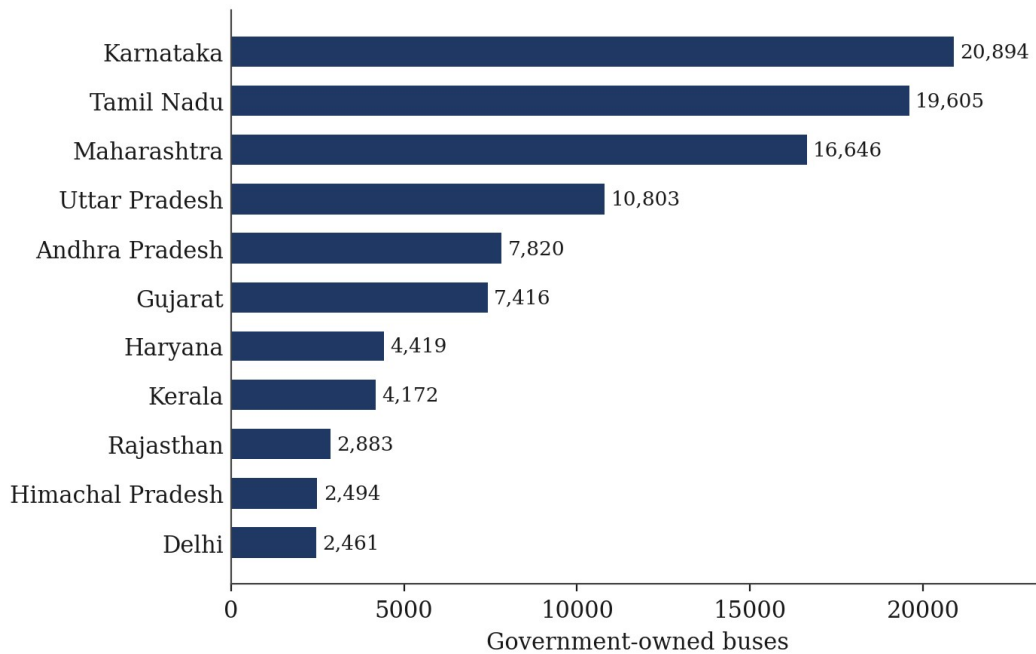
Table 1 — Composition of the National Bus Fleet

Ownership	Buses	Share
State Governments	1,06,964	~98% of Government fleet
Union Government	2,459	~2% of Government fleet
Government — total	1,09,164*	~25% of national fleet
Privately owned	3,31,301	~75% of national fleet
Total	4,40,465	100%

*Source: Data placed before the Committee by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, drawn from the VAHAN database (Vehicle Class "Bus" within Vehicle Categories HPV and MPV). *The Government total and the sum of its constituent figures differ slightly between places in the Ministry's material; see paragraph 2.2. Telangana does not report to VAHAN; see Finding Ten.*

1.5 The Government-owned fleet is heavily concentrated. Eleven States and Union territories together account for more than 90 per cent of it, with Karnataka (20,894), Tamil Nadu (19,605), Maharashtra (16,646) and Uttar Pradesh (10,803) at the head of the distribution, and several States maintaining a negligible State-operated fleet. The distribution is displayed at Figure 1. In the States at the foot of that figure, and in those absent from it altogether, the entire burden of public bus transport rests upon private operators, a circumstance which any national policy must take into account.

Figure 1 — State-wise Distribution of the Government-Owned Bus Fleet (major States)



Source: Data placed before the Committee by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

1.6 The passenger side of the ledger is more striking still, and less well documented. Industry representatives stated before the Committee that five to six crore persons travel by inter-city bus every day, a figure exceeding, on their submission, the daily ridership of the Indian Railways. The study material placed before the Committee recorded that buses account for around 40 per cent of road-based travel demand, and that by 2019 inter-city buses were serving over three crore daily travellers as against 2.3 crore carried by the railway network. These figures, which could not be verified against any official count, are collected at Table 2. The Committee returns in Chapter III to the fact that no official estimate of bus-borne passengers exists against which they could be tested; but even on the most conservative view, the mode under examination carries more Indians every day than any other, and it does so with the least public support.

Table 2 — Daily Passenger Volumes, as Submitted to the Committee

Submission	Daily passengers	Reference year
Inter-city bus travel (deposition of operators)	5 to 6 crore	Current
Inter-city bus travel (study placed before the Committee)	Over 3 crore	2019
Indian Railways (same study)	About 2.3 crore	2019

Source: Figures placed before the Committee by industry representatives and in the study material, attributed by the deponents to external research. They were not reconciled with the Ministry during the sitting and are recorded as submitted; see Finding Ten.

The Constitutional and Institutional Setting

1.7 The governance of bus transport is divided between the Union and the States, and among three Ministries at the Union level. The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways administers the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, frames the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, and drives the formulation of the Automotive Industry Standards which govern the construction, safety and accessibility of vehicles. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs oversees urban transport, implements the National Common Mobility Card, and administers the PM e-Bus Sewa scheme for the deployment of electric buses in cities. The Ministry of Heavy Industries coordinates the electric vehicle ecosystem and implements the PM e-Drive scheme for the procurement of electric buses.

1.8 The States, for their part, implement and enforce the rules; constitute the transport authorities; issue stage carriage and contract carriage permits and the All India Tourist Permit; grant registration and fitness certificates; fix fares; develop terminal infrastructure; and own and operate the State Road Transport Undertakings, with all that this entails by way of fleet management, scheduling and route selection.

1.9 Road transport is not a subject of exclusive Union competence; motor vehicle taxation lies in the State List; and rule-making under the Act is exercised concurrently. The Ministry can motivate the States, place common questions before the annual conferences of Transport Ministers and Transport Secretaries, and hold up good practice for emulation; it cannot direct outcomes in matters within State competence. The Committee accepts this position without reservation, and it has consciously framed every recommendation in this Report in terms of the instruments which are lawfully available to the Union Government, namely standards, model frameworks, contractual conditions attaching to Central assistance, digital infrastructure, and the publication of comparative information.

1.10 The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways described to the Committee its deliberate practice of keeping regulation and incentivisation in separate hands, so that the regulator is never open to the objection of promoting a class of manufacturers through the standards it frames. The Committee regards this as a sound principle. Its corollary, however, is that the regulatory, urban-implementation and incentive functions for one and the same bus rest with three different Ministries, and the Committee has borne this dispersal in mind throughout the examination.

The Ministry's Framework for Next-Generation Bus Transport

1.11 In its presentation, the Ministry set out a framework resting upon three pillars, supported by two enablers. The first pillar, sustainability, comprises the phasing out of conventional vehicles through the Voluntary Vehicle-Fleet Modernisation Programme, the promotion of electric vehicles. The second pillar, safety and inclusivity, comprises the new Bus Body Code effective from 1st September, 2025, the Automotive Industry Standards governing structural integrity, fire safety and sleeper coaches, the standards formulated for advanced driver assistance systems, and the provisions made for differently-abled passengers and senior citizens. The third pillar, digital integration, comprises fleet management systems, electronic ticketing and passenger information systems. The two enablers are policy formulation under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and standard-setting through the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989 and the Automotive Industry Standards.

1.12 The Committee records at the outset an asymmetry which coloured the whole of the evidence and to which it returns repeatedly in this Report. In respect of the first two pillars, the Ministry placed before the Committee notifications with their numbers and dates, standards with their dates of effect, and figures of implementation. In respect of the digital pillar, the material was confined to the naming of three functional categories. The distance between the precision of the one and the generality of the other is itself a finding, and it is addressed as such in Chapter III.

Scope, Approach and Course of the Examination

1.13 The examination was directed to five questions: first, whether the institutional and legal framework governing bus transport corresponds to the manner in which buses are actually operated and used today; secondly, whether the three pillars of the Ministry's framework are supported by the infrastructure and enforcement upon which their success depends; thirdly, whether the regulatory environment as experienced by the operator, public

or private, is consistent, predictable and fair; fourthly, whether the supporting infrastructure of terminals, testing stations, charging and maintenance facilities is adequate, and what part private investment can take in providing it; and fifthly, whether the data upon which planning proceeds is complete and reliable.

1.14 The Committee took oral evidence on the subject at its sitting held on 24th July, 2025, at which the Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, led the Ministry's deposition, supported by the Director-General (Road Development), an Additional Secretary, senior engineers, and the Director of the Central Institute of Road Transport. At the same sitting the Committee heard the President of the Bus and Car Operators Confederation of India, representatives of FlixBus and of GreenCell Mobility, inter-city bus operators, and a policy research organisation which placed before the Committee a study of the regulatory landscape of inter-city bus transport with particular reference to the All India Tourist Permit. The Committee considers it significant, and telling, that public authority and private industry sat before it at one table; much of what follows proceeds from the confrontation of their respective accounts.

1.15 In addition to the oral evidence, the Committee has drawn upon the background note and presentation furnished by the Ministry, the study material aforesaid, the suggestions subsequently received for the strengthening of the Report, and the verbatim record of the proceedings. The minutes of the sitting and the list of witnesses are appended to this Report. Where the Report refers to international practice, or to developments occurring after the date of the sitting, it does so from the public record and for context; the findings of the Committee rest upon the evidence taken before it.

1.16 The structure of the Report follows the sequence of the Committee's own reasoning. Chapter II sets out what the Committee heard, from the Ministry, from the operators and from its own Members. Chapter III states what the Committee finds upon that evidence, in the form of ten findings. Chapter IV states what the Committee recommends, in the form of ten recommendations, each of which answers to the finding bearing the same number. The Committee has deliberately confined itself to ten. A report which recommends everything recommends nothing; the Committee has preferred to identify the ten interventions which, in its considered judgment, would together recast the sector, and to pursue them with specificity.

CHAPTER II

THE EXAMINATION: EVIDENCE OF THE MINISTRY, THE STAKEHOLDERS AND THE POINTS RAISED BY MEMBERS

A. Evidence of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways

2.1 The Secretary opened the Ministry's deposition by describing the division of functions set out in Chapter I, and by placing before the Committee the profile of the national fleet: approximately 4.4 lakh registered buses with valid fitness, of which about 1.1 lakh are Government-owned and about 3.3 lakh privately owned; more than 90 per cent of the fleet compliant with BS-III or higher emission norms, approximately 47,000 vehicles remaining in the pre-BS, BS-I and BS-II categories; and more than 90 per cent of the fleet within fifteen years of age. The figures are drawn from the VAHAN database and relate to vehicles of Vehicle Class "Bus" within the categories Heavy Passenger Vehicle and Medium Passenger Vehicle.

2.2 Two qualifications to these figures emerged in the course of the evidence, and the Committee records them here because much turns upon them later. First, the State of Telangana does not report to the VAHAN database, so that the national figures exclude a major State in its entirety. Secondly, buses recorded in vehicle categories other than the two named, including large numbers engaged in school and employee transport, are not comprehended in the figure of 4.4 lakh. The Ministry's own presentation also carried two slightly different totals for the Government-owned fleet at two places, a discrepancy which is small in magnitude but which ought not to appear in material placed before Parliament.

2.3 On the age of vehicles, the Ministry clarified that no age-based restriction on the operation of buses has been prescribed by the Union Government; that the fifteen-year limit applies to Government-owned buses, whose intensive utilisation makes operation beyond eight to ten years difficult in practice; that privately owned buses continue in service on the strength of fitness certification alone; and that the restriction operating in the National Capital Region proceeds from an order of the National Green Tribunal, subsequently endorsed by the Supreme Court, and not from any notification of the Ministry. A Member pressed the point directly: why should an age ceiling bind the Government fleet at all, when no comparable rule is known elsewhere in the world and a bus is a considerable capital asset; the Ministry's answer rested on utilisation, and the Committee has weighed it in Finding Five. The emission and age composition of the fleet, as placed before the Committee, is set out in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3 — Emission Profile of the Registered Bus Fleet

Emission category	Privately owned	Government	Total
Pre-BS	1,598	0	1,598
BS-I	4,771	904	5,675
BS-II	35,053	5,186	40,239
BS-III	1,03,009	38,096	1,41,105
BS-IV	1,01,014	37,771	1,38,785
BS-VI	85,856	27,207	1,13,063
Total	3,31,301	1,09,164	4,40,465

Source: Presentation of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, drawn from the VAHAN database. The pre-BS, BS-I and BS-II categories together account for approximately 47,500 vehicles.

Table 4 — Age Profile of the Registered Bus Fleet

Age of vehicle	Privately owned	Government	Total
0 to 5 years	1,20,792	41,752	1,62,544
5 to 10 years	1,16,279	35,803	1,52,082
10 to 15 years	73,156	31,609	1,04,765
15 to 20 years	16,674	0	16,674
20 to 25 years	2,599	0	2,599
Above 25 years	1,801	0	1,801
Total	3,31,301	1,09,164	4,40,465

Source: Presentation of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, drawn from the VAHAN database. Every bus above fifteen years of age, 21,074 in all, is privately owned; the Government fleet above that age stands at nil. See Finding Five.

(i) The sustainability pillar

2.4 Under the Voluntary Vehicle-Fleet Modernisation Programme, launched in 2021, the Ministry reported that 106 Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities are operational across 21 States and Union territories, and that 2.6 lakh vehicles have been scrapped at them, of which 13,710 are buses: 2,587 of the Union Government, 10,235 of the State Governments and Union territories, and 888 privately owned. The Ministry itself observed that uptake in the private segment is low and needs to improve. Incentives for scrapping at a registered facility range, under the framework announced for 2025-26, from ₹50,000 to ₹1,50,000 for a Government vehicle and from ₹5,000 to ₹20,000 for a non-Government vehicle; a certificate of deposit issued on scrapping carries no expiry, the owner chooses the scrapping facility himself, the Ministry's portal displaying the facilities in his vicinity with the average rates

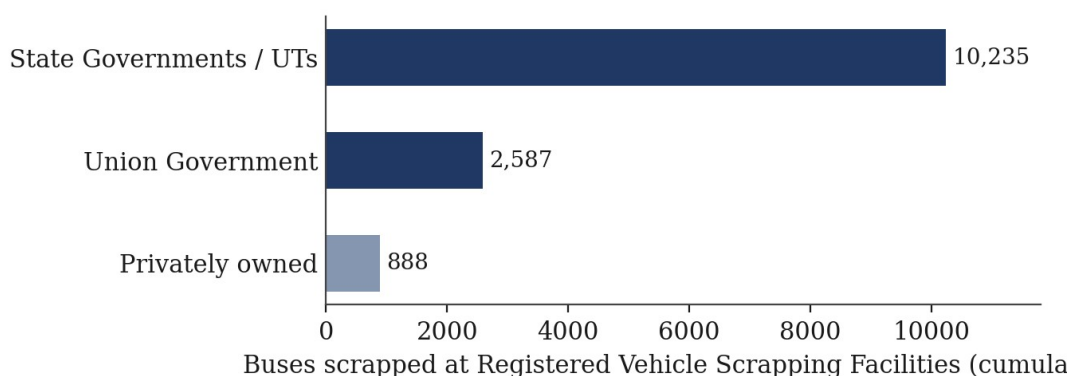
offered; and manufacturers extend a discount of the order of three per cent on a new purchase against the certificate. When a Member asked to the reason behind the private number so small, the answer carried the Committee to the heart of Finding Five. The position is summarised at Table 5 and Figure 2.

Table 5 — Status of Implementation of the Fleet Modernisation Programme

Particulars	Position reported to the Committee
Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities operational	106, across 21 States / UTs
Automated Testing Stations operational	142, across 17 States / UTs
Vehicles scrapped at RVSFs (all classes)	About 2.6 lakh
Buses scrapped at RVSFs — total	13,710
of which: Union Government	2,587
of which: State Governments / UTs	10,235
of which: privately owned	888
Incentive per Government vehicle scrapped	₹50,000 to ₹1,50,000
Incentive per non-Government vehicle scrapped	₹5,000 to ₹20,000

Source: Presentation and background note of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

Figure 2 — Buses Scrapped at Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facilities, by Ownership



Source: Data placed before the Committee by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. The private segment owns about three-quarters of the fleet and accounts for about six per cent of the buses scrapped.

2.5 The programme rests upon fitness testing, and fitness testing upon the network of Automated Testing Stations, of which 142 are operational across 17 States and Union territories. An Automated Testing Station conducts thirty-six categories of test by machine, in place of the visual and largely discretionary examination conducted at Regional Transport Offices. Transport vehicles must be tested every two years for the first eight years and annually thereafter. The Ministry described four models by which stations may be

established, and identified as the most satisfactory the model followed in Gujarat and adopted in Haryana, in which the private sector provides the land, builds the station and conducts the testing without any public investment, break-even being attained at about 18,000 vehicles tested annually. A second model, followed in Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, proceeds on viability gap funding. In Rajasthan, no Automated Testing Station has been established, and inspection centres set up in that State some seven to eight years ago do not meet the prescribed standard, though they are capable of upgradation.

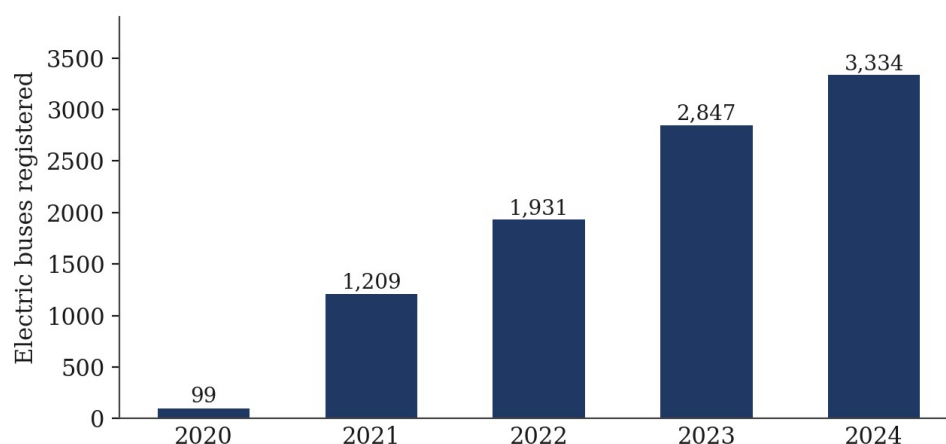
2.6 On electric buses, the Ministry has notified safety requirements for electric powertrains and Rechargeable Electrical Energy Storage Systems, prescribed standards for the measurement of energy consumption, range and power, provided for type approval of electric vehicles under the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, and notified norms for the retrofitment of diesel vehicles for electric and hybrid operation. Within its own remit it has waived registration certificate fees for electric buses and set the fee for the All India Tourist Permit at nil for them. Registrations of electric buses have risen from 99 in 2020 to 3,334 in 2024, as set out in Table 6 and Figure 3; the Committee notes that the latter figure nonetheless represents about 5.7 per cent of the buses registered in that year.

Table 6 — Registration of Buses by Propulsion, 2020 to 2024

Year	Electric	Diesel / Petrol / CNG	Total	Electric share
2020	99	21,531	21,630	0.5%
2021	1,209	8,049	9,258	13.1%
2022	1,931	22,597	24,528	7.9%
2023	2,847	43,265	46,112	6.2%
2024	3,334	55,119	58,453	5.7%

Source: Presentation of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, drawn from the VAHAN database. The figures for 2021 reflect the conditions then obtaining, total registrations having fallen sharply in that year.

Figure 3 — Registration of Electric Buses, 2020 to 2024



Source: Data placed before the Committee by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.

2.7 On charging, the Ministry stated that stations are being provided as part of the wayside amenities on National Highways developed by the National Highways Authority of India, and that a scheme of the Ministry of Heavy Industries to support charge point operators in urban areas was ready and expected to be issued shortly. On the disposal of electric buses and their batteries at the end of life, the Ministry stated in terms that no policy presently exists; that the matter had received some consideration, particularly as regards batteries, for which extended producer responsibility obligations notified by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change apply; and that, the induction of electric buses being about five years old, vehicles have not yet reached the point of scrapping. The Committee acknowledges the openness of this reply, and returns to its implications in Chapter III.

(ii) The safety and inclusivity pillar

2.8 The centerpiece of the safety pillar is the new Bus Body Code. Until now, a fully built bus of seating capacity exceeding 22 passengers could be self-certified for type approval under Form 22B of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules where the body was constructed on a purchased chassis. With effect from 1st September, 2025, self-certification stands withdrawn: every such bus requires type approval from a testing agency specified under Rule 126, such as the Automotive Research Association of India or the International Centre for Automotive Technology, as a condition precedent to registration, with compliance to the performance parameters of AIS-153 and the safety requirements of AIS-052. Approval is granted on a prototype, once for each model, and conformity of production may be verified thereafter by selection of a vehicle from the line. The notification issued approximately one year before its

date of effect, following consideration by a technical committee on which stakeholders are represented and a public objection process.

2.9 For sleeper coaches, revisions under AIS-119 effective from 1st April, 2024 have increased gangway width, and made mandatory toughened glass, safety hammers and readily accessible roof hatches for emergency exit. Fire detection and alarm systems and fire detection and suppression systems have been required under AIS-135 and AIS-153 since 1st April, 2019. For advanced driver assistance, a draft notification, G.S.R. 184(E) dated 20th March, 2025, covers electronic vehicle stability control, automatic emergency braking, driver drowsiness alert and lane departure warning; it stood at the stage of public consultation, with final notification expected within a few months, and compliance will rest with vehicle manufacturers rather than with Bus Body Manufacturers, the systems being electronic in character.

2.10 For school buses, the governing standard is AIS-063, incorporating the provisions of AIS-052; the Committee records with some appreciation that the citation was settled in evidence at the instance of a Member who had spent an hour that very day with the standards, and who pressed the point until the Director of the Central Institute of Road Transport clarified the position. The Ministry stated that electronic stability control is being brought into the standard; that seat design is being revised with reference to the physical characteristics of children; that provision for the stowage of school bags is under discussion; and that step height is being reduced. For accessibility, AIS-052 and AIS-153 require priority seats with facilities for securing walking aids, provision for a wheelchair, and stop-request controls adjacent to priority seats; AIS-119 reserves at least one lower berth near the service door in sleeper coaches, with a call bell; and a draft standard, AIS-216, is under formulation to bring the floor height of 9-metre and 12-metre intra-city buses down to 400 millimetres in a phased manner, with kneeling provision, as against the 650 to 800 millimetres of the fleet in service. Discussion with stakeholders on AIS-216 was described as at an advanced stage, with release for public comment expected in about three months. Members observed that the great majority of the buses now operated by the State undertakings are of stepped, high-floor construction, one Member remarking that the transition would need to reach some ninety per cent of the fleet before it could be called complete, and asked whether a time-frame exists; the Ministry's answer, that the requirement will attach to vehicles hereafter manufactured, is weighed at Finding Six. The principal safety and accessibility instruments, with their dates of effect, are brought together at Table 7.

Table 7 — Principal Safety and Accessibility Instruments and their Dates of Effect

Instrument	Effect from	Coverage
AIS-135 / AIS-153 (fire safety)	1st April, 2019	Fire detection and alarm; fire detection and suppression
AIS-119 (sleeper coaches)	1st April, 2024	Wider gangways; toughened glass and safety hammers; accessible roof hatches; reserved lower berth with call bell
Bus Body Code	1st September, 2025	Type approval by Rule 126 agency mandatory for fully built buses above 22 seats; self-certification withdrawn; AIS-153 performance and AIS-052 safety parameters
ADAS — G.S.R. 184(E)	Draft of 20th March, 2025	Electronic stability control; automatic emergency braking; driver drowsiness alert; lane departure warning; compliance to rest with vehicle manufacturers
AIS-063 (school buses)	In force	Incorporates AIS-052; electronic stability control, child-scaled seating, bag stowage and reduced step height under revision
AIS-216 (accessibility)	Draft under formulation	Floor height of 400 mm for 9-metre and 12-metre intra-city buses, phased; kneeling provision

Source: Presentation and oral evidence of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. Every instrument operates prospectively, upon vehicles manufactured after its date of effect; the significance of this is examined at Finding Four.

2.11 On the safety of women, the Ministry described the scheme instituted after the events of 2012 under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, under which proposals of States for the fitment of emergency buttons, emergency call facilities and Vehicle Location Tracking Devices in public transport vehicles are sanctioned by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. All proposals received have been sanctioned; sixteen States have made progress and effected installation; others are in course. Closed-circuit television, the Committee was informed, is being made mandatory in new buses. The working of the emergency alert system in practice is dealt with at paragraph 2.22 and Finding Four, and the Committee's question regarding dedicated services for women during peak hours, which was not answered at the sitting, at paragraph 2.25.

(iii) The permit regime and enforcement

2.12 The Ministry explained the statutory scheme of permits: the stage carriage permit, authorising operation along a specified route with the taking up and setting down of passengers at intermediate stages; the contract carriage permit, authorising carriage from point to point under a contract, without intermediate boarding; and the All India Tourist

Permit, framed by the Union Government, enabling operation across State boundaries without separate authorisation in each State, in the nature of a "one nation, one permit" arrangement.

2.13 The Ministry was frank in its assessment that difficulties under this regime run in both directions. Certain operators obtain All India Tourist Permits from States in which their vehicles never operate, permits taken in Nagaland or Arunachal Pradesh for vehicles running in southern or western India being cited; and certain States, Kerala and Tamil Nadu among them, complain that vehicles under such permits are operated as stage carriages, with a perceived loss of revenue, the tax being apportioned among States by distance run. At the same time, the Ministry accepted that operators face harassment in enforcement. It stated that it sees no reason for the continuance of border check posts; that it has written to the States repeatedly; that individual States were called out at a conference of Transport Ministers, one State thereafter discontinuing the practice; and that check posts nonetheless continue to operate in six States.

2.14 The Ministry then described the remedial framework upon which a broad understanding has been reached with the State Transport Secretaries: that the All India Tourist Permit shall be obtained from the State in which the vehicle was first registered, and that every vehicle shall be fitted with a Vehicle Location Tracking Device, the data being monitored through command and control centres at the State level, for which funds have been released, and a national control room, for which a scheme is under approval. Once monitoring is in place, the Ministry submitted, evidence will exist both to establish misuse where it occurs and to establish that enforcement action was unwarranted where that is the case, and the evidence will be available to an operator who wishes to contest action taken against him.

2.15 In parallel, the Ministry has prepared a standard operating procedure for electronic enforcement, comprising the manner of issue of electronic challans and the procedures for contesting and for payment. Acting through the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety in a field where its own competence is constrained, the Ministry has obtained orders giving the guidelines the force of law; the document was stated to be at the stage of finalisation. Through the Jan Vishwas Bill, an amendment to the Motor Vehicles Act was proposed under which a vehicle may be registered at any Regional Transport Office within a State. Fitness testing, however, remains confined to the State of registration; a Member pressed in evidence

the case of a vehicle registered in Rajasthan, detained in Chennai by weather beyond the currency of its certificate, which had to be carried home upon another vehicle for testing, and urged that testing conducted to a uniform national standard at automated stations be made portable across the country; the Ministry's answer, that the certificate is the State's because the State's additional rules are applied in it, defines the question the Committee takes up at Recommendation One.

(iv) Terminals, infrastructure and public-private partnership

2.16 On terminal infrastructure, the Ministry placed before the Committee what the Committee regards as the governing insight of that part of the examination. In civil aviation, the operation of services and the provision of infrastructure are in different hands; several States, Delhi and Haryana among them, have applied the same distinction to bus transport by separating the ownership and management of terminals from the transport undertaking which operates services; and where this has been done, a terminal fee, is levied upon every operator using the facility, and access ceases to be a matter of contention between competitors.

2.17 Through the National Highways Logistics Management Limited, the Ministry has commenced the development of bus terminals on a public-private partnership basis with willing States: a proposal is in progress for Gurugram, and another for Katra, where an intermodal station is to serve both as a bus terminal and as a facility connecting more than one mode. Such projects, the Ministry stated, are financially viable in the larger cities at least, and readily so where a commercial element is built into the development. On the framing of a national code prescribing the requirements of a bus terminal, the Ministry tendered that it would examine it, subject to the variation of available land from place to place. On bus stops upon National Highways, the Ministry informed the Committee that a standardised design for a modern bus stop, costing of the order of ₹10 to ₹12 lakh, is at the final stage of approval, to be applied to expressways and highways hereafter constructed and built into the code thereafter, and undertook to furnish the design upon notification.

2.18 Finally, on the digital pillar, the Ministry identified the integration of Intelligent Transport Systems, comprising fleet management systems, electronic ticketing and passenger information systems, stated that it encourages States and undertakings to adopt them and releases funds for the purpose, and described general guidelines issued in respect of aggregators, within which buses are covered as a mode. No particulars of initiatives, targets, budgetary provision or extent of adoption were placed before the Committee under this pillar.

B. Evidence of the Operators and of Industry

2.19 The Committee heard the President of the Bus and Car Operators Confederation of India, representatives of FlixBus and GreenCell Mobility, individual inter-city operators, and a research organisation whose study of the inter-city bus system, undertaken through consultations with operators, aggregators, researchers and serving and former government officers, was placed before the Committee. The Committee notes from that study that the Transport Development Council has committed to form a committee headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, to deliberate upon the difficulties attending the All India Tourist Permit, incorporating feedback from the States; the subject of the deepest grievance before this Committee is thus already acknowledged, at the highest administrative level, to require resolution.

2.20 The operators' deposition on the All India Tourist Permit may be summarised shortly, for Chapter III examines it at length. Holders of the permit are exempted from Rules 82 to 85A of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, yet no authoritative statement exists of what that exemption permits: whether, and to what extent, such a vehicle may halt at a public bus stand or take up passengers at intermediate points. A clarification was sought at the sitting and was not furnished. In the vacuum, enforcement varies from officer to officer and State to State: vehicles are stopped and detained at borders, challans ranging between one to one and a half lakh rupees are issued, sums exceeding, as Members observed, an operator's monthly instalment on the vehicle, and passengers are on occasion required to alight. In one instance placed before the Committee, students travelling from Delhi to Shimla were subjected to penal action on the ground that, being residents of the destination, they were not tourists. Insurers, it was further submitted, rely upon the unsettled classification to decline or delay claims arising from accidents, including claims for own damage, so that the ambiguity ultimately falls upon the injured passenger. The operators pressed for redesignation of the permit as an All India Passenger Permit, for its issue by the State of registration, and for enforcement founded upon electronic verification rather than physical interception, observing that the VAHAN database already records the permit, tax, insurance and fitness particulars of every vehicle, and FASTag the movement of every vehicle across every tolled highway.

2.21 On terminals, the operators drew the analogy of civil aviation sector: an airline does not build its own airport but obtains access to public infrastructure on payment. Delhi, it was stated, is the only jurisdiction extending clear access to all inter-State bus terminals to private operators; a charge of ₹500 per entry is levied at the Kashmere Gate terminal and collected

through FASTag, and one operator alone pays approximately ₹5 lakh per day in access fees there, the receipts having improved the terminal's finances, funded its renovation, and given passengers a fixed point of departure. Elsewhere, access is refused on the stated ground that the terminals belong to the State Road Transport Undertaking and cannot be opened to its competitors. In the smaller towns, publicly owned terminal capacity stands substantially unused; operators have sought access and offered payment; and where States have accepted, the terminals have turned cash-flow positive within months, the receipts being applied to cleanliness, sanitation and accessibility. In Tamil Nadu, private operators are permitted a fifteen-minute halt at bus stands upon payment of ₹500. Denial of terminal access, the operators added, defeats the very standards of safety and inclusivity, for the assistance of Divyangjan, the elderly and women presupposes a defined and controlled point of boarding.

2.22 On the emergency alert system, an operator deposed that the button, costing between ₹15 and ₹20, has been fitted in every vehicle of his fleet for the past ten years in compliance with the requirement instituted after the events of 2012; that no receiving centre has been established anywhere to answer it; and that at every fitness test a fee ranging from ₹2,500 to ₹25,000 per vehicle is charged in respect of this equipment and its repeated examination. The Ministry, clarifying, stated that in several States the system had been connected to the emergency response number 112, that a large volume of false alarms followed, and that States thereupon disengaged it; the Ministry wishes the system restored, while among operators there is a feeling that it should be dispensed with. A Member observed that if the system is not effective, it is not fair that so much money be taken for it; another asked why closed-circuit television should not be installed, to which the Ministry replied that CCTV is being made mandatory in new buses.

2.23 On the structure of the sector, the operators placed six propositions before the Committee: that there exists no authority for surface passenger transport comparable to those constituted for telecommunications, civil aviation, insurance or banking; that an authority for surface transport infrastructure should be created on the model of the Airports Authority of India, charged with building bus terminals and multi-modal terminals serving rail as well as road, a suggestion of which the Ministry accepted that a common standard would be an advantage, subject to the constitutional constraint; that the Motor Vehicles Act is a statute of traffic and vehicles, and that legislation is required in which the passenger is the central subject; that the expression "public transport" is in practice read as meaning publicly owned buses, although any vehicle carrying persons other than the family of its owner serves the

public; that priority in budgetary allocation should be accorded to public transport infrastructure, it being submitted that 92 per cent of buses have no infrastructure available to them and that a proportion of the order of 25 per cent of the allocation for roads might appropriately be applied to infrastructure for public transport as distinct from carriageway; and that planning and monitoring bodies are required at every level of government, no single mode being capable of door-to-door service. The anomaly was also cited that buses are not permitted within airports although they are received at railway stations.

2.24 Two further submissions from the industry side deserve record. The first concerned scale: five to six crore persons travelling daily by inter-city bus, some 20 lakh buses in operation on the wider definition, the majority engaged in school and employee transport, and approximately 4 lakh vehicles upon inter-city and inter-State routes. Members did not let the figures pass. One Member challenged the deponents to justify a number nearly five times the official count, observing that with a bus carrying at most about fifty passengers the vehicle and passenger figures ought to reconcile arithmetically, and stating in terms that a Committee of Parliament is entitled to know the correct number; the deponents answered that the divergence lies in the vehicle categories of the VAHAN database itself, only two of several being comprehended in the official figure. The exchange, which could not be brought to a settled number during the sitting, is examined at Finding Ten. The second concerned conduct in the market: aggregators operating in the inter-city segment have taken to declining vehicles not registered in the State of operation, because such vehicles are liable to be stopped and their passengers inconvenienced, and passengers record these experiences in publicly visible reviews. Private capital, in other words, is already pricing the cost of regulatory uncertainty, and the price is being paid in the coverage of service.

C. Points Raised by Members in the Course of the Sitting

2.25 Members subjected both the Ministry and the operators to close questioning, and the principal points may be gathered as follows. On institutions, Members drew attention to the distribution of responsibility for the bus among three Union Ministries and desired that the Ministries of Housing and Urban Affairs and Heavy Industries, and the Automotive Research Association of India, be associated with any further examination. On fitness, Members pressed the practical economics of the Automated Testing Station network: where a district is served by a single station, the fuel cost of taking a vehicle to it and back may be of the order of ₹10,000, while a certificate may be had at a Regional Transport Office for an informal

payment of about half that sum; a regime so constructed, Members observed, makes evasion cheaper than compliance throughout the country. On the Bus Body Code, Members raised the position of small body-building enterprises concentrated in Rajasthan and Punjab, for whom the cost and procedure of prototype approval may weigh heavily, with consequences for employment. On electric mobility, Members sought a unified strategy for the disposal of batteries, noting that batteries will reach the end of life before the buses that carry them, and questioned the adequacy of charging stations on highways and the pace of urban schemes. On the fifteen-year cap for Government buses, Members questioned the economic logic of an age limit unknown, as it was observed, in other jurisdictions, for an asset of substantial capital value, and pressed for uniform fitness-based norms. On school transport, Members placed before the Committee the practice of deploying buses withdrawn from inter-State service, repainted, upon village school routes in an overcrowded condition, video records from Rajasthan showing children positioned outside the windows of moving vehicles, and fatalities having occurred. On women's safety, Members enquired what dedicated services for women at peak hours were contemplated and what part the State undertakings would play, and the enquiry went unanswered, an omission the Committee has treated as itself a datum. A Member pursued the connected question of sanitation with particular persistence: whether toilets could not be provided within buses on long overnight journeys, as is done in other countries, pressing that the facility must be assured at least for women; the Ministry replied that the matter is comprehended in the new Bus Body Code and that standardisation is in progress. On accessibility, Members pointed to the high floors of the fleet in service and the need to fast-track the standards for low-floor and sleeper accessibility. On enforcement geography, a Member instanced a highway which crosses a neighbouring State for barely a hundred metres, so that what is in substance an intra-State journey stands exposed to inter-State enforcement for the length of a culvert.

2.26 Members were also constructive. It was Members who proposed that the ranking of States upon their treatment of public transport be instituted and published, drawing upon information furnished by operators as to where vehicles are most frequently stopped and where check posts continue, observing that the identity of the six States operating check posts is not generally known and that publication would of itself generate an incentive to reform; as a suggestion which the Ministry assured would be implemented as early as possible, with a feedback component. It was Members who observed that a standardised bus stop costing ₹10 to ₹12 lakh falls within the scope of works fundable under the Members of Parliament Local

Area Development Scheme, so that an approved design, once circulated, would enable Members themselves to provide such structures in their constituencies. And it was in the Committee's deliberations that the proposals took shape for a centralized crowd sourced rating system for operators, routes and terminals with its outcomes linked to the permit and licensing databases; for GPS-based live tracking of buses on a unified public platform with arrival boards at terminals, aligned in its technical specifications with the systems in use on the Indian Railways; for a unified online booking platform spanning public and private operators; for a centralized maintenance, repair and overhaul system for tourist buses resting upon accredited facilities and digital logbooks; for a multi-channel grievance system carrying geo-tagged citizen complaints to the authority concerned; for minimum service standards for terminals; for an integrated multimodal tourism transport ecosystem; for a time-bound plan to bring electric buses into service, with targets for each operator and support by way of capital subsidy, cheaper finance and tax relief; and for phased, mandatory coverage of these digital systems for operators holding commercial permits, with simplified compliance for the smallest. These proposals, communicated to the Ministry for response, inform Chapter IV throughout.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

3.1 Upon the evidence set out in Chapter II, the Committee records ten findings. They are stated in the order of the weight the Committee attaches to them, and each is answered by the recommendation bearing the same number in Chapter IV.

Finding One: The law governs the vehicle; no law governs the journey

3.2 The first and largest finding concerns the architecture of the law itself. The Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 knows the bus in two characters only: the stage carriage, plying a fixed route with intermediate boarding, and the contract carriage, hired from point to point. Between these two categories, conceived for an age in which a passenger attended at a terminal, purchased a ticket and presented it for examination, falls the whole of the modern inter-city industry: the service booked remotely on a telephone, boarding at a point convenient to the passenger, operated across State lines under an All India Tourist Permit whose very name misdescribes the persons it carries. The consequences were laid bare in evidence. Nobody, including the Ministry which framed the rules, could state at the sitting what the exemption of permit holders from Rules 82 to 85A of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules actually permits. Students on a Delhi to Shimla service were penalised for failing to be tourists. Challans of ₹1 to ₹1.5 lakh, exceeding the monthly instalment on the vehicle, are issued at borders which the Ministry itself considers should not exist, and which persist in six States notwithstanding repeated letters and a naming at the conference of Transport Ministers. Insurers plead the unsettled character of the permit to decline the claims of injured passengers. A Member reduced the absurdity of the geography to a single instance: a highway that clips a neighbouring State for about a hundred metres, exposing an intra-State journey to the whole apparatus of inter-State enforcement. And when another Member put it that this cluster of grievances was the industry's chief anxiety, the Ministry concurred with this assertion. Each of these is commonly discussed as a separate malady; the Committee finds that they are one malady. Where the categories of the parent statute no longer describe the service actually rendered, every subordinate instrument built upon those categories, namely permits, exemptions, enforcement and insurance, becomes uncertain with it.

3.3 The Committee also finds that the materials for the remedy are already at hand, and that what is wanting is consolidation and speed. The Ministry has reached an understanding with the State Transport Secretaries that the permit be issued by the State of first registration

and that compliance be monitored through Vehicle Location Tracking Devices; command and control centres have been funded; a national control room is under approval; a standard operating procedure for electronic enforcement has been prepared with the authority of the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety behind it; and the operators themselves demonstrated that the VAHAN and FASTag databases, read together, can establish where a vehicle went and whether it was entitled to go there, without a single physical interception. The Committee would add, from its study of practice abroad, that the great liberalisations of inter-city coach travel in Europe proceeded precisely by replacing route-wise permission with the simple licensing of fit operators: Germany opened its inter-city coach market in 2013 and France followed in 2015, and in each case a market that had barely existed multiplied within a few years, new national networks arising to aggregate hundreds of small family operators under common branding and technology, one of which now sat before this very Committee as a witness. Nor have events since the sitting stood still: public reports in the months that followed record private operators suspending inter-State services between Kerala and its neighbouring States over the very disputes of taxation and permit recognition described above, the conflict escalating from harassment of individual vehicles to the withdrawal of whole corridors of service. The finding, in short, is that the permit regime is not in need of clarification; it is in need of replacement. Recommendation One so provides.

Finding Two: The terminal is the sector's point of strangulation, and its greatest idle asset

3.4 The second finding concerns the bus terminal. The evidence established, and the Ministry's own deposition supplied the explanation for, a structural conflict of interest at the heart of terminal administration: in most States the terminal is owned and managed by the State Road Transport Undertaking, which is simultaneously an operator of services, so that the body controlling the gate is a competitor of every operator standing outside it. Access is refused in terms which concede the point, namely that the applicant competes with the owner. The results are contradictory on multiple fronts. Passengers board from roadsides rather than from premises with lighting, sanitation and information. The safety and inclusivity standards of Chapter II presuppose a controlled point of boarding which most private services are denied. Publicly owned terminals in the smaller towns stand substantially unused while demand mills about outside them. And the exchequer forgoes revenue which the evidence shows to be immediate and substantial: at the one terminal complex where access is sold openly, Kashmere Gate in Delhi, a ₹500 entry collected through FASTag yields from a single

operator approximately ₹5 lakh per day, funding the renovation of the terminal itself; and small-town terminals opened to paying operators have turned cash-flow positive within months.

3.5 The Committee finds that the remedy has likewise already been identified, partly by the Ministry and partly by the operators, and requires only to be pursued to its conclusion. The Ministry described the separation, already effected in Delhi and Haryana, of terminal ownership from service operation, on the pattern of civil aviation, where the airport and the airline are never the same undertaking, with a terminal fee payable by every user. The operators proposed a dedicated authority for surface passenger terminals on the model of the Airports Authority of India, and the Ministry accepted before the Committee that a common standard so established would be an advantage. The National Highways Logistics Management Limited is already developing terminals at Gurugram and an intermodal station at Katra on a public-private basis, and the Ministry stated that such projects are viable wherever a commercial element is incorporated. No national code exists prescribing what a bus terminal must contain, although codes of great detail prescribe what a bus must contain; and 95 per cent of the buses of the State undertakings halt upon the carriageway of the highway itself, the standardised bus stop, costed at ₹10 to ₹12 lakh, still awaiting notification. The Committee has also weighed a cautionary example from abroad. In the United States, where terminal infrastructure was left wholly to the market, the historic stations of the principal inter-city bus company have in recent years been bought up by property investors and closed, and inter-city passengers in great cities now board from open curbsides; a nation that once possessed a terminal in every town let its terminals die, and is discovering what their absence costs the poorest travellers. India still owns its terminals. The choice before it is the airport path or the curbside path, and the window in which the choice is free will not stay open indefinitely. The Committee finds that terminal infrastructure is at once the sector's binding constraint and its most bankable public-private opportunity, and Recommendation Two is framed accordingly.

Finding Three: The digital pillar is a name without a programme, while the digital rails already exist

3.6 The third finding concerns the third pillar. The contrast in the quality of evidence has been noted at paragraph 1.12: notifications, dates and figures under sustainability and safety; three category headings under digital. The Committee does not infer idleness; it infers, and finds, that the digital pillar has never been reduced to a programme, with initiatives, targets,

funds and dates capable of being reported against. The cost of this vacancy is borne daily by the passenger. Systems for ticketing, tracking and passenger information have grown up State by State and undertaking by undertaking, each to its own design, none conversing with its neighbour, so that no journey crossing a boundary of jurisdiction or of operator can be planned, booked or tracked as one journey. The Committee heard the illustration of a resident of Gurugram obliged to spend of the order of ₹800 to reach the Kashmere Gate terminal in order to board a bus to Jaipur which passes within sight of his home; the example is trivial in itself and revealing in what it represents.

3.7 Meanwhile, the very State which has not built a passenger-facing digital layer for its buses has built, for other purposes, the finest digital rails in the developing world. VAHAN holds the registration, permit, tax, insurance and fitness particulars of every vehicle; FASTag records every tolled movement; Vehicle Location Tracking Devices are already mandatory equipment; and the country's experience of unified payments has shown what open, interoperable standards can summon from private enterprise. The Committee heard, too, that a private digital layer for the bus already exists and thrives, in the booking platforms and aggregators through which a large share of inter-city custom now flows; the same platforms, declining vehicles registered outside the State of operation for fear of enforcement, are pricing the State's regulatory failure into the map of service. The Committee finds that the task is not to construct a governmental application, but to do for the bus what was done for payments: prescribe the standards, open the data, and let public and private systems interoperate. Two facts from the wider record fortify the finding. Industry reporting places inter-city bus bookings through private digital platforms at some fourteen crore passengers in a recent half-year, growing by about a quarter annually with occupancies at record levels — a private digital layer of world scale already exists, and waits only for a public data grid to stand upon. And the international experience of fare and data simplification points the same way: independent research in Germany has credited that country's single nationwide public transport ticket with a measurable shift of travel from road to public transport, evidence of how powerfully a simple, universal product can move behaviour once the underlying systems interoperate. The Committee notes that among the proposals before it is the alignment of tracking specifications with the systems in use on the Indian Railways, so that the citizen may one day follow a bus as easily as a train.

3.8 Two further capabilities lie latent in the same grid, and the Committee draws them out deliberately, for they convert the passenger from the object of the system into one of its

instruments. The first is citizen vigilance. The proposals before the Committee already contain its elements, a moderated, crowdsourced rating portal on the one hand and a grievance channel carrying geo-tagged complaints on the other; and the country has already proved the pattern at national scale in another field, where the Election Commission's citizen vigilance application enables any citizen to lodge a geo-tagged, time-stamped report, with photograph or video, which travels automatically to the jurisdictional officer for disposal within a defined time. The Committee sees no reason why the condition of a bus should be harder to report than the conduct of an election. The State's inspector is occasional; the passenger is always aboard. The videos of children carried outside the windows of moving school buses, which reached this Committee through its Members, would under such a system have reached the enforcement officer the same hour, with the vehicle's number and position attached.

3.9 The second is the map. Every bus holding a commercial permit is already required to carry a satellite positioning device, and every tolled crossing is already recorded electronically; months of such traces, aggregated, amount to a survey of the working bus network which no manual exercise could produce, and which at present is generated only to be discarded. Read through a geographic information system, the same data yields the atlas the sector has never had: the routes actually operated as against those authorised; the points at which buses actually halt, to be compared with the evidence that 95 per cent of State undertakings' buses halt upon the carriageway itself; the running speeds and delay patterns from which arrival times can be predicted with the reliability passengers now expect of the railways; and the evidence-based siting of the bus bays, terminals, testing stations and charging infrastructure with which other Recommendations of this Report are concerned. Prediction, in transport, is a by-product of observation; the observation is already mandated and already paid for. Recommendation Three gives this finding, in all three of its parts, form.

Finding Four: Safety regulation reaches the bus at its birth, and abandons it thereafter

3.10 The fourth finding concerns safety, and it may be stated bluntly. Every safety instrument examined in Chapter II, namely the Bus Body Code, the sleeper coach revisions of AIS-119, the fire systems of AIS-135 and AIS-153, the draft standards for advanced driver assistance, and the accessibility standard AIS-216, operates prospectively, upon vehicles hereafter manufactured. The fleet in service, which is the fleet in which the travelling public actually rides, is governed by none of them; Table 7 collects the instruments and their dates,

and the column of dates is the finding. It is governed instead by the fitness regime; and the fitness regime, upon the evidence, is a network of 142 automated stations across 17 States (Table 5), absent altogether from Rajasthan, whose economics are such that taking a vehicle to the station can cost twice the informal payment for which a certificate may otherwise be had, a comparison Members themselves placed before the Committee from the experience of their own districts. A safety architecture so arranged deters the honest and rewards the evasive, and its protective effect diminishes precisely as the vehicle ages and the risk increases. The Committee has not forgotten the account, given by a Member in the course of the sitting, of a bus which came to rest wedged between two culverts, its occupants unable to get out of an enclosed coach; the standards which now require accessible emergency exits answer that account only for buses yet to be built.

3.11 Nowhere is the gap between prescription and protection so stark as in the emergency alert system. A device costing ₹15 to ₹20, mandated in the aftermath of a crime that seared the national conscience, has been fitted in vehicles for a decade; no centre exists anywhere to receive its signal; States that connected it to the emergency number disengaged it under a flood of false alarms; and yet at every fitness test the operator pays between ₹2,500 and ₹25,000 to have the silent instrument examined. The Committee heard a Member put the matter with a simplicity the Committee cannot improve upon: if it is not effective, it is not fair to take so much money for it. The Committee finds, further, that the regulatory system knows the vehicle but not the operator: no licence, rating or record attaches consequences to the safety conduct of the undertaking which schedules the driver, maintains the vehicle and deploys a time-expired inter-State coach, repainted, upon a village school route with children beyond its windows. Jurisdictions which have made bus travel safe have generally done so by making the operator's licence, and not merely the vehicle's certificate, the instrument of accountability: in the United Kingdom, an operator holds his licence upon continuing good repute and fitness, and a traffic commissioner may revoke it, and disqualify him, for safety failures, whatever the paper condition of his vehicles. The Committee completed its hearing in July, 2025. Before this Report could be presented, the country counted its dead in two sleeper coach fires within ten days of each other in October, at Jaisalmer and at Kurnool, each reported in the public record to have taken some twenty lives, drawing the intervention of the National Human Rights Commission and a governmental review of sleeper coach design. The Committee claims no foresight; it records only that everything those tragedies are reported to

have revealed, the enclosed coach, the obstructed egress, the in-service vehicle beyond the reach of the new standards, was already in its evidence three months earlier.

Finding Five: The fleet cannot renew itself, because the asset is chained to the balance sheet of its owner

3.12 The fifth finding explains a pattern that recurs across scrappage, electrification and fuel transition alike, and the fleet tables tell it at a glance. The scrapping programme has succeeded completely in the Government fleet, where buses above fifteen years stand at nil, and scarcely at all in the private fleet: Table 4 shows that all 21,074 buses older than fifteen years on the national register are privately owned, every one of them, and Figure 2 shows that of 13,710 buses scrapped only 888 were private, although the private segment is three-quarters of the whole. When a Member asked why the private number is so small, the arithmetic of Table 5 supplied the answer before the witnesses could: the incentive offered to the private owner, ₹5,000 to ₹20,000 against ₹50,000 to ₹1,50,000 for a Government vehicle, bears no relation to the replacement cost he must find from his own resources. Members probed the machinery too, satisfying themselves that the certificate of deposit does not expire and that the owner may choose his facility from a portal; the machinery is sound, and still the private owner does not come, which is what makes the finding structural rather than administrative. Electric buses, for all the completeness of the enabling standards, were 5.7 per cent of registrations in 2024 (Table 6, Figure 3); the charging the Ministry can offer lies along the National Highways while the buses to be charged ply in the cities, under the schemes of two other Ministries; and no framework exists for the vehicle or its battery at the end of life, though the batteries will arrive there first, as a Member with electric vehicles of his own put to the Secretary in the plainest terms: the batteries are expiring now. The common thread is capital. A bus is a substantial capital asset, as a Member observed in questioning the very existence of an age ceiling for the Government fleet; the small operator who owns one cannot write it off, cannot finance its electric successor, and rationally defers both.

3.13 The Committee finds that the answer lies in a principle the record itself discloses. When a State procured private capacity on a per-kilometre basis, retaining the route and the fare while paying for the service, the response, in the Ministry's word, was substantial: operators will run what they need not own. The jurisdictions which have accomplished fleet transitions at scale have each, in their different ways, done exactly this. Shenzhen electrified a municipal fleet of some sixteen thousand buses within a decade, resting the transition upon

leasing structures under which the operator paid for use rather than ownership; Santiago de Chile assembled the largest electric bus fleet outside China by placing the buses in the hands of utilities and financiers who lease them to the men who run them; and Singapore contracts out the operation of services over buses and depots which the State itself owns. Three continents, one principle: place the asset with entities able to carry it, and leave the operator to operate. The Committee further notes the proposals before it for a time-bound plan to bring electric buses into service, with targets for each operator, supported by capital subsidy, cheaper finance and tax relief settled with the Ministry of Heavy Industries, and the suggestion, made in its own deliberations, of regional clusters combining bus manufacturing, testing and maintenance capacity, which would serve at once the body-builders of Rajasthan and Punjab facing the discipline of the new Code, the testing deficit of Finding Four, and the maintenance needs of the tourist fleet. Recommendation Five draws these threads together.

Finding Six: Inclusion has been legislated for the vehicle, not organised for the passenger

3.14 The sixth finding concerns the word "inclusive" in the title of this Report. The standards are not wanting: priority seats, wheelchair provision and stop-request controls under AIS-052 and AIS-153; the reserved lower berth and call bell of AIS-119; the 400-millimetre floor and kneeling provision of draft AIS-216. But AIS-216 is prospective and pre-consultation, while the fleet in service rides at 650 to 800 millimetres, three steps above the kerb, and will be replaced only at the pace disclosed by the registration figures. Inclusion of women fares no better, and the sitting itself supplied the demonstration: the subject reached the floor only when a Member pointed out that the depositions had passed it by, and the Committee's specific enquiry which followed, what dedicated services for women at peak hours are planned and what part the State undertakings will take, went unanswered. The alert system stands as described in Finding Four. And the evidence connected sanitation to safety in terms the Committee accepts without qualification. A Member pressed the question to its practical point: on an overnight journey, can the toilet not travel with the bus, as it does in other countries, and must its provision not be assured for women at the least; the Ministry could answer only that the matter is comprehended in the new Bus Body Code, standardisation being in progress. Where an overnight service halts at a place without usable facilities, the journey is closed to half the travelling public, whatever the fare and whatever the standards of the coach; a mode which women cannot use without apprehension is not, in any sense that matters, an inclusive mode.

3.15 The Committee finds that inclusion must now be organised as a service and not merely specified as equipment: services operated for women, and visibly operated by women, with women bus drivers as well as women among the other bus staff; sanitation treated as network infrastructure, on board through the standardisation in progress under the new Bus Body Code and at halts through monitored facilities; and the safety kit of button, tracking and camera made to function as a system, funded on a footing, such as the Inclusive Transport Fund suggested in the Committee's deliberations, that does not tax the operator for equipment that answers to no one. The Committee observes from the public record that the federation has already begun to answer the question the Ministry did not: one State has since fielded a pink bus service operated by women drivers, and the capital has announced women-only electric services. What is under way piecemeal deserves a national frame, and Recommendation Six provides accordingly.

Finding Seven: The tourist bus carries the nation's visitors, and no part of the system is designed for it

3.16 The seventh finding belongs particularly to this Committee, whose remit joins transport to tourism. The instrument that carries the word "tourist", the All India Tourist Permit, is in truth the workhorse of general inter-city travel, and its infirmities have been found at Finding One. But the genuine tourist service, the coach on a circuit, the group at a pilgrimage, the visitor moving from airport to hill station, is served no better. There is no maintenance, repair and overhaul system for the tourist fleet: no registry of accredited facilities, no standardised schedules, no digital record travelling with the vehicle, although the proposals before the Committee set out precisely such a system, down to the digital logbook and the accredited vendor. There are no integrated circuits binding the tourist bus to rail, metro, airport and waterway through common ticketing and information, although the proposals before the Committee describe that ecosystem in terms the Committee has adopted. And the terminal, where the visitor forms his first and last impression of Indian travel, is as Finding Two describes it. The intermodal station at Katra, conceived to join bus and other modes at a great pilgrimage destination, shows what is possible; it is at present an exception.

3.17 The Committee finds that tourism is not an adjunct to this subject but a principal use-case of it, and that a country which aspires to receive the world may reasonably be expected to move its visitors by road in vehicles maintained to certified standards, from terminals fit to be seen, upon circuits planned as products. Recommendation Seven gives this finding effect.

Finding Eight: The mode that carries the most receives the least, and no head of the budget answers for it

3.18 The eighth finding concerns money. The Ministry administers an annual budget of the order of ₹3 lakh crore; no substantial provision within it is available for infrastructure serving bus transport, as distinct from the construction of carriageway. The submissions before the Committee, that 92 per cent of buses have no infrastructure available to them, and that a proportion of the order of 25 per cent of the road allocation might properly be applied to public transport infrastructure, stand effectively unanswered. Members of the Committee themselves identified an immediately available instrument, and did so across the table in real time: a Member asked the cost of the standardised bus stop, was told ₹10 to ₹12 lakh, and observed that Members could then build such stops in their constituencies under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme, the Ministry undertaking to circulate the design upon notification. Members spoke, too, of what stands in the design's absence: stops improvised from corporate social responsibility funds, and structures raised without a standard to build to. The Committee finds that the imbalance between the numbers carried by bus, on any of the figures at paragraph 1.6, and the provision made for those who carry and are carried, is not a matter of scarcity but of the absence of any budgetary identity for the bus passenger; what has no head in the budget has no claim on it. The public record shows where that road leads if it is not left. Independent public-policy research records that in one major State the ratio of buses to population fell from one for every 910 persons in the year 2000 to one for every 2,807 by 2023, the shortfall migrating directly into private vehicle ownership and congestion; a separate study of another State's cities has assessed their unmet requirement at some twenty-four thousand buses. Supply is thinning at the very moment industry reporting records inter-city demand at record occupancies. A country that under-provides the mode carrying its greatest numbers does not economise; it merely transfers the cost to roads, to air, and to those least able to pay it.

Finding Nine: Where the Union cannot direct, it has not yet begun to disclose

3.19 The ninth finding concerns the instruments of a federal polity. The constitutional position accepted at paragraph 1.9 means that the Union Government cannot command the States in most of the matters found above; but the evidence shows that the instrument which remains, the systematic publication of comparative fact, has scarcely been tried, and that where tried informally it works. Six States maintain border check posts which the regulating Ministry itself considers purposeless; their identity is not generally known; one State

abandoned the practice after being named at a conference of Transport Ministers. The proposal of Members that States be ranked and the rankings published, upon parameters such as testing station density, terminal access, check posts, online services and the functioning of the emergency systems, was accepted by the Ministry as a good suggestion to be implemented as early as possible, with a feedback component drawing upon the experience of operators; an industry exercise of the kind is already in progress with a research organisation. The Committee finds that comparative disclosure, published at regular intervals upon verifiable parameters, is the strongest lawful lever available to the Union in this sector, and that it should now be institutionalised. Recommendation Nine so provides.

Finding Ten: The State counts vehicles, and has never counted passengers

3.20 The tenth finding underlies all the others. The official national figure of 4.4 lakh buses (Table 1) excludes an entire State, which does not report to the VAHAN database, and every bus registered outside two vehicle categories; the operators' figure of some 20 lakh buses, most in school and employee service, could not be reconciled with it at the sitting, though a Member pressed the deponents hard, observing that a bus carries at most about fifty passengers and the two sets of figures ought therefore to be capable of arithmetic reconciliation, and stating what the Committee here adopts as its own position, that a Committee of Parliament is entitled to the correct number; and the two totals of the Government fleet in the Ministry's own presentation differ between its pages (Table 1, note). Of passengers, there is no official count at all: the figures of five to six crore daily travellers, and of bus volumes exceeding the railways (Table 2), entered the record from industry, attributed to external research, and no instrument of Government could confirm or refute them. The Committee finds that a transport system exists for the movement of persons; that a planning framework which enumerates vehicles but not persons is incomplete at its foundation; and that every question examined in this Report, from the sizing of terminals to the pricing of permits to the sufficiency of budgets, returns ultimately to numbers which do not presently exist. The Committee notes with approval that the remedy sketched in its deliberations, a federated architecture in which the States retain and own their systems while a national layer draws upon them through prescribed standards of exchange, respects the constitutional position found at paragraph 1.9 and matches the interoperability principle of Finding Three. Recommendation Ten completes the scheme.

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

4.1 The ten recommendations which follow answer, in order, to the ten findings of Chapter III. Each is addressed to the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, which may act in consultation with the Ministries and State Governments concerned; each is framed within the constitutional position stated at paragraph 1.9; and each closes with a statement of the outcome the Committee intends, so that the action taken may be measured against the destination and not merely against the direction. In respect of each, the Committee expects to be apprised of the action taken within the period indicated, or, where none is indicated, within six months of the presentation of this Report.

Recommendation One — The All India Passenger Permit: one nation, one permit.

4.2 A permit named for tourists carries the general public; an exemption nobody can authoritatively construe governs where a bus may halt; enforcement proceeds by physical interception at borders the regulating Ministry itself wishes gone; and the uncertainty travels all the way down to the insurance claim of an injured passenger. Every component of the remedy already exists, agreed with the States or prepared with the authority of the Supreme Court Committee on Road Safety behind it, and awaits only notification and assembly into one instrument. The Committee is of the considered view that the regime should not be patched but replaced.

4.3 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry establish, within one year, a unified All India Passenger Permit regime in place of the All India Tourist Permit, under which: (i) the permit is re-designated to reflect the passengers it actually carries, so that no enforcement consequence can ever again turn upon whether a traveler is a tourist; (ii) the permit is issued only by the State in which the vehicle is first registered, in terms of the understanding already reached with the State Transport Secretaries, extinguishing the practice of registration-of-convenience in distant States; and (iii) the rights of the permit holder, including the right to halt, to board and set down passengers at notified points, and to enter public terminals on payment, are stated exhaustively on the face of the permit, in supersession of the present uncertainty surrounding Rules 82 to 85A of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989.

4.4 The Committee further recommends that enforcement of the new permit be effected exclusively through the electronic correlation of the VAHAN, FASTag and

vehicle location tracking data streams, physical interception being confined to cases flagged by that correlation; that the command and control centres for which funds have been released, and the national control room under approval, be commissioned within one year and their data made available to any operator contesting enforcement action; that the discontinuance of the border check posts still operating in six States be pursued to completion and reflected in the disclosure recommended at Recommendation Nine; and that the Ministry take up with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India, as a matter of priority and in advance of the wider reform, a joint clarification placing the claim of an injured passenger beyond the reach of any dispute as to permit classification.

4.5 The outcome the Committee intends is concrete enough to be pictured. A bus registered at Jaipur takes its passengers aboard at a notified point in Gurugram and sets them down at Indore without once being flagged to the roadside; the only barrier it crosses is a toll gantry, which is also the instrument of its supervision; a challan, where one is deserved, arrives electronically with the evidence attached and a stated procedure for contest; the two southern States which today lose services to permit disputes receive their apportioned tax through the settlement system rather than through interception; and the family of an injured passenger recovers upon the policy, never upon the classification. Where Europe's largest coach markets replaced route permission with the licensing of fit operators, ridership multiplied within a few years; the Committee expects nothing less from a country of India's distances, and it expects the tourist, for whom the permit was named, to be the first beneficiary of a road network on which the bus at last moves as freely as the goods vehicle beside it.

Recommendation Two — A National Bus Terminals Authority.

4.6 The rationale rests on the structural conflict identified at Finding Two, and on its demonstrated cure. Where the body that owns the terminal also runs buses, it will exclude its competitors, and does; where ownership and operation have been separated and access sold at a published charge, the terminal earns, the operator enters, and the passenger boards from premises instead of pavements. The one terminal complex where the model operates collects some ₹5 lakh a day from a single operator; the small-town terminals that opened their gates turned cash-flow positive within months. Against this stands the cautionary spectacle, recorded at Finding Two, of a great bus nation abroad whose terminals passed to property

investors and whose passengers now board at curbsides. The Ministry accepted before the Committee that a common standard, set by a dedicated authority on the airports model, would be an advantage. The Committee proposes to hold it to that acceptance.

4.7 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry constitute, on the model of the Airports Authority of India and through the appropriate legislative or institutional route, a National Bus Terminals Authority, or equivalent dedicated undertaking built upon the National Highways Logistics Management Limited, charged with the development, standardisation and, where States so agree, the management of bus terminals and intermodal passenger hubs throughout the country; and that the Ministry commend to all State Governments, as settled national policy, the separation of the ownership and management of bus terminals from the operation of bus services, so that no undertaking which runs buses ever again controls the access of its competitors to public infrastructure.

4.8 The Committee further recommends: (i) that a model framework of non-discriminatory access be circulated to the States, providing for published access charges collected electronically in the manner of the ₹500 FASTag levy at Kashmere Gate, transparent allocation of arrival and departure slots, and a grievance mechanism; (ii) that a National Code for Bus Terminals, be framed within one year, prescribing minimum standards of sanitation, lighting, seating, security, signage, digital passenger information and accessibility, and serving as the reference for viability gap funding or other Central support; (iii) that the public-private terminal projects at Gurugram and Katra be pursued as national templates and their progress reported to the Committee; and (iv) that the standardised highway bus stop, costed at ₹10 to ₹12 lakh, be notified forthwith and the approved design circulated to all Members of Parliament for provision in their constituencies under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme, the siting of such stops and bays being guided, as the network atlas under Recommendation Three matures, by the mapped evidence of where buses and passengers actually halt.

4.9 Once this is done, the terminal changes character: from a possession of one operator into a piece of national infrastructure that any licensed bus may enter as of right and on payment, as any airline enters any airport. The idle terminals of the tier-two and tier-three towns become what the evidence shows they are waiting to be, self-financing civic buildings

whose access receipts pay for their own cleanliness, lighting and ramps; the roadside boarding that today defeats every standard of safety and inclusivity acquires a lit, signed, supervised alternative; the intermodal hub at Katra becomes the first of a family, not an exception; and along the highways, at ₹10 to ₹12 lakh a structure, Members of Parliament themselves raise the bus stops their constituents wait at. The revenue is proven, the model is domestic, and the counter-example abroad shows the cost of delay. The Committee regards this as the most bankable single reform available to the sector.

Recommendation Three — The National Bus Digital Grid: track a bus like a train, book any bus anywhere

4.10 The rationale follows from Finding Three. The digital pillar lacks a programme while the country possesses, in VAHAN, FASTag and the mandated tracking devices, the finest transport data rails in the developing world, and possesses besides a private booking industry moving passengers at the scale of crores whose systems cannot lawfully or technically see the whole network. India's own experience of payments shows the method: the State prescribes open standards and settlement rails; public and private systems interoperate upon them; and the citizen chooses the interface. The German experience of one simple nationwide fare, credited by independent research with shifting travel measurably toward public transport, shows what a universal product can do once interoperability exists. And two capabilities identified at Finding Three wait within the same grid: the citizen as sensor, on the pattern the Election Commission has proved nationally with its geo-tagged vigilance application; and the network as map, the mandated satellite positioning of every commercial bus yielding, through a geographic information system, the atlas of routes, halts, speeds and delays from which arrival times become predictable and infrastructure siting becomes evidence-based. The task is not another portal; it is the grid beneath every portal.

4.11 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry notify, within one year and in consultation with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the States, a national framework of interoperability standards for bus transport, comprising common data definitions, application programming interfaces, authentication and cybersecurity protocols and payment settlement formats, with which every ticketing, tracking, terminal management and permit system, public or private, shall conform, the States retaining ownership and operation of their own systems; and that upon these standards there be established (i) a unified, publicly accessible live tracking layer displaying the position, expected arrival and delay of every bus holding a commercial

permit, its technical specifications aligned with the systems in use on the Indian Railways, and its feed displayed on arrival boards at terminals; (ii) a unified online booking capability spanning State undertakings and private operators alike, with standardised fare transparency and real-time seat availability; (iii) a centralized, moderated, crowd sourced rating system for operators, routes and terminals, whose outcomes are integrated with the permit and licensing databases; (iv) a citizen vigilance channel, on the pattern of the Election Commission of India's cVIGIL application, through which any passenger or citizen may lodge a geo-tagged, time-stamped report, with photograph or video, of the condition or conduct of any bus, terminal or halting place, including overloading, the carriage of school children in unsafe conditions, non-functional safety equipment and the state of sanitation, the report being routed automatically to the jurisdictional enforcement authority for disposal within a defined time, its outcome recorded, and the whole subject to the moderation protocols already proposed to the Committee for the verification of inputs; and (v) a GIS-based national bus network atlas, assembled from the traces of the mandated vehicle location tracking devices, toll-crossing records and terminal systems, mapping the routes actually operated against those authorised, the points at which vehicles halt, and their speeds and delay patterns, from which shall be published route-wise punctuality and predictability metrics for scheduled services, and hazard mappings of roadside halts to guide the siting programmes of Recommendation Two.

4.12 The Committee further recommends that participation in these systems be phased and made mandatory for operators holding commercial permits and for licensed terminals, with simplified compliance and capacity-building support for the smallest operators; that the outputs of the vigilance channel and of the network atlas be carried, by design and not by afterthought, into the operator safety ratings of Recommendation Four and into the State index of Recommendation Nine, so that what citizens report and what satellites record become part of what regulators weigh; and that the Ministry place before the Committee, within six months, a substantive programme of work for the digital pillar, with initiatives, measurable targets, budgetary provision and dates, so that this pillar may henceforth be reported against with the same precision as the other two.

4.13 The destination is easily stated, because every Indian already knows it from the railways: a passenger in any town opens the application of her choice, sees every bus that will

pass, public or private, its position on the map and its expected minute of arrival, books the seat, pays once, and watches the vehicle come; the terminal board shows the same truth the driver's console shows; the operator who serves well wears his rating where every passenger can see it, and the operator who does not answers for it at renewal. The Gurugram resident of the illustration boards his Jaipur bus at the end of his street. The same passenger, finding the emergency hatch painted shut or the aisle carrying twice its lawful load, photographs it and lodges it as easily as a citizen today reports an election poster, and an officer must answer within the defined time; and in the control rooms, the accumulating satellite traces of every journey settle into a national atlas from which the villager's bus acquires a predicted minute of arrival as dependable as the city traveller's train, and the next bus bay is sited where the map shows the passengers actually stand. Upon such a grid, and only upon such a grid, do the further possibilities open, seamless inter-State ticketing, integrated tourist circuits, and, when policy so chooses, fare products of national simplicity of the kind that have moved whole populations abroad toward public transport. The grid is the precondition; the Committee recommends it as such.

Recommendation Four — Regulate the operator, not only the vehicle: a safety regime for the fleet actually in service

4.14 The rationale is written in Finding Four, and, since the sitting, in the public record of two burnt coaches. Standards of real quality govern buses yet to be built, while the bus actually carrying passengers tonight is governed by a fitness network of 142 stations whose economics reward evasion, by an alert button that rings nowhere though operators are charged up to ₹25,000 at a time for its verification, and by no instrument at all that holds the operating undertaking, as distinct from its vehicle, to account. Jurisdictions that made bus travel safe made the operator's licence the pressure point; India has, in the rating and database proposals already before the Committee, the makings of the same instrument, joined to Indian scale.

4.15 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry: (i) prepare and place before it, within six months, a district-wise plan for the completion of the Automated Testing Station network, propagating among the States the model in which the private sector provides land, builds and operates the station without public investment, and settling by a fixed date the position of legacy inspection centres which do not meet the prescribed standard; (ii) issue an advisory to all States requiring that the presence and working condition of fire detection and suppression systems, emergency exits, roof

hatches, toughened glass, safety hammers and emergency alert equipment be verified and recorded at every fitness test, so that the life-safety standards in force since 2019 and 2024 (Table 7) reach the fleet in service and not merely the fleet to come; and (iii) examine, with the testing agencies, which further provisions of the new standards are capable of application to in-service vehicles by retro-fitment at fitness testing, with particular reference to enclosed sleeper coaches, and report the outcome.

4.16 The Committee further recommends the institution of an operator-level safety accountability system, under which the safety conduct of every holder of a commercial permit, drawn from electronic enforcement records, fitness compliance, verified passenger feedback and citizen vigilance reports under Recommendation Three, and accident history, is reflected in a published safety rating attached to the operator and taken into account in the renewal of permits, on the principle, followed in the jurisdictions which have made bus travel safest, that it is the operator's licence, and not the vehicle's certificate alone, which secures careful conduct. As respects the emergency alert system, the Committee recommends in terms: the receiving infrastructure shall be established or restored within one year, through the command and control centres of Recommendation One, with technical and procedural safeguards against false alarms; and if it is not, the levy collected from operators at fitness testing in respect of this equipment shall cease. A charge for a protection that does not exist should not survive this Report.

4.17 What does the country hold when this is done? A family weighing an overnight coach reads the operator's safety rating as it reads a hotel's; a coach whose hatches are painted shut fails its next fitness test, not its last journey; the button beside a woman's berth reaches a room where someone answers; the repainted inter-State bus on a village school route is intercepted by the fitness system before it is ever counted by the accident statistics; and the operator who cuts these corners loses the thing he cannot replace, his licence, while the operator who invests in safety at last has a market that can see it and reward it. Vehicles will still fail and men will still err; but the regime will no longer be arranged, as the Committee has found it presently arranged, so that compliance is dearer than evasion and negligence is invisible until it burns.

Recommendation Five — The Fleet Transition Compact: separate owning from operating, scrap-and-lease, and electric buses

4.18 The rationale stands in Finding Five and in the fleet tables: 21,074 over-age buses, every one private (Table 4); 888 private buses scrapped against an incentive a tenth the size of the Government's (Table 5, Figure 2); electric registrations rising yet still one bus in eighteen (Table 6); charging in one place and buses in another; batteries expiring, as a Member put it, now, into a policy vacuum candidly acknowledged. The capital cost of the vehicle is chained to the smallest balance sheet in the system. Shenzhen, Santiago and Singapore, by three different routes on three continents, lifted the asset off the operator and let him operate; India's own per-kilometre procurements drew, in the Ministry's word, a substantial response. The principle is proven at home and abroad; what remains is to build the machinery.

4.19 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry, jointly with the Ministry of Heavy Industries and in consultation with the States, formulate within one year a Fleet Transition Compact for the bus sector comprising: (i) a framework for fleet-ownership and leasing entities, public, private or joint, which acquire new buses and lease them to permitted operators, with the scrapping of an over-age vehicle at a Registered Vehicle Scrapping Facility serving as the entry event, so that the owner of an end-of-life bus surrenders it and drives out a leased successor; (ii) a review of the scrapping incentive for privately owned buses, whose present range of ₹5,000 to ₹20,000, against ₹50,000 to ₹1,50,000 for a Government vehicle, has yielded 888 private buses scrapped out of 13,710 (Figure 2) and left 21,074 over-age vehicles in service, every one of them private (Table 4); (iii) a time-bound plan to bring electric buses into service, setting a target for each operator, with the buses bought together in bulk on model contracts and standard lease terms, and supported by capital subsidy, cheaper finance and tax relief; and (iv) a joint assessment, with the Ministries concerned, of charging infrastructure matched to where electric buses actually operate, distinguishing depot charging in cities from opportunity charging on inter-city routes.

4.20 The Committee further recommends: that a framework for the disposal of electric buses and their traction batteries at the end of life be settled within one year, in consultation with the Ministries of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and Heavy Industries, addressing the vehicle in its entirety including the recovery of critical minerals, the Committee recording its view that a policy framed after the first vehicles

reach the scrapyard will have been framed too late; and that the Ministry examine the establishment, with the States and industry, of regional bus manufacturing, testing and maintenance clusters, in the regions where body-building enterprise is already concentrated, so that the small enterprises of Rajasthan and Punjab are brought within the discipline of the new Bus Body Code as participants rather than casualties, with simplified procedures and concessional testing for enterprises below a defined threshold.

4.21 The outcome is a fleet that renews itself as a matter of course rather than of campaign. The operator nursing a fifteen-year-old diesel surrenders it at a registered facility and drives out, the same season, a leased electric successor whose capital cost he never carries; the columns of Table 4 above fifteen years, all private today, empty from the top; the scrapping facilities and testing stations find their volumes; the body-builders of Rajasthan and Punjab build to the new Code inside clusters that test and certify at their door; the battery has a destination appointed before the first one is orphaned; and the electric share of Table 6 ceases to be a percentage remarked upon and becomes the ordinary way a bus is bought, which is to say, not bought at all, but leased against the surrender of the old. That is how sixteen thousand buses turned electric in a single city abroad within a decade; the Committee sees no reason why the same arithmetic, upon Indian scale, should not retire a lakh.

Recommendation Six — Services for women, run by women: inclusion as an operated service

4.22 The rationale is Finding Six, the Committee's question about dedicated services went unanswered; the alert equipment stands charged-for and unanswered; and a Member's plain question about sanitation on overnight journeys met only the assurance that the matter sits within a Code still being standardised. Meanwhile, from the public record, one State has fielded a pink bus service driven by women and the capital has announced women-only electric services: the federation has begun answering piecemeal the question the Ministry has not answered nationally. Inclusion, the Committee has found, must be organised as a service, not specified as equipment; this Recommendation organises it.

4.23 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry, in consultation with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the State Governments, frame and report to the Committee within six months a programme for dedicated bus services for women during peak hours in urban and semi-urban areas, operated with women bus

drivers as well as women among the other bus staff, specifying the part to be taken by the State Road Transport Undertakings and the support to be extended to them; and that the requirement of closed-circuit television in new buses, stated in evidence to be under introduction, be brought into force without delay.

4.24 The Committee further recommends: that the completion of the programme under which emergency buttons, emergency call facilities and vehicle location tracking devices are installed in public transport vehicles be pursued with the States beyond the sixteen which have made progress, upon the footing as to receiving infrastructure laid down at Recommendation Four; that the standardisation of on-board toilet provision for inter-city buses within the new Bus Body Code be brought to conclusion and notified, the Committee adopting the position pressed by a Member at the sitting that on long overnight journeys such provision, available in other countries, must be assured for women at the least; that sanitation at intermediate halts on overnight routes be treated as network infrastructure and brought under centralised monitoring in consultation with the States and local authorities, the Committee recording its view that safety and sanitation are, for the woman passenger, one question and not two; and that the funding of the safety and accessibility equipment recommended in this Report be examined on a common footing, such as a dedicated Inclusive Transport Fund, rather than by levies upon operators for equipment that does not function.

4.25 The outcome the Committee intends can be told as a single journey. A woman takes the morning peak service on which a woman is at the wheel and a woman checks the tickets; the camera above the aisle records; the button beside the seat reaches a room where someone answers; and when, another week, she books the overnight coach to another State, she does so without first calculating, as she must today, where the vehicle will halt and what she will find there, because the coach carries its own facility and the halt is monitored. None of this is exotic; every element exists somewhere in the country or in the Code already. What the Recommendation adds is the decision that the half of the travelling public which today boards with apprehension shall instead board as of right, and that the buses of India shall be, visibly, workplaces for women as well as vehicles for them.

Recommendation Seven — The National Tourist Bus Grid: circuits, certified maintenance and intermodal hubs

4.26 The rationale is Finding Seven. This Committee answers for tourism as well as transport, and the examination showed the tourist bus to be everywhere in the sector and nowhere in its design: the permit named for the tourist serves everyone but him; no accredited maintenance system follows the coach that carries him; no circuit joins his bus to the train, the metro or the airport; and the terminal at which he forms his first impression of Indian travel is the terminal of Finding Two. The proposals already before the Committee, for an accredited maintenance and overhaul system with digital logbooks, for integrated multimodal circuits with unified ticketing, and for hubs of the Katra kind with revenue shared between public and private participants, want only assembly into one named national undertaking.

4.27 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry, in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and the State Governments, establish a National Tourist Bus Grid comprising: (i) integrated tourist bus circuits interconnecting with railways, metro systems, airports, waterways and local public transport, supported by interoperable digital platforms, real-time passenger information and unified ticketing on the standards of Recommendation Three; (ii) a common, centralized Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul system for tourist buses, resting upon a registry of facilities accredited by the Ministry, standardised maintenance schedules and safety inspection protocols, digital tracking of the maintenance history of each vehicle, and an integrated portal through which operators schedule maintenance and maintain digital logbooks, coordinated with the State transport authorities and tourism boards; and (iii) intermodal passenger hubs at major tourist and pilgrimage destinations on the template of the station under development at Katra, with the revenue-sharing arrangements between public and private participants which the Committee has endorsed in its deliberations.

4.28 The Committee further recommends that minimum service standards for passenger terminals framed under Recommendation Two make specific provision for the tourist passenger, including digital information, accessibility, security and commercial amenities; and that periodic passenger satisfaction surveys, integrated with the rating system of Recommendation Three, be instituted for terminals and tourist

services alike, so that the quality of the visitor's journey by road is measured, published and improved as a matter of course.

4.29 Carried through, this Recommendation gives the country something it has never had: the tourist coach as a national product. The visitor lands, and a certified coach, its maintenance logbook inspectable at a touch, carries him from the airport concourse to the hill shrine on a circuit whose ticket he bought in one transaction with his train; the hub he changes at is lit, signed and shared by every operator; the rating he leaves is read by the next visitor and by the licensing authority alike. For the domestic pilgrim the same grid means the same dignity. A country that aspires to receive the world moves its guests, for the most part, by road; this Recommendation is how the road becomes an ambassador rather than an apology, and it is the Committee's answer, within its own remit, to the question of what tourism infrastructure means when the monument is already built and the journey is not.

Recommendation Eight — A budgetary identity for the bus passenger

4.30 The rationale is Finding Eight. A ministry commanding of the order of ₹3 lakh crore a year makes no distinct provision for the infrastructure of the mode that carries the most Indians; 92 per cent of buses operate with no infrastructure at all; and the public record shows supply thinning, one major State's ratio of buses to population having fallen threefold in a generation while another State's cities stand twenty-four thousand buses short, even as inter-city demand runs at record occupancy. What has no head in the budget has no claim on it; the Committee proposes to give the bus passenger a head.

4.31 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry examine and report to it, within six months, the creation of a defined provision within its budget for infrastructure serving public passenger transport, distinct from highway construction, encompassing terminals, bus bays, depots, charging and testing infrastructure and passenger amenities; and that in this examination the Ministry state its considered position on the proposal placed before the Committee that a proportion of the order of 25 per cent of the allocation for roads be applied to public transport infrastructure, having regard to the evidence that 92 per cent of buses operate without supporting infrastructure of any kind, and that the number of persons carried daily by bus exceeds, on the material before the Committee, the number carried by any other mode. The Committee further recommends that viability gap funding be extended to terminals and testing stations conforming to the codes and models set out in this Report, and that the

MPLADS circulation recommended at Recommendation Two be effected within three months of the notification of the standard bus stop design, the Committee recording that its Members ascertained the cost of the structure across the table, found it within the Scheme's compass, and signified their readiness to build; the Ministry has only to send the design.

4.32 The outcome is a change in the grammar of the annual budget. Once a head exists, its size is debated every February; once its size is debated, the twenty-five per cent proposal placed before this Committee is answered in numbers rather than in silence; and once the money moves, the physical residue of every other Recommendation in this Report, the terminal, the testing station, the charging depot, the bus bay off the carriageway on which today 95 per cent of State buses halt in the traffic lane, has a source to be built from. At the near end of the same outcome stand the bus stops themselves: an approved ₹10 to ₹12 lakh design in the hands of seven hundred and more Members of Parliament who have already said, in this Committee's hearing, that they will build. The Committee can think of no other national infrastructure whose first instalment awaits nothing but a circular.

Recommendation Nine — The State of the States: an annual published index of bus transport facilitation

4.33 The rationale is Finding Nine. In this sector the Union prescribes and the States dispose, and the one instrument that has visibly moved a State, the naming of check-post States at a conference, after which one of them is understood to have discontinued the practice, has never been institutionalised. The proposal for a published ranking came from the Committee's own Members, was accepted by the Ministry as a good suggestion to be implemented early, and finds a parallel in ranking exercises the Ministry already conducts in other fields; an industry exercise with a research organisation is in progress besides.

4.34 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry institute, within one year, and thereafter publish at regular intervals, a ranking of States and Union territories upon their facilitation of public bus transport, its parameters to include the density and functioning of Automated Testing Stations; the existence of border check posts; the access afforded to licensed operators at publicly owned terminals and the charges levied; the adoption of online services and electronic enforcement; the commissioning of command and control centres; the installation and, above all, the functioning of the emergency alert systems; the condition of terminals and passenger

facilities against the National Code; the route-wise punctuality and predictability metrics published under Recommendation Three; and a feedback component drawing upon the verified experience of operators and passengers, including the volume and disposal record of citizen vigilance reports in each State. The first publication shall disclose, plainly, the identity of the States in which border check posts continue to operate. The Committee is of the view that in a field in which the Union prescribes but cannot direct, comparative disclosure is an instrument of proven effect, and it expects the Ministry to use that instrument without hesitation.

4.35 The outcome works by a mechanism every public administrator recognises. The State that dismantles its last check post gains a rank and says so; the State that opens its terminals sees the receipts of its neighbour and follows; the six States whose check posts survive this Report's first anniversary explain themselves in public, annually, against a table their own officers compile; and the operator's and passenger's verified experience, fed through the systems of Recommendation Three, keeps the table honest. Within a few editions the index becomes what such instruments become where they are honestly kept: the shorthand by which investment chooses its State, the brief from which every Transport Minister is questioned in his own Assembly, and the quiet, standing pressure under which practices that have survived twenty years of correspondence do not survive five years of publication.

Recommendation Ten — Count the passenger: the federated national registry and the passenger census

4.36 The rationale is Finding Ten, which underlies all the others. The official fleet figure excludes a State and most vehicle categories; the industry figure could not be reconciled with it across the Committee's own table; the Ministry's presentation disagrees with itself; and of passengers there is no official count at all, so that the central claim of the sector, that it daily carries more Indians than any other mode, rests on figures no instrument of Government can confirm. A Member stated, and the Committee has adopted, the principle: a Committee of Parliament is entitled to the correct number. The remedy must respect the constitutional position, and the federated architecture already sketched in the Committee's deliberations does: the States keep their systems and their ownership; the nation gains a single verified picture.

4.37 The Committee accordingly recommends that the Ministry: (i) undertake, within six months, a reconciliation of the national bus fleet figures, taking up with the Government of Telangana the integration of that State with the VAHAN database (ii) publish a consolidated statement of buses across all vehicle categories, distinguishing stage carriage, contract carriage, school, employee and other transport, so that the divergence between the official figure of 4.4 lakh and the industry estimate of some 20 lakh buses is resolved by classification rather than by argument; (iii) establish, upon the interoperability standards of Recommendation Three, a federated national transport data architecture in which the States retain and own their vehicle, permit and operational databases while a national layer draws upon them through prescribed standards of exchange; and (iv) institute, in consultation with the States, the undertakings and industry, a periodic authoritative estimate of passengers carried by bus, distinguishing public from private operation and intra-city from inter-city service, published with the same regularity and authority as the statistics of other modes.

4.38 The outcome is a number, and the Committee stands by its Recommendations despite their modest scope, because it is the number on which everything else computes. The first authoritative statement of how many Indians ride a bus each day will reorder every debate this Report has touched: the budget share of Recommendation Eight will be argued from it, the terminal capacity of Recommendation Two sized by it, the rankings of Recommendation Nine weighted with it, and the sector's claim upon national attention settled by it once for all. Tables 1 and 2 of this Report, with their asterisks and their caveats, record the present state of knowledge; the Committee intends that no successor Committee should have to print them again. What is not counted is not planned for; the bus passenger has gone uncounted for too long.

Concluding Observation

4.39 The Committee has confined itself, deliberately, to ten recommendations. They are few because each is large; they are large because the evidence warranted nothing less. They are also, the Committee would emphasise, one construction. The permit of Recommendation One moves a bus freely along corridors; the terminals of Recommendation Two give the corridors their stations; the digital grid of Recommendation Three makes the whole visible and bookable; the safety regime of Recommendation Four makes it trustworthy; the fleet compact of Recommendation Five renews the vehicles that ply it; the services of

Recommendation Six open it fully to women; the tourist grid of Recommendation Seven turns it outward to the visitor; the budget head of Recommendation Eight finances it; the index of Recommendation Nine disciplines it; and the census of Recommendation Ten measures it. Taken together they amount to a national bus grid, a connected system of corridors, terminals, data and trust, standing to the ordinary traveller as the national highway network stands to the vehicle, and the Committee commends them to the Government as such: not ten repairs, but one construction. The Committee will pursue the action taken on each, and expects the first report of such action within six months of the presentation of this Report.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE — AT A GLANCE

1. **All India Passenger Permit:-** Replace the All India Tourist Permit, within one year, with an All India Passenger Permit issued by the State of first registration, its rights stated exhaustively on its face; enforce it exclusively through electronic correlation of VAHAN, FASTag and vehicle location data, commission the monitoring centres, end the border check posts in the six States where they persist, and, with the insurance regulator, place the injured passenger's claim beyond dispute. (Paras 4.2 to 4.5)
2. **National Bus Terminals Authority:-** Separate terminal ownership from bus operation as settled national policy; constitute a dedicated terminals authority on the Airports Authority model; circulate a non-discriminatory access framework on the Kashmere Gate template; frame a National Code for Bus Terminals within one year; pursue Gurugram and Katra as templates; notify the standard bus stop and circulate it to Members of Parliament for MPLADS funding. (Paras 4.6 to 4.9)
3. **National Bus Digital Grid:-** Notify interoperability standards within one year; upon them, a public live-tracking layer aligned with Indian Railways specifications, unified booking across public and private operators, a moderated crowdsourced rating system linked to the permit databases, a cVIGIL-pattern citizen vigilance channel with geo-tagged, time-bound reporting of bus and terminal conditions, and a GIS-based network atlas from vehicle tracking and toll data publishing punctuality and predictability metrics and hazard maps; participation phased and mandatory for commercial permit holders; a measurable programme of work for the digital pillar within six months. (Paras 4.10 to 4.13)
4. **Operator-centric safety:-** A district-wise completion plan for Automated Testing Stations within six months; verification of fire, egress and alert equipment at every fitness test so that life-safety standards reach the fleet in service; retro-fitment examined for sleeper and school buses; a published operator safety rating taken into account at permit renewal; and the emergency alert system made to function within one year, failing which the levy upon operators for it shall cease. (Paras 4.14 to 4.17)

5. **Fleet Transition Compact:-** Fleet-ownership and leasing entities so operators run buses they need not own, entered through scrap-and-lease at registered scrapping facilities; review of the private scrapping incentive; a time-bound plan for electric buses, with a target for each operator and buses bought in bulk on standard terms; charging matched to where buses operate; an end-of-life framework for electric buses and batteries within one year; regional manufacturing, testing and maintenance clusters. (Paras 4.18 to 4.21)
6. **Services for women, run by women:-** A reported programme, within six months, of dedicated peak-hour services operated with women bus drivers and women staff; CCTV in new buses brought into force; the alert-system programme completed beyond sixteen States; on-board toilet standardisation concluded under the Bus Body Code; monitored sanitation at overnight halts; funding on a common footing such as an Inclusive Transport Fund. (Paras 4.22 to 4.25)
7. **National Tourist Bus Grid:-** Integrated tourist circuits interconnecting bus, rail, metro, air and waterways with unified ticketing; a centralized accredited Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul system with digital logbooks for the tourist fleet; intermodal hubs at major destinations on the Katra template with revenue-sharing between public and private participants; tourist-facing terminal standards and published satisfaction surveys. (Paras 4.26 to 4.29)
8. **A budgetary identity for the bus passenger:-** A defined provision for public transport infrastructure within the Ministry's budget, reported within six months, with the Ministry's considered position on applying a proportion of the order of 25 per cent of the road allocation to it; viability gap funding for conforming terminals and testing stations; MPLADS circulation of the standard bus stop within three months of notification. (Paras 4.30 to 4.32)
9. **The State of the States:-** An annual published ranking of States on bus transport facilitation, on verifiable parameters from testing density to terminal access to the functioning of emergency systems and the punctuality metrics of the network atlas, with operator and passenger feedback including the disposal record of citizen vigilance reports; the first edition to disclose the identity of the States still operating border check posts. (Paras 4.33 to 4.35)

10. Count the passenger**- Reconciliation of the fleet figures within six months, with Telangana's integration into VAHAN pursued and disclosed meanwhile; a consolidated all-category statement of buses; a federated national data architecture in which the States own their systems; and a periodic authoritative estimate of passengers carried by bus, published with the authority accorded to the statistics of other modes. (Paras 4.36 to 4.38)**

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