



## Indian Trails to Resume Daily, Scheduled Bus Service Throughout Michigan and Beyond

For Immediate Release

August 3, 2020

Effective Saturday, August 8, Indian Trails, Inc., will restart most of its daily scheduled bus service, which includes [routes throughout Michigan](#), and into Chicago, Milwaukee and Duluth, along with reduced connections with the Greyhound and Amtrak national transportation networks.

“We’re grateful to be resuming this important service in our region,” says Indian Trails President Chad Cushman. “Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we’ve faced the biggest economic challenge in the 110-year history of our family-owned company. It feels great to bring more employees back to work and watch part of our 74-bus fleet roll off the lots and back on the road again.”

The Phase I resumption of bus service should be very welcome news to the hundreds of thousands of passengers in approximately 80 communities normally served by Indian Trails each day.

- Tickets for every active Indian Trails route can now be purchased at the company’s [webstore](#).
- Schedules for all active routes are posted online [here](#).
- Tickets can also be purchased in person at [more than 90 locations statewide and beyond](#), though it’s highly recommended for passengers to call ahead to ensure that the travel center nearest them will be open since many are still closed.

One temporary exception to the restart will be Battle Creek, where Indian Trails’ buses normally connect with Amtrak. The trains are currently operating on a reduced schedule that does not allow for such connections, so Indian Trails will resume Battle Creek service when Amtrak does. However, Indian Trails and Amtrak still connect in Milwaukee.

### Why Some Bus Service Can Restart Now

Indian Trails suspended operation of its daily scheduled routes about four months ago, on March 21, for financial and safety reasons. Specifically, there was a steep decline in passenger demand as businesses and government authorities restricted non-essential travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and many bus terminals and travel centers closed. The other major factor was concern for the health of passengers, drivers, and staff as the coronavirus spread.

Now, the economic obstacle has at least been temporarily overcome with about \$2.4 million in federal CARES Act funding through the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (the same type of funding provided to local transit authorities, of which a small percentage was designated for intercity bus service). Basically, this will help subsidize losses on all contracted and subsidized routes throughout Michigan and Wisconsin for the remainder of 2020 and perhaps the early part of 2021 as ridership builds back up.

The Phase I resumption of service—representing about 25 percent of normal operations—will enable the company to bring a quarter of its 150-member staff back to work, joining a smaller number of staff who have been working during the pandemic.

At the same time, concerns about the health and safety of passengers and employees are being addressed with a comprehensive set of precautionary measures.

### **Protections for Passengers and Drivers**

In order to minimize the chance of spreading the coronavirus on board its buses, Indian Trails is taking the following steps, among others, in addition to its normal safety and cleaning protocols:

- Requiring passengers to wear face masks for the duration of their trips—“No Mask, No Ride.”
- Providing hand sanitizer on all buses.
- Limiting the number of passengers per bus.
- Asking passengers to occupy seats as far apart as possible.
- Ventilating buses with fresh air rather than air recirculated through the heating/cooling system.
- Providing transparent, protective barriers between drivers and passengers with the first row of seats blocked off.
- Cleaning and disinfecting buses after each run, with particular attention to high-touch areas such as handrails, arm rests, and restrooms.
- Spraying the entire interior of each bus with a general disinfectant for additional sanitization.
- Requiring daily temperature and symptom checks of all on-duty Indian Trails employees, and requiring the entire workforce to abide by a comprehensive [COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan](#). Of course, staff members must stay home if they feel sick.

For a complete list of things to know before traveling with Indian Trails, please click [here](#).

### **Status of Other Indian Trails Operations**

- [Michigan Flyer](#)—the popular airport shuttle service of Indian Trails—suspended all of its daily runs between East Lansing, Brighton, Ann Arbor and Detroit Metro Airport (DTW) as of March 16, 2020. The service remains suspended until further notice. This includes the AirRide service that connects Ann Arbor and DTW.

Michigan Flyer, LLC—which received scant government support—normally operates almost entirely on fares paid by some 250,000 passengers a year. The great majority of its passengers are people who use airlines at DTW to travel to or from the mid-Michigan region. So, the shuttles cannot economically resume service while the airlines are operating at only about 20 percent capacity.

- [Indian Trails Charter Service](#)—which enables groups to rent deluxe motorcoaches with professional drivers for trips to whatever destinations they choose in the Continental U.S. or Canada—has continued operations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, though at a significantly reduced level. The company now is seeing renewed interest in booking charter trips by professional and college sports teams, corporations, universities, trade associations, churches, and others.

In addition, Indian Trails has continued to run shuttles on contract with a couple of universities and essential employers and looks to add to those with the restart of some additional contract shuttles to begin in the fall semester.

- [D2A2 commuter service](#) between Detroit and Ann Arbor was launched last March 16 by the Regional Transit Authority of Southeast Michigan in partnership with the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority and operated by Michigan Flyer. D2A2 remains temporarily suspended at this time.
- [U-M Detroit Connector](#) service, previously sponsored by the University of Michigan to provide transportation between U-M campuses in Ann Arbor, Dearborn, and Detroit, was discontinued after the D2A2 service began.

### **The Big Picture for Bus Companies**

The motorcoach industry in the United States consists of nearly 3,000 private bus companies, mostly family-owned small businesses like Indian Trails. Nearly 90 percent are still shut down four months into the pandemic crisis, according to the American Bus Association.

Before this, they connected cities with one another and with rural areas, transported urban commuters, and represented the only means of intercity transportation for many Americans. They provided nearly 700 million passenger trips annually—second only to the airline industry—serving workers of all kinds, moving troops and taking people out of harm’s way during hurricanes, connecting families and friends, and bringing travelers to tourist destinations. Many are apt to go out of business for good.

Unlike the airlines and public transit, which received billions in bailout money from the federal government, the private bus industry has so far been left to fend for itself. But that could change if Congress passes the Coronavirus Economic Relief for Transportation Services (CERTS) Act, which was introduced by Sens. Jack Reed (D-R.I.) and Susan Collins (R-Maine) on July 2. A House version of the bill was introduced later in the month. If passed, it would provide \$10 billion in emergency relief grants to the industry—potentially leading to the restart of services such as the Michigan Flyer airport shuttle.

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Indian Trails, Inc.—which has served as Michigan’s premier, family-owned, inter-city motorcoach carrier for 110 years, and is based in Owosso, Mich.—operates one of the largest and newest fleets of deluxe motorcoaches in Michigan. In addition to its daily scheduled routes throughout Michigan and into Chicago, Duluth and Milwaukee, its services include charters, tours, shuttles, and airport transfers. On the web at [www.IndianTrails.com](http://www.IndianTrails.com).

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