



**BusTrusted**  
DRIVER'S LIBRARY

VOLUME 12

---

# FUEL & THE COST OF A MILE

*Build your real cost-per-mile, then attack its  
biggest lever — with the levers that actually work.*

**Every bus. Vetted. Trusted.**

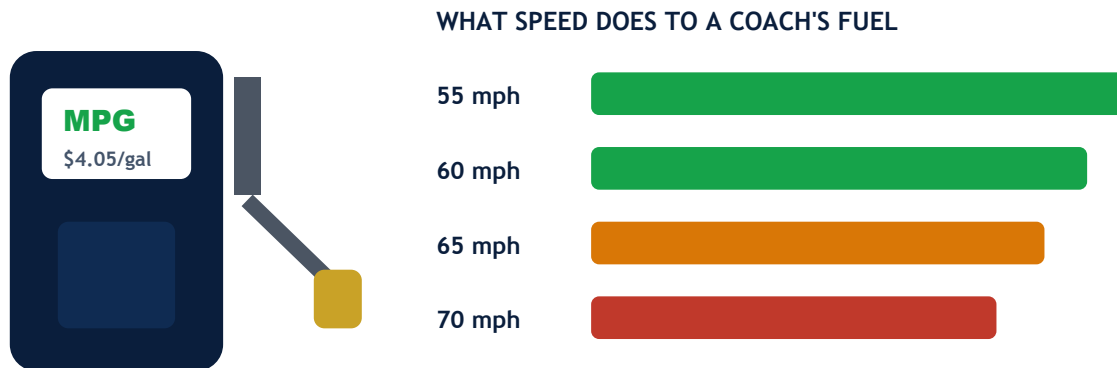
[bustrusted.com/operators](https://bustrusted.com/operators)

Educational guide — not legal advice. Verify current federal, state, county, and local regulations before relying on any content.

VOLUME 12 · BUSINESS SERIES

# Fuel & the Cost of a Mile

Most small operators can quote you their coach payment to the penny — and have no idea what one mile actually costs them. That number decides every quote you send. This volume builds your cost-per-mile, then attacks its biggest lever: fuel.



Industry rule of thumb — every coach differs. Measure YOUR fleet weekly.

Figure 1 — Speed is the cheapest fuel additive ever invented.

## Know your cost per mile (CPM)

Add a year of costs, divide by a year of miles. Sample below — plug in YOUR real numbers; the point is the method, not our figures.

Cost bucket	Sample \$/mile	Notes
Fuel (7 mpg @ ~\$4/gal)	\$0.57	The biggest variable cost — and the most controllable
Maintenance & tires reserve	\$0.35	Reserve it per mile NOW or pay it in a lump later
Insurance	\$0.30	Annual premium ÷ annual miles (Volume 03 lowers this)
Coach payment / depreciation	\$0.45	The coach costs money even parked
Driver wages & payroll costs	\$0.65	Include deadhead hours and overnights
Overhead (phone, software, yard, BusTrusted...)	\$0.13	Small items, real money
<b>Sample all-in CPM</b>	<b>\$2.45</b>	Below this number, a 'booked' trip is a paid hobby



### THE QUOTING RULE

Quote = (ALL miles including deadhead × your CPM) + driver day pay + profit. If a broker's 'great rate' is under your CPM, they're not buying transportation — they're buying your coach's remaining life at a discount.

### The fuel levers, biggest first

- Speed: the industry rule of thumb says every few mph above 60 costs measurable MPG (see Figure 1). On a 500-mile run, slowing 65□62 often costs 10 minutes and saves real gallons. Cruise control is free money on flat interstate.
- Idling: a big diesel burns roughly half a gallon to a gallon per hour at idle. Venue waits are where profit evaporates — manage HVAC smartly, use shore power where it exists, follow local idle laws (many East Coast states cap idling at 3–5 minutes).
- Tires: underinflation quietly taxes every mile (and kills the tire early). Gauge them cold, weekly — it's fuel policy AND the pre-trip (Volume 02).
- Smooth hands: progressive acceleration, reading traffic two lights ahead, letting the retarder — not the brakes — manage downgrades. The smoothest driver in your company is your cheapest driver.
- Maintenance as fuel policy: clean air filters, healthy injectors, and proper alignment are worth more MPG than any additive ever sold at a counter.

### Buying fuel like a fleet

- Get a fleet fuel card (EFS, Comdata, or a chain card) — discounted network pricing, controls per driver, clean reports.
- Fuel before the city, never inside it; use the apps (Volume — Trip Planner page) to price the corridor.
- Keep every receipt tied to the trip — your IFTA filings and your CPM math both depend on them.

### Track it or it never improves

- One number per coach per week: miles ÷ gallons. Post it where drivers see it.
- A sudden MPG drop is a maintenance alarm (dragging brake, filter, injector) before it's a fuel problem.
- Review CPM every quarter — insurance renewals, fuel swings, and new coaches all move it.

### THE ONE-CENT GAME

On 60,000 miles a year, saving one cent per mile is \$600; getting fuel from \$0.57 to \$0.50/mile is \$4,200 — roughly a month of coach payments, found inside the throttle pedal and the tire gauge.

Sources & further reading: Operating-cost method: standard fleet cost-per-mile accounting; fuel-economy levers per DOE/EPA fleet guidance rules of thumb; IFTA record-keeping requirements. Sample figures are illustrative — use your own.

Disclaimer: This volume is a free educational training aid for BusTrusted members, written in plain English from the sources above. It is NOT law, NOT legal advice, NOT a regulatory document, and NOT a substitute for the FMCSRs, your state CDL manual, your state/county/city regulations, your carrier's policies, or your coach manufacturer's procedures — where they differ, they govern. Laws and regulations vary by jurisdiction and change over time: always research and verify the current rules that apply to YOUR operation with the FMCSA ([fmcsa.dot.gov](http://fmcsa.dot.gov)), your state DOT, and local authorities — or a qualified attorney — before acting. BusTrusted and its authors accept no liability for actions taken in reliance on this guide.