



# FUELED FOR GROWTH

*Reliable Gas Engines Help Busse Student Transportation Better Serve Changing Minnesota Community's Shorter Routes*



Family-owned and operated for more than 50 years, Busse Student Transportation provides school bus service for the Prior Lakes Savage Area School District, part of the growing Minneapolis suburb of Prior Lakes. The core of their mission has always been to deliver students to school safely, and they pride themselves on “caring just a little too much” about the community they serve.

Longtime proponents of IC Bus, the company operated with just four buses back in 1994 when President Jim Busse took over the business from his father, a former school bus driver. In the two decades since assuming leadership, Busse has presided over a great deal of growth and change. Today, Jim works alongside his daughter Nikki Gendron, who serves as operations manager. The company boasts more than 70 total employees and a fleet of 45 school buses, including 12 new gas-powered IC Bus CE Series models with PSI engines.

## According to Busse, the changing demographics and increased population density of Prior Lakes made the shift from diesel to gas engines a no-brainer.

The long-term plan is to go “all-in” on gasoline.

“The community has grown immensely,” says Busse. “When I first started, most of the time we were driving way out in the country. Now we have routes that are only five or ten minutes long due to new neighborhood elementary schools.. Most of the time our drivers are in stop-and-go situations. That was one of the main reasons for going with the gas-powered PSIs. With the diesel engines, it can be hard to get them up to operating temperature on our short routes.”





# THE CASE FOR GASOLINE

While diesel buses have a longstanding reputation built on power and fuel efficiency, Busse insists that school districts and transportation companies need to look at the full picture when deciding the best engine choice for their particular situation. On shorter routes, diesel engines may never reach that ideal operating temperature where they provide those benefits.

“Let’s look at the long haul here,” he says. “Diesels are designed to be in a vehicle that goes out on the road. They’re great for long distances. With our buses, there’s some routes we only get up to 45 miles an hour. This year, we’re opening up a new school. We’ve got routes that are going to get shorter yet. Gas just makes so much sense for us.”

The notoriously frigid Minnesota weather was also a huge factor in the decision to choose the reliable PSI 8.8L gasoline engine. “We’re dealing with sub-zero temperatures in the wintertime,” says Operations Manager Kyle Klapperick. “We need these buses to start no matter how cold it gets.”

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Klapperick recalls a blustery day last winter when the thermometer dipped down to 20-below. With their diesel powered buses, they’d have to plug the engines to the electrical grid to ensure they would start in those conditions. But with the gas engines, those precautions weren’t necessary. The drivers hopped in and the buses fired up right away.

“Once we switched to gas, the drivers have been happy,” says Gendron. “When you’re battling the frost, dependability is important. Believe me, nothing is more stressful than the thought of having 40 kids get stranded in the cold on a school trip. We can trust gas – the reliability is there.”

Busse was one of the first operators in Minnesota to start running IC’s gas-powered buses. After purchasing two in 2018, the positive experience convinced them to buy 10 more from their dealer, Hoglund Bus Company.

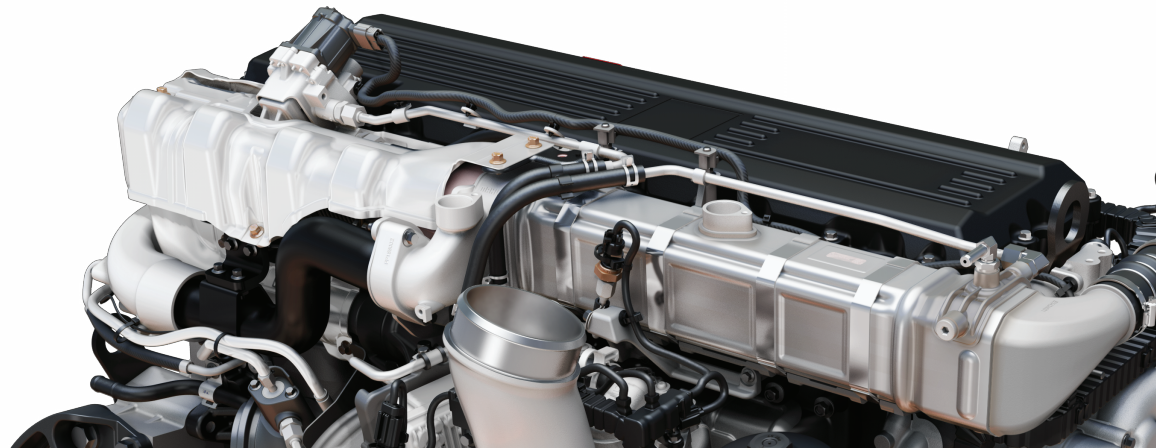
When Jim Busse thinks of his experience with Hoglund and IC Bus, he thinks of stellar customer service. “Starting from our sales manager to working with service and parts, they deliver when it comes to availability,” he says. “They stand behind what they say they’re gonna do. And that means a lot.”

For Busse, start-stop routes in the cold year-in and year-out mean that routine maintenance costs are always a factor to consider.

**So far, Busse is experiencing an overall lower cost of operation with the gas engines compared with the diesel-powered buses in its fleet.**

“The cost of maintaining a diesel engine is much more expensive,” says Chris Bensick, owner of Busse’s service partner Accelerated Auto. “Replacing spark plugs on a gas engine can cost less than a hundred dollars. If a DPF (diesel particulate filter) or a turbo-charger goes bad on a diesel, that can easily cost a couple thousand dollars. Longer-term, you could replace the whole gas motor for probably \$5,000 or \$6,000 where a diesel motor costs \$16,000, \$17,000.”

He added that since gas engines are easier to work on, labor costs are also a consideration. “Our mechanics have no problem keeping them running with minimal downtime.”





## THE DRIVERS' VIEW

Veteran driver Tom Palumbo has been behind the wheel of a gas-powered IC Bus for nearly two years. He says the quieter gas engines help enhance the safety of his daily routes.

"I don't have to yell over the engine in the background, which helps me pay more attention to the road, as well as the kids on the bus," he says. "My fatigue level is not as high because I don't have the sound of the diesel engine wearing me down."

And to those drivers who think running a gas engine means having to sacrifice power, Palumbo says his experience with the PSI has been quite the opposite.

"With the gas engines, you just have to adjust a little bit and get a feel for where that sweet spot is between second and third gear," he says. "To be honest, I think I get more power from a dead stop with the gas - and it's a smoother ride."

After nearly 15 years of driving a diesel, the gas-powered IC bus has turned Palumbo and his fellow drivers into believers.

"When I'm done with my shift, I look forward to going into work the next day knowing that my bus is going to start and it's going to require very little maintenance to keep it on the road every day," he says. "Once you get behind the wheel, it's hard to go back to the diesel."

*To learn more about how IC Bus brings you the power of choice, including CE Series buses featuring gas-powered PSI engines, contact your dealer today or visit [ICBus.com](http://ICBus.com).*