

Trailways

[This is for all of our Transportation collectors!]

The company was founded February 5, 1936, by Burlington Transportation Company, Santa Fe Trails Transportation Company, Missouri-Pacific Stages, Safeway Lines, Inc., and Frank Martz Coach Company.

The system originated with coast-to-coast service as the National Trailways Bus System (NTBS). Greyhound Lines had grown so quickly in the 1920s and 1930s that the Interstate Commerce Commission encouraged smaller independent operators to form the NTBS to provide competition. Unlike Greyhound, which centralized ownership, Trailways member companies became a formidable competitor while staying an association of almost 100 separate companies.

In the 1950s, Morgan W. Walker, Sr., of Alexandria, Louisiana, became head of the southern division of the company. He had entered the business on a small scale during World War I as the Interurban Transportation Company of Alexandria. During the 1950s and 1960s, consolidation among bus operators resulted in four of the five original Trailways members becoming part of a new company, Continental Trailways, which eventually operated the majority of Trailways routes

In 1968, under the leadership of major stockholder Kemmons Wilson, Holiday Inn acquired Continental Trailways, which remained a subsidiary of Holiday Inn until 1979, when Holiday Inn sold Trailways to private investor Henry Lea Hillman, Sr., of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In the years during which Trailways was a subsidiary of Holiday Inn, television commercials for Holiday Inn frequently showed a Trailways bus stopping at a Holiday Inn hotel.

Regular route bus ridership in the United States had been declining steadily since World War II despite minor gains during the 1973 and 1979 energy crises. By 1986, the Greyhound Bus Line had been spun off from the parent company to new owners, which resulted in Greyhound Lines becoming solely a bus transportation company. It was sold off to new owners headed by Fred Currey, a former executive with the largest member of the National Trailways Bus System. The old Greyhound parent had changed its name to Dial Corporation.

Under the new ownership in 1987, led by Currey, Greyhound Lines later acquired the former Continental Trailways company, the largest member of the rival National Trailways Bus System, effectively eliminating a large portion of bus competition.[8] Although Greyhound negotiated cooperative schedules with Carolina Coach Company and Southeastern Trailways, two of the larger members of the Trailways system, many smaller carriers were effectively forced out of business. Greyhound later acquired Carolina and the intercity operations of Southeastern. Most of the survivors diversified into charters and tours.

Today, Trailways members are spread across North America. They provide charter bus service, bus tours and scheduled route services, with some members providing regular route service to areas not served by any other bus company on an interlining basis with Greyhound Lines, each other, and independent companies. Members also offer motorcoach charters and tours in competitive markets.

