Choosing between the bus and the train to Chicago is less about which is better in general and more about which one fits this particular trip, from your front door to your final stop. Without a car, the plan rests on schedules and walking routes, so save them on your phone before you set out.

Then look at where you arrive

The train arrives at Chicago Union Station. Bus stops in Chicago vary by carrier, so check exactly where your bus arrives and how far that is from your destination.

Arriving close to your meeting, hotel or event matters more than the headline travel time, especially when you are carrying bags or traveling in bad weather.

Start with your starting point

Several intercity bus lines and the train both use the Milwaukee Intermodal Station downtown, so for many travelers the departure point is the same. Some bus service also stops at Milwaukee Mitchell Airport, which can help if you live south of downtown.

Map your trip from home to each departure point. The option that saves you a transfer at the start often wins, even if the ride itself takes a few extra minutes.

Compare schedules and comfort

Departure times differ by day and by carrier, so line up the options that fit your morning and your evening return. Fares change with demand, which makes it worth checking both modes on the date you plan to travel.

Think about comfort too. Some travelers prefer the steady ride and space of the train, while others are happy with the bus when the times or the https://chicago.ghost.io/summerfest-parking-shuttles-and-getting-there-without-a-car/ arrival point suit them better.

Make the decision

Write down the door-to-door time, the cost and the return options for each choice. The best option is the one with the fewest weak points, not the one with the single best number.

Whichever you choose, check the current schedule the day before and keep a backup departure in mind in case plans run late.