throughout the space shuttle program a
familiar launch day site was the shiny silver vehicle known as the Astro van
before each launch astronauts smiled and waved as they left the crew quarters and boarded the van that would carry them to meet their fully fueled ride to space the vehicle had lined its way across NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida as it carried the crew to the launch pad it was an exciting ride for the crew members but especially for the rookies ready for their first trip to space the first time it's just everything about it
is just you know the anticipation

excitement you know you're a little bit nervous but it's I mean it's just need
to know that you know you're one in a series of a very long line of astronauts

off-road in this vehicle going to the pad you know for flight to space so it's pretty cool early shuttle crews had fewer astronauts so they rode from the launch pad in an Apollo era transport

but since 1984 each shuttle crew traveled those nine miles aboard the current vehicle the modified Airstream
motorhome only racked up about 27,000 miles and it's 27 years of service

that's because it's used solely to transport the astronauts for each mission but I always associate the this vehicle with flying because you only get in here twice you get in here for tcdt which of course is the launch rehearsal and then launch day the only other time the Astro van was used was to take the ash drop back to crew quarters after landing the vehicles appeal is rooted in its tradition rather than its decor it's not really extravagant and a lake base
seating and it's pretty crowded on launch day especially with a crew of seven you know I think everyone's trying to cut the tension with the filter -

the interiors narrow center aisle is paralleled by long benches lift out sections accommodate the ventilator units used to circulate cool air through the astronauts multi orange launch and entry suits this is the only place that they have liquid air and liquid air is really really good you know we have this this cooling garment that circulates water cooling and in the hot Florida Sun
it's nice to have it they plug that liquid air into you and it just blows as cool air throughout your suit which is really nice because it actually dries your suit and the only place we get to have it is in here and I don't know why it was like a special treat on launch day and while each crew no doubt had their own unique take on their ride to the launch pad shuttle Atlantis sts-135 mission crew took in the significance of the final ride for the space shuttle program it was really special this time
because there were so many people here

and I think even though it's kind of an anxious time as you head out to the launch pad because you know this might actually heat the day on this particular
day you know the last play I think we were all really amazed how many people showed up I mean even on the road you're paying the right-turn to go to the pad and there were the road was lined with people waving American flags make me feel good you know to know that that the show program it this much to so many people I'm not just national but
internationally a lot of people turned out to watch while the vehicle won't be taking any more shuttle crews for the launch pad NASA plans to keep it ready to ferry future astronaut crews to the path I would like to keep this tradition you know I don't know if any of us will get to fly on the next vehicle whatever that may be a US vehicle but it would be kind of neat to have some of it be the same everybody ready so after riding the astro van to the launch pad a number of times what would be like if a space
shuttle commander got the keys to take

00:03:58,030 --> 00:04:11,170
it for a spin sts-135 commander Chris

00:04:01,479 --> 00:04:14,099
Ferguson found out vehicle fit for

00:04:11,169 --> 00:04:14,099
another space program