

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

February 15, 2004

THE NEWS RESOURCE FOR THE BUS AND MOTORCOACH INDUSTRY

## Dramatic makeover pondered for Greyhound Lines

DALLAS — Is Greyhound Lines about to get an *extreme makeover*?

Comments by the spokeswoman for Greyhound's parent company, Laidlaw International, have fueled new speculation that major changes may not be far down the road for the nation's

largest private bus company.

"In the long term, the business has to shift dramatically," Sarah Lewensohn told *Bus & Motorcoach News*. "It is not able — under its current environment and current structure — to operate at a level of profitability that will make it viable for the long term."

She said the entire Greyhound system is undergoing an extensive review with an eye toward development of a business model that will allow it to be both profitable and sustainable for the long run.

Obvious potential changes include exiting markets that aren't earning an adequate return and

don't hold out much promise of becoming profitable, and reducing the trip frequency to marginal communities.

"In some markets, we may determine that in areas that are less populated, we serve only those that are more heavily populated and travelers will have to find ways

to get to those larger population centers," Ms. Lewensohn said in a phone interview.

The company also is looking for ways to boost ridership among targeted segments of the population, particularly the Hispanic community.

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### N.Y. newspaper pits LimoLiner against others

NEW YORK CITY — Four months after it began offering luxury motorcoach service between Boston and New York City, LimoLiner has yet to attract significant ridership by business travelers, *The New York Times* reports.

LimoLiner operates between Boston's Back Bay and Midtown Manhattan three times each weekday and once on Sunday for \$69 each way. It began service Oct. 1.

"Since then, most business travelers have resisted LimoLiner's advances, but Fergus McCann, the Scottish entrepreneur who started the Boston-based service, has a plan to promote it by persuading potential customers to tour the inside of the vehicle," the *Times* reported.



The 200-mile, Boston-to-New York trip is one of the busiest corporate travel markets in the U.S. A tourism marketing organization told the *Times* that 316,000 Bostonians travel to New York for business each year.

At the same time, the Greater Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates that almost a million New Yorkers head to Boston annually.

With LimoLiner creating a new option for New York-Boston



travelers, *Times* reporter Ken Gordon was assigned the task of comparing the four modes of public transportation now available to commuters between the cities.

What follows is Gordon's description of two round trips,

starting in Boston on LimoLiner, returning on Amtrak's Acela Express, going back to Manhattan on a Greyhound, and making the final leg home to Boston on a US Airways Shuttle.

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## The costly battle over minimum corporate taxes

FORT DODGE, Iowa — An Iowa motorcoach operator is the latest "poster company" for emphasizing the financial and bookkeeping headaches state corporate franchise taxes are causing the motorcoach industry these days.

Northwest Iowa Tours recently

settled a \$6,000 bill for five years of back taxes the Minnesota Department of Revenue claimed the company owed under that state's franchise tax policies.

While company President Loren L. Jones concedes the payment probably won't break his business, he's convinced that

things are likely to get much worse down the road. "It's not a major battle lost for us, but as more and more states decide to collect retroactively, it will remain an aggravating drain on already slim operating margins," he warns.

Cash-strapped states across the country, most of them facing steep

budget deficits, have been hunting for more revenues by dusting off seldom enforced franchise or nexus tax polices and dunning motorcoach operators for taxes they haven't bothered to collect in years.

Some companies have been hit with bills of more than \$30,000 for

taxes going as far back as 10 years. While some have paid the bills in full, others have negotiated smaller payments or taken advantage of state-offered amnesty programs that allow businesses to get out of paying costly late penalties and interest charges if they pay their

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### THE DOCKET

#### Tax bill to change

A tax bill that would harm motorcoach operators will be modified by U.S. Senator Charles Grassley of Iowa.

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#### Banned in Texas?

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#### Tolls aplenty

An expert predicts tolls will become the primary method of paying for highways. Page 4

#### Bush proposes billions

President Bush has proposed flat highway spending for fiscal 2005. Page 5

#### Transportation bill

Prospects for a new surface transportation bill are looking increasingly iffy. Page 5

# Just Arrived

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## Coach USA unit gets 17 buses

PARAMUS, N.J. — Coach USA has taken delivery of 17 new MCI D4500 motorcoaches that have been assigned to the company's Northeast region.

The purchase represents an investment of \$6 million, or \$353,000 per coach. The 55-seater buses were put into service at the end of last month.

Five of the coaches were assigned to the company's Suburban Transit operation based in New Brunswick, N.J., and the remaining 12 coaches were allocated to Shortline, based in Mahwah, N.J.

All of the coaches feature 425-

horsepower Detroit Diesel Series 60 12.7-liter engines with Jake Brakes, Allison B500 transmissions, Ricon Mirage wheelchair lifts, REI six-monitor A/V systems, Michelin tires and lavatories.

The coaches also have Carrier A/Cs, Pro Heat auxiliary heaters and National 93B driver's seats.

Brian Souter, chief executive of Coach USA, said "the performance of our Northeast division is very encouraging and we are continuing to invest in our operations. This \$6 million investment in new coaches will improve the quality of service we provide our longer-dis-

tance commuter passengers and help facilitate organic growth."

Coach USA Northeast, which operates more than 1,000 coaches and buses, provides long-distance express coach, commuter, transit and sightseeing services. Roger W. Bowker is chief operating officer of Coach USA Northeast.

Tom Sorrells, chief executive of Motor Coach Industries, said his company was pleased Coach USA had selected MCIs to serve its customers' needs. "MCI is proud of its ongoing relationship with Coach USA and the trust and confidence that this new purchase conveys."

## New name, mission for Atlantic City motorcoach group

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — After 23 years as the Atlantic City Bus Operators Association, ACBOA has a new name and new focus.

In voting last month, members of the association approved changing the name to the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association and adopting a broader mission.

"Over the years, ACBOA's role has expanded beyond the scope of Atlantic City," said Andrea Malamut, executive director of the association. "The new name will reflect the membership's growing concern and interest in statewide and regional issues.

"Currently, there is no other organization in the state of New Jersey to address these issues."

The changes at ACBOA, which traditionally has represented the interests of bus operators bringing thousands of gamblers to Atlantic City daily, came after a group of independent bus owners

began discussing the need for a statewide association to represent coach operators.

Two meetings were held and at the second meeting in early November, attended by 39 bus company owners and managers, a decision was made to explore forming an alliance or joining with ACBOA.

At the time, Ms. Malamut and a number of ACBOA members indicated a willingness to consider making changes to the association, including adopting a new name.

Less than three months later it's a done deal, and at least one operator who was advocating a strong statewide association is pleased.

Renee Mills of Jay & Nay Charter Bus Service in Willingboro, N.J., said the expanded scope of the Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association should benefit operators across in the Garden State. "We needed to unify

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# THE DOCKET

## Tax bill to be modified to ally bus industry concerns

WASHINGTON — The United Motorcoach Association has been given assurances that a bill designed to close a tax loophole being exploited by defense contractors is being modified so its doesn't have the unintended consequence of harming hundreds of motorcoach operators.

The proposed legislation, Senate Bill 1637, was introduced last year by Senate Finance

Committee Chairman Charles Grassley, R-Iowa, to fix loopholes in government lease/buy-back arrangements.

However, after studying the bill, UMA, Laidlaw International Inc. and others said they believed the IRS might interpret the proposed law as eliminating the ability of tax-paying private motor carriers to use "straight-line" depreciation for equipment used

to provide contract bus services to tax-exempt entities.

All across the U.S., private bus operators, especially school bus contractors, derive substantial amounts of revenue by contracting with government entities.

Section 476 of Grassley's bill appeared to disallow the use of straight-line depreciation for any contract service if it was provided to a tax-exempt entity.

"I have spoken to the author of the legislation and ... he has informed me we have nothing to worry about," said Norman Littler, vice president for government and industry affairs at UMA. "I was told that not only is the bill language being modified but that the conference report will reflect the true intent."

Littler said he also was told that a clear statement of intent

will be made by Sen. Grassley on the floor of the Senate.

"Finally, he told me that he didn't want his sister to get mad at him — since she works for a motorcoach manufacturer."

The bill amends the Internal Revenue Code to comply with World Trade Organization rulings. It is called the Jumpstart Our Business Strength Act or JOBS Act.

## Expert says more, higher tolls coming

WASHINGTON — Tolls, not fuel taxes, will become the primary method of paying for highway improvements and maintenance as autos become more fuel efficient and roadways become more congested, says the head of a key association.

Patrick Jones, executive director of the International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association, likens tolls to a giant tidal wave that is gaining momentum. He cites examples of toll proposals from North Carolina to Texas.

"This is not an ordinary wave," says Jones. "This wave is 300 feet high and 1,000 miles wide. And this wave represents tolling and road pricing. The idea I would like you to buy is that the wave is coming."

Jones spoke at the Transportation Research Board annual meeting here last month.

## Tolls for I-81?

RICHMOND, Va. — Officials are considering a variety of options, including tolls, additional lanes and truck-only lanes, to relieve congestion on Interstate 81 through Virginia.

However, a statewide video-conference by the Virginia Department of Transportation indicated the public wants more rail transportation options along the I-81 corridor. Commercial carriers oppose tolling of the highway on the grounds it would hurt business and push commercial vehicles onto secondary roads.

## State & Provincial Fuel Tax Rates

A handful of states boosted fuel tax rates during the third quarter of 2003. Here are the updated rates for

all states and provinces, plus the federal tax rate in the U.S.

State	Gasoline	Diesel	State	Gasoline	Diesel
Alabama	18	19	North Carolina	24.2	24.2
Alaska	8	8	North Dakota	21	21
Arizona	18	26	Ohio	27	27
Arkansas	21.5	22.5	Oklahoma	16	13
California	30	26.3	Oregon	24	0
Colorado	22	20.5	Pennsylvania	25.9	30.8
Connecticut	29	30	Rhode Island	30	30
Delaware	23	22	South Carolina	16	16
D.C.	20	20	South Dakota	22	22
Florida	19.17	28.77	Tennessee	21	18
Georgia	11.31	11.31	Texas	20	20
Hawaii	16	16	Utah	24.5	24.5
Idaho	25	25	Vermont	20	26
Illinois	25.8	28.7	Virginia	19.5	19.5
Indiana	29	27	Washington	28	28
Iowa	20.3	22.5	West Virginia	25.35	25.35
Kansas	24	26	Wisconsin	31.5	31.5
Kentucky	18.6	18.6	Wyoming	14	14
Louisiana	20	20	U. S.	18.4	24.4
Maine	24.6	25.7	<i>Tax Rate in cents per gallon</i>		
Maryland	23.5	24.25			
Massachusetts	21	21	Province	Gasoline	Diesel
Michigan	25	22.5	Alberta	9	9
Minnesota	20	20	British Columbia	14.5	15
Mississippi	18	18	Manitoba	11.5	10.9
Missouri	17	17	New Brunswick	14.5	16.9
Montana	27	27.75	Newfoundland	16.5	16.5
Nebraska	24.6	24.6	Nova Scotia	15.5	15.4
Nevada	23.81	27.75	Ontario	14.7	14.3
New Hampshire	18	18	P.E. Island	14	13.5
New Jersey	14.5	17.5	Quebec	15.2	16.2
New Mexico	17	18	Saskatchewan	15	15
New York	31.5	30.1	<i>Tax Rate in Canada = cents per liter</i>		

## I-40 project starts in New Mexico

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — A \$19 million project to rebuild an interchange and replace a bridge over Interstate 40 in the heart of Albuquerque will cause traffic disruptions on and off during the next 10 months.

I-40 is a main east-west route across the U.S., connecting North

Carolina with California.

The 42-year-old span over Louisiana Boulevard will be dismantled beginning next month.

The project will result in some complete road closures and detours on I-40, mostly on weekends.

The project is scheduled for completion by Nov. 15.

## Coaches could get caught in left-lane ban in Texas

FORT WORTH, Texas — Because the local police aren't aware that most motorcoaches have three axles, over-the-road buses may get dragged into a proposed ban on left-lane highway travel that is aimed at truckers.

The Fort Worth City Council is considering a proposal from the city's Police Department that would ban truckers — and motorcoaches — from the left lane of Interstate 30 along the entire 15-mile stretch of the highway within the city limits.

The council has already given preliminary approval to the idea.

A spokesman for the police department confirmed to *Bus & Motorcoach News* that the ban is aimed at truckers. However, when asked if he was aware that over-the-road buses also have three axles he replied, "they do?"

If approved by the city and the Texas Department of Transportation, the ban on vehicles with three or more axles could be in place within six months. The city council has instructed City Manager Gary Jackson to ask TexDOT to study the proposal.

Under the plan, the city transportation department would install signs and truckers — and apparently coaches, too — would be fined for driving in the fast lane.

Other cities along I-30, including Arlington, may eventually be asked by the state if they want to join the ban, an article in the *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram* reported. Additionally, the I-30 ban could be expanded to include other nearby roads used by trucks, the newspaper said.

## Increased construction will cause delays at Wilson Bridge on I-95

WASHINGTON — Coach operators may want to try to avoid the Woodrow Wilson Bridge along Interstate 95 near Washington, D.C., in coming weeks as increased construction is expected to cause additional traffic delays.

The bridge, which handles about 200,000 vehicles a day, connects Alexandria, Va., with Oxon Hill, Md., along the East Coast's major north-south interstate highway. Alternate routes include U.S. 301 and the

American Legion Bridge.

Dredging for the costly bridge began in October 2000, and construction has been underway since 2001. However, much of the work has not affected the existing roadway but that is expected to change in the next few weeks.

A pair of higher drawbridges will replace the existing Wilson Bridge. That will necessitate the replacement of four interchanges. The entire \$2.56 billion project will not be completed until 2012.

## Bush wants \$33.6 billion for roads; Amtrak cut

WASHINGTON — President Bush has proposed \$33.6 billion in highway construction spending for fiscal 2005 — no change from fiscal '04. The spending figure is contained in the federal budget the administration sent to Congress earlier this month.

The Bush plan for roadway construction is the largest chunk of the administration's proposed budget for the U.S. Department of Transportation.

For the year beginning Oct. 1, the administration is seeking \$58.7 billion for the USDOT, an increase of less than 1 percent from the current \$58.6 billion budget.

The DOT budget outlines plans for doubling the funds for road-safety programs administered by the National Highway

Traffic Safety Administration. The increase would be to \$689 million, from \$298 million.

Bush's budget also increases spending on homeland security programs by 14 percent, to about \$48 billion.

A total of \$381 million would be allocated for food safety, up from \$79 million in the previous fiscal year.

In addition, the U.S. Transportation Security Administration would get a 20 percent increase in its budget, to \$5.3 billion.

There would be a reduction of 26 percent in funding for Amtrak, to \$900 million.

The overall budget the administration sent to Congress would boost total federal spending by 3.5 percent to \$2.4 trillion.

## Senate takes up transportation bill

WASHINGTON — It looks increasingly like the surface transportation reauthorization bill has gotten caught up in both election-year and presidential politics.

The Senate voted — 75 to 11 — earlier this month to take up the transportation legislation despite warnings from the White House about the cost of the measure. At the same time, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee put off a vote on its transportation bill because of disagreements over raising fuel taxes.

The current transportation bill, passed in 1998, expires at the end of this month.

The Senate proposal would provide \$311 billion for thousands

of transportation projects over the next six years, significantly more than what President Bush wants to spend.

The Bush administration is calling for \$256 billion in highway and transit spending during the six years ending 2009.

In the House, the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee wants to spend a whopping \$375 billion on highway and public transportation projects.

Committee Chairman Rep. Don Young, R-Alaska, and the ranking Democrat, Rep. Jim Oberstar of Minnesota, want a 5-cent per gallon increase in the federal gasoline tax, currently

18.4 cents a gallon.

Both the White House and House leaders oppose a tax increase. Two Cabinet secretaries told congressional leaders that if Bush is sent a budget-busting bill that a veto is a real possibility — a threat that was not warmly received in the House.

Meanwhile, it was reported that a proposal by Rep. Mark Kennedy, R-Minn., to repeal the ban on interstate highway tolls is gaining support.

The American Bus Association suggests the highway bill will become immersed in the debate over federal budget deficits vs. Congress' ability to deliver pork to voters.

## 13 transit agencies seek private charter operators

The following public transit providers have informed the United Motorcoach Association of their intent to provide charter bus service unless willing and able private operators step forward to offer their services, or to bid on contract opportunities.

UMA urges operators to take the time to respond to these notices:

**Grand Haven, Mich.** Deadline: Feb. 22, 2004. Write to: Julie Bildner, Transportation Director, Harbor Transit, 440 North Ferry, Grand Haven, MI 49417. Phone: (616) 842-3200.

**Ames, Iowa.** Deadline: 4 p.m. Feb. 25, 2004. Write to: Robert Bourne, Director of Transportation, Ames Transit Agency, 1700 West Sixth St., Ames, IA 50014. Phone: (515) 292-1105 or 292-1100.

**Bluefield/Mercer County, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Agency: Bluefield Area Transit.

**Clarksburg/Harrison County, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Agency: Central West Virginia Transit Authority.

**Fairmont/Marion County, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Agency: Fairmont-Marion County Transit Authority.

**Fayette/Greenbrier/Nicholas/**

**Webster counties, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Mountain Transit Authority.

**Granville/Calhoun County, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Agency: Little Kanawha Bus.

**Kingwood/Preston County, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Agency: Preston County Senior Citizens.

**Petersburg/Grant County, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Agency: Potomac Valley Transit Authority.

**Philippi/Barbour County, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Agency: Here and There Transit.

**West Hamlin/Lincoln County, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Agency: TriRiver Transit.

**Wayne/Wayne County, W. Va.** Deadline: Feb. 27, 2004. Agency: Wayne X-Press.

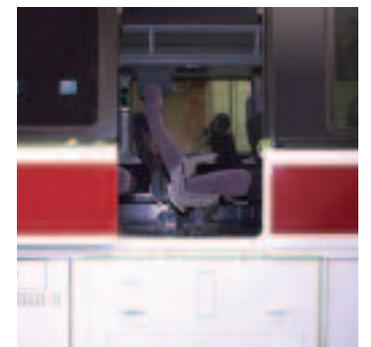
To respond to any of the above 10 notices, write to: West Virginia Department of Transportation, Division of Public Transit, Bldg. 5, Room 830, 1900 Kanawha Blvd. East, Charleston, WV 25305.

**Dayton, Ohio.** Deadline: March 5, 2004. Write to: Executive Director, Greater Dayton Regional Transit Authority, 4 South Main St., Dayton, OH 45402. Phone: (937) 425-8400.

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## THE DOCKET

## Memorial for World War II opening nears

WASHINGTON — Dedication of a major new memorial — the National World War II Memorial — that is expected to become a popular stop for many Washington tour bus groups is three months away.

The dedication will mark the official opening of the memorial and also celebrate the Greatest Generation on Saturday, May 29.

Along with the dedication, other events are planned for that week, including a World War II reunion and tribute.

The American Battle Monuments Commission, which was authorized by President Bill Clinton more than 10 years ago to establish the memorial, has announced that no more seats are available for any of the events being held in connection with



the dedication. In fact, demand has far exceeded seating capacity and an extensive wait-list exists.

For many elderly who will be attending the events or simply visiting the memorial, the trip to the capital has taken on aspects of a pilgrimage.

The memorial, which is situated on the Capital Mall in the

shadow of the Washington Monument, is designed to pay special tribute to America's World War II generation. It honors the 16 million people who served in the U.S. armed forces during World War II and the more than 400,000 who died.

As a symbol of the defining event of the 20th century, the

memorial will serve as a reminder of the spirit, sacrifice and commitment of the American people to the common defense of the nation and the broader causes of peace and freedom from tyranny throughout the world.

While the official opening of the memorial won't be until the days leading up to May 29, the site

and monument are expected to be ready for viewing by April 1.

Information about the memorial and the dedication events can be obtained by calling (800) 297-1421 or by going to [www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com). Strict rules have been established for tour buses bringing groups to the dedication in May.

## LimoLiner

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

### Room to stretch out

The silver LimoLiner pulled in front of the Hilton Boston Back Bay Hotel 15 minutes late on a cold Thursday afternoon, and Lara Setrakian, a Harvard senior with 70,000 frequent-flier miles, and three other passengers climbed aboard.

Inside were tinted windows and 28 reclining leather chairs that gave off a pleasant musky aroma. "It doesn't have that bus smell, which is a killer," Ms. Setrakian said.

Compared with the Acela, the LimoLiner provided each person an enormous amount of legroom. And not just that: the bus is rarely crowded, meaning travelers can wait until the last minute to buy a ticket.

Hillary Johnson, a student at Harvard's Graduate School of Education who travels between Boston and New York four times a year, decided to take the LimoLiner three hours before its departure.

"You can't do that with an airplane, unless you want to pay an incredible amount of money," she said.

Soon, an attendant brought sandwiches and nonalcoholic drinks to passengers, "much like a flight attendant would on an airline," said Kevin S. Kenefick, chief executive of Data Intensity,

a database business in Waltham, Mass., and a recent LimoLiner customer.

Also available at each seat: free Ethernet or wireless connections, an amenity that neither the plane nor the train offers. "Having access to e-mail for the length of the trip, that's a home run," said Scott Signore, a principal at Matter Communications in North Andover, Mass.

The coach also offers movies on the big-screen television (earphones: \$2) and free magazines.

On this day, the bus reached its destination, the New York Hilton, 45 minutes late. Mr. McCann, the owner, said he was not certain how long the \$69 fare would last, but added, "I would rather have it fail at \$69 than be empty at \$99."

### Office on a track

Amtrak's Train 2164 was so crowded that Brian Foye and Chris Harrington, managers for the Capital Grille steakhouse in Westborough, Mass., had to sit in the quiet car, which did not suit them.

Acela passengers, unlike LimoLiner guests, are not permitted to choose their seats before boarding.

It was a Friday afternoon, an hour after the train had left Penn Station in Manhattan 10 minutes late, and the pair had moved to the cafe car for \$4.50 beers.

Though the Acela serves alco-

hol and has a larger menu than the LimoLiner, it charges for the food and drink and sometimes runs out of items, including, on this trip, hot dogs, pizza and roast turkey sandwiches. On the other hand, the opportunities for social interaction are greater and it is easier for passengers to spread out papers and write memorandums.

Alison Merifield, an account director at the Boston office of Lewis PR who often rides the Acela, describes the train less as a mode of transportation than as a mobile satellite office. "Our clients expect to be able to reach us any time, and traveling on the Acela means they can," she said. "While cellphone coverage can be spotty - particularly when trying to conduct a conference call with India - it's still better than on a plane."

Although the train has a top speed of 150 miles an hour, it is notorious for running late. David Jacobson, a public relations freelancer in the Boston area, complained that after Providence, R.I., it "creeps along the coast while you watch the old men driving Cadillacs go faster than you."

Still, on this trip, the train got to Boston in three hours and 13 minutes, just two minutes late. The one-way fare was \$99.

### Low-price option

The most arduous leg of this road test was a Monday morning

Greyhound journey from Riverside Station in Boston to the Port Authority terminal in New York.

At \$30 for a one-way ticket, the price is right (though triple the \$10 fare for the Fung Wah bus that runs between the Chinatowns of New York and Boston), but the ambience is stark.

While the LimoLiner's bathroom was clean and bright, featuring a black vase with yellow flowers and plenty of mirror space, Greyhound's had a flimsy accordion door, a small stack of moist towelettes, no sink and a chemical smell.

The ride was cramped and bumpy and no food was available.

All of which may help explain why there was a distinct absence of laptop computers and suits on this three-hour-and-55-minute journey, which began 10 minutes late.

So where were the corporate travelers?

Julia Searles, a Greyhound ticket agent in Boston, said business travelers usually caught the 7:20 a.m. bus, which she said was "always on time."

### Crowded yet speedy

On a Tuesday, the check-in line for a 2 p.m. US Airways Shuttle to Boston was short and the security measures seemed routine, if tight.

Tom Kane, a vice president of

Harborside, a New York stock trading company, says he chooses the shuttle for its reliability. The flight usually takes about an hour. Mr. Kane disdains the Acela because, he says, it is rarely on time.

Mario Almonte, a brand specialist at Herman Associates, a New York public relations firm, says he considers the train more dependable and a better place to work or doze. "When I'm traveling to Boston from New York, I ask myself: 'Do I feel lucky?' and if the answer is 'No,' then I take the Acela," Mr. Almonte said.

US Airways does provide cubicles, some with phones, at its gates, though Elliot Schrage, 43, a consultant based in San Francisco, said he was "stunned that they don't have wireless access."

The flight itself (which cost \$128.50) was packed, and as an unsmiling attendant distributed free soft drinks and bags of pretzels, the LimoLiner's dining and space advantages became apparent. But the plane took off on time and landed early, though the exit process was predictably slow.

So, which is the best way to make the trek?

That, of course, depends on the traveler's tastes and budget.

But Mr. McCann, LimoLiner's owner, puts the issue in perspective.

"Business travel is a grind," he said. "Nobody really enjoys it."

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# A tidal wave of tolls

On page 4 of this issue is a small story with big implications.

The headline reads: Expert says more, higher tolls coming.

It is the latest in a string of headlines that have appeared in recent issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News* reporting about tolls that have increased, tolls that are going to increase, and tolls that someone wants to increase.

Right below the story on page 4 is an item about a proposal by the Virginia Department of Transportation to add toll and dedicated truck lanes to Interstate 81, a major corridor between the Canadian border and the southeastern United States.

Maryland also is considering putting tolls on the 12 miles of I-81 that run through that state.

I-95, which often serves as an alternative to I-81 and already has a hodge-podge of tolls, may get more. The governor of New Hampshire is moving ahead with plans to restore tolls to I-95 in his state.

In the Feb. 1 issue, we carried a story about the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission boosting tolls by 43 percent on that heavily traveled roadway come Aug. 1.

All that is bad enough but, unfortunately, it gets worse.

Buried in a story on page 5 is a one-sentence paragraph reporting that a Minnesota congressman is gaining adherents from his colleagues for completely lifting the ban on tolls on interstate highways.

Currently, states must get permission from the Federal Highway Administration before they can erect toll booths on interstates within their borders.

When you combine what the Minnesota congressman is attempting with what the expert is saying in the story on page 4 and an extremely disturbing picture emerges.

The expert is the executive director of a trade association that represents highway, bridge and tunnel operators. He says tolls, not fuel taxes, will become the primary method of paying for highway improvements and maintenance as autos become more fuel efficient and roadways become more congested.

He likens tolls to a giant tidal wave that is gaining momentum. "This is not an ordinary wave," says Patrick Jones. "This wave is 300 feet high and 1,000 miles wide. And this wave represents tolling and road pricing. The idea I would like you to buy is that the wave is coming."

The idea of more tolls is as repugnant as it is unfair. Coach operators pay tens of millions of dollars annually in non-exempt diesel fuel taxes and similar amounts in federal and state highway-user fees.

Carriers don't need more tolls to run on roads the industry already has helped finance through user fees and fuel taxes.

A tidal wave of messages that conveying that idea should descend on Congress.

# OSHA sets posting requirement

WASHINGTON — Starting this month, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration is requiring employers to post a summary of the total number of job-related injuries and illnesses that occurred last year.

Under the new requirement, employers are required to post only the summary of injuries and illnesses (OSHA Form 300A). The complete injury log (OSHA Form 300 Log) does not have to be posted.

The summary lists the total number of job-related injuries and illnesses that occurred last year and were logged on the OSHA 300 form. Employment information about annual average number of employees and total hours worked during the year also is required to assist in calculating incidence rates.

Companies with no recordable injuries or illnesses last year

must post the form with zeros on the total line. All summaries must be certified by a company executive.

The form is to be displayed in a common area where notices to employees are usually posted. Employers must make a copy of

**'Employers must make a copy of the summary available to employees.'**

the summary available to employees who move from worksite to worksite, such as construction workers, and employees who do not report to any fixed establishment on a regular basis.

Employers with 10 or fewer employees and employers in certain industry groups are normally exempt from federal OSHA injury and illness recordkeeping

and posting requirements. A complete list of exempt industries in the retail, services, finance and real estate sectors is posted on OSHA's website.

While exempted employers don't have to post the injury summary they may still be selected by the Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics to participate in an annual statistical survey.

All employers covered by OSHA need to comply with safety and health standards and must report verbally within eight hours to the nearest OSHA office all accidents that result in one or more fatalities or in the hospitalization of three or more employees.

Copies of the OSHA forms are available on the OSHA Recordkeeping Web page in either Adobe PDF or Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet format. Go to [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov).

# OSHA announces plan for random audits

WASHINGTON — OSHA plans to conduct audits of some employers' 2002 record-keeping efforts. For the audits, OSHA will select 250 companies using a statistically random approach.

During the audits, an OSHA compliance officer will ask employers to furnish the following information:

- Employee roster(s) for 2002.
- OSHA Form 300 and Form 300A for 2002.
- Worker Compensation First

Reports of Injury for a sample of employees.

- Medical records for a sample of employees.
- Total number of hours worked by employees in 2002.
- Average number of persons employed in 2002.

In addition, the compliance officer will ask to see related records for some employees, as needed, such as, but not limited to:

- Nurse/doctor/clinic logs.
- Company first-aid reports.

- Company accident reports.
- Insurer accident reports.
- Accident-and-health benefit insurance records.
- In-plant employee transfer records.
- Absentee records.
- Employee/payroll records.

Since all OSHA inspections include a review of the most recent three years of Injury and Illness Logs, the compliance officer will ask to review those. However, only the 2002 log will be audited in detail.

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# New company set to build RTS buses

ROSWELL, N.M. — A small start-up company, Millennium Transit Services LLC, is well on the road to bringing back one of North America's legendary buses, the RTS.

Backed by more than \$4 million in loans from the New Mexico State Investment Council and the City of Roswell, Millennium expects to be ready to begin producing buses by summer, perhaps earlier.

Upwards of 25,000 RTS's were manufactured between 1978, when they were introduced by General Motors, and 2002 when Nova Bus stop production at its plant in Roswell.

Millennium is headed by business partners Les Kolls and Jane Somes, neither of who have a bus industry background. The pair have been executives at large corporations and reportedly are experienced at starting and growing businesses. Kolls is CEO and Somes is COO.

Assisting them are key former employees of Nova Bus, which produced the RTS for nearly a decade. Nova Bus is a subsidiary of



Prevost Car.

David West and Mark Proctor, two former Nova Bus executives, are assisting Kolls and Somes. West is a vice president of Millennium and the former director of sales and contract administration at Nova Bus in Roswell.

Sales of the RTS dropped steadily during the 1990s as public transit agencies switched their purchases from traditional, high-floor buses like the RTS to low-floor

models that make passenger loading and unloading easier. The Americans with Disability Act was a driving force in the move to low-floor buses.

The 20,000th RTS was delivered in the spring of 1998, 20 years after the first RTS rolled off the assembly line. The RTS was developed by General Motors before it abandoned the bus business. Thousands remain in service across the U.S.

Many variations of the RTS have been offered over the years in 30-, 35- and 40-foot lengths.

Two years ago, Nova Bus announced it would close the Roswell plant if a buyer could not be found. At the time, the plant employed nearly 400 workers. Less than a year later, virtually the entire workforce had been laid off.

West and other former plant workers led the effort to find an investor to buy the plant and resurrect production. After months of searching and several dead ends, they happened onto Kolls and Somes and got them involved.

The Millennium team has spent much of the past couple of months contacting former RTS customers. They're confident they will find sales and eventually win contracts now that they own the 500,000-square-foot former RTS plant and are readying it to start production again. Hundreds of former Nova Bus employees are believed to still live in the Roswell area.

For more information, contact West by phone at (505) 347-7515 or e-mail at [duw4664@msn.com](mailto:duw4664@msn.com).

## Atlantic City

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

ourselves," she said. "This is an excellent thing. ... The Greater New Jersey Motorcoach Association will work for everybody, not just Atlantic City operators."

Ms. Mills said he had spoken to more than a third of those who attended the meetings last fall and all favored the new arrangement. "We need a statewide association in New Jersey, doing positive stuff. They'll be watching legislation; they have a lobbyist. Everything you need."

Ms. Malamut said the revamped association expects to attract new members, like Ms. Mills, who want to participate in a statewide association. She noted, however, that the association will not forget its roots and will focus both on Atlantic City and its expanded role.

The association has more than 100 members, most of which are motorcoach and tour operators.

For more information about the association, call (865) 665-3200, or e-mail [acboa@lycos.com](mailto:acboa@lycos.com).

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

## Taxes

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tax bills by specific dates.

The taxes generally range from a minimum of \$200, to more than \$1,000 a year, and are triggered by the amount of business a carrier does in an individual state.

While states differ on the definition of what constitutes doing business inside their borders, the factors usually include the number of miles or number of trips a carrier travels in the state with passenger pick-ups and drop-offs, or a combination of those factors and others. Carriers that pass through the state without any passenger activity are not subject to the tax.

**A bonanza for CPAs**

Victor Parra, president and CEO of the United Motorcoach Association, said the complicated variables that go into figuring the tax are an administrative nightmare and that in many cases it costs more to figure out the tax than what the actual tax totals. In other words, these situations are a financial bonanza for CPAs and accountants.

Under the laws of most states, corporations can recover money they pay in taxes to other states when they file their corporate income taxes in their home states. For example, if a company has an income tax bill of \$1,000 and it has paid \$300 to another state, its home-state income tax liability would be reduced to \$700.

Many companies are losing out, however, because it is turning out to be too costly to have their accountants redo tax returns for all of the states in which they pay income taxes and all of the years in which they are paying back taxes to multiple states.

"For the small amount of tax per year, it wasn't worth amending and refiling all those years' returns in Iowa and other states where we pay income taxes," said Jones.

Accountants say it would be less expensive to complete the

## Minnesota legislators want to control state spending

ST. PAUL, Minn. — While many state across the U.S. are trying to reload their cash-strapped budgets with new and higher taxes that hit motorcoach operators, two Republican lawmakers in Minnesota are taking a different approach — hold the line on expenses.

State Sen. Michele Bachmann and State Rep. Phil Krinkie have introduced a proposal in the state legislature that would create a Taxpayer's Bill of Rights amendment to the state constitution limiting how much government can spend and giving voters the right to approve tax increases.

If endorsed by lawmakers during the 2004 legislative session that begin earlier this month, the measure would go before Minnesota voters in the fall.

"This, in my opinion, is the first sensible approach to the growing deficit problem," observed Victor Parra, president of the United Motorcoach

Association.

He and others in the motorcoach industry have been critical of states that are increasing taxes or adding new taxes as a means of working their way out of financial problems and budget deficits.

Over the past several months, states have begun collecting corporate franchise taxes that they had not collected in the past, increased fuel taxes, eliminated rolling stock tax exemptions and increased commercial vehicle registration fees, all measures that reach the motorcoach industry.

Bachman said her proposal is aimed at reducing the growth of government spending.

Under the measure, spending increases by the state would be limited to the rate of inflation and population growth, while county and city spending could grow only by the rate of inflation and increases in local property values. In addition, tax rates could not be increased unless approved by voters.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty said he likes the idea and several state lawmakers have indicated support for it.

The Taxpayers League of Minnesota quickly endorsed it, saying it is important for the state to make a serious attempt to reign in what it called "out-of-control" spending.

The measure would be similar to a citizen initiative that was adopted in Colorado in 1992 and which is credited with making the state one of only five in the country that did not face serious budget deficits in 2002. Colorado not only had a balanced budget that year, but also refunded \$927 million to taxpayers.

Parra said the measure in Minnesota acknowledges a business view to operating a government. "This approach recognizes that there are two parts to sound fiscal management — revenues and expenses — and that in lean times you look at both, similar to the way you run a business."

proper forms for the deductions when taxes are initially filed and many companies are expected to be doing just that when they are billed in future years.

**N.J. gets the ball rolling**

The big push to begin collecting the franchise taxes as a means of easing state budget problems appears to have gotten its start in New Jersey and caught on quickly in other states, including Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Illinois and many others throughout the country.

While the need for increased revenues was behind the actions of most states, some — Pennsylvania among them — are believed to

have joined in because they were worried about losing money if any of the motorcoach companies based in their states began deducting from their corporate income taxes any payments that they made to other states. Suddenly it became a tit-for-tat situation.

Taxing authorities in Pennsylvania touched the nerve of a number of carries by sending out bills for 10 years of back taxes to companies that had been in business only three or four years. Companies receiving the bills said state officials told them they simply wanted to get the attention of the operators so they would pay the taxes they actually owe the state.

The surprise tax bills sent out

by the states have triggered concern throughout the industry and have touched off protests that included announced boycotts by tour companies of states that were dunning businesses for the back payments.

Qwen Elmore, president of Fun Tours in Norfolk, Va., and one of those billed by Pennsylvania for several years that it was not taking tours to the state, was so upset at the time that she said she no longer would promote Pennsylvania as a tour site and only would take customers there if they requested it. "I think they're cutting off the arm that feeds them," she said, noting that the state could lose much more in tourism

business than it will collect from the franchise tax.

The situation drew the attention of the Pennsylvania Tourism and Lodging Association, which quickly mounted a campaign to get the state to drop the tax. The complaints reached state lawmakers and the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee conducted a hearing last month in Harrisburg to air the issue.

**Industry advocate**

The Pennsylvania Tourism and Lodging Association went to bat for the motorcoach industry, with association President Barry Wickes lining up speakers from the coach, convention and resort industries to address committee members at the hearing.

If Pennsylvania eventually drops the tax, Parra suggests that others should follow, noting that those that continue to collect the tax could eventually lose money as coach companies deduct from their state incomes taxes the amount of money they pay in franchise taxes to other states.

"If all states start collecting these taxes, no one wins, only the accountants that operators need to hire to understand and fill out the forms each state has for filing corporate franchise tax," he said.

State associations need to join the fight, too, he emphasized, by linking up with officials of the hotel, convention, destination, attraction and similar industries to drive home to politicians the value of their business. "We'll need to tell our story forcefully, convincingly and passionately," he added. "We need to show how much money we contribute to local economies and a state's tax base."

Meantime, Jones is moving on — and with a little encouragement.

"On a brighter note, the state of New York put us through the paces, but finally conceded that we did not owe tax under their regulations," he said.

## Motorcoach parking map is available for Chicago

CHICAGO — The Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau has released its *2004 Chicago Motorcoach Parking Map & Information Guide*.

The map and guide are designed to assist tour operators, guides and drivers that are transporting groups within Chicago.

The map includes the locations of free downtown parking lots for coaches, "on-street" parking areas

and the numerous coach loading zones throughout the city.

Additionally, it identifies the new overnight parking area at the McCormick Place Marshalling Yard (31st and Lake Shore Drive). The lot is fenced, patrolled and available 24 hours daily.

The guide also lists affordable restaurants that are close to the free coach parking lot at 631 W. Kinzie St., as well as other infor-

mation for groups traveling by coach.

The Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau has incentives for the parking lot at McCormick Place and for hotel stays.

In addition to the map, the Chicago CTB has a new Travel Professionals Guide, a comprehensive publication for tour operators, group leaders and other travel professionals that plan individual and

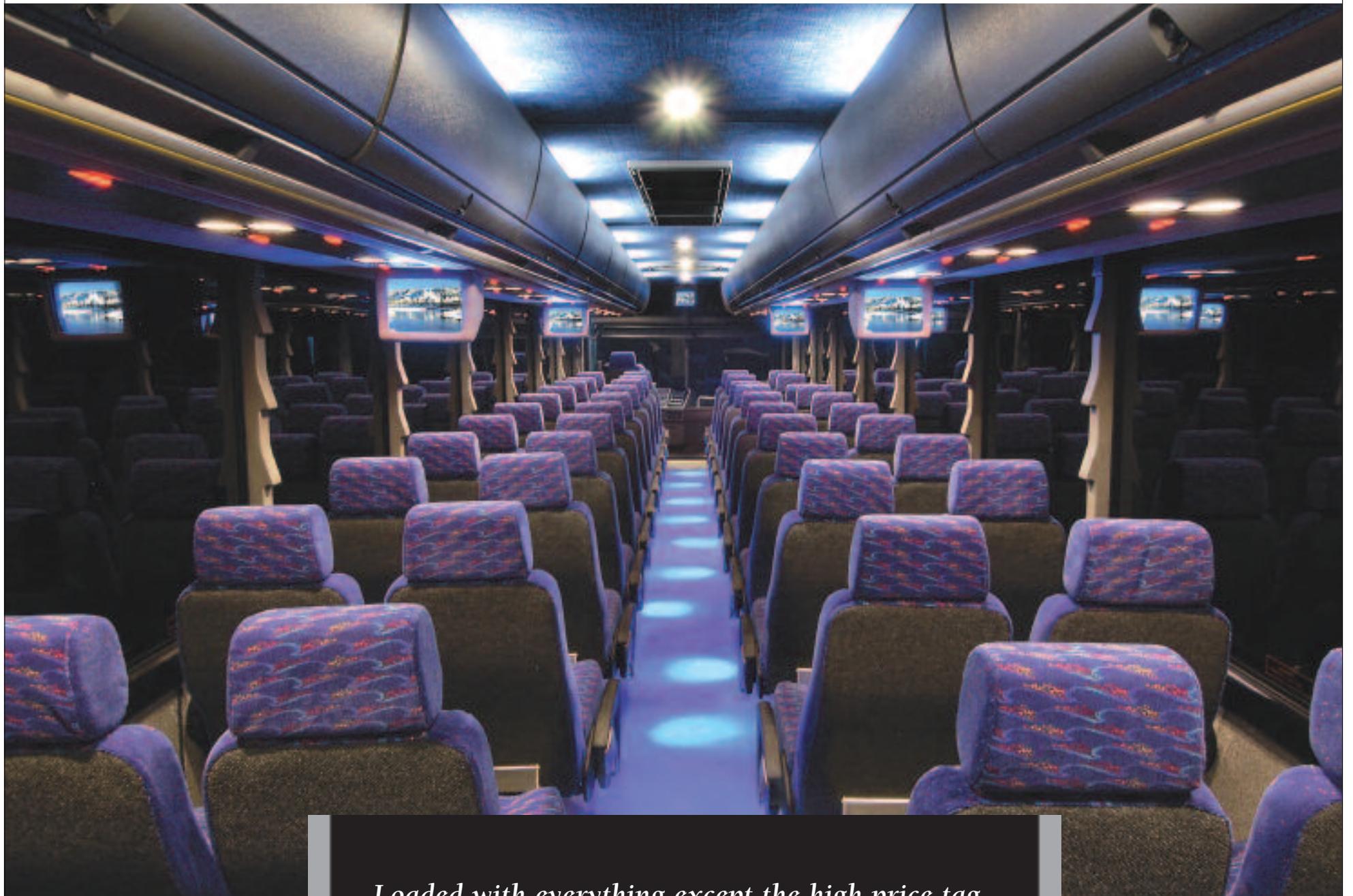
group leisure travel, and a marketing piece, Chicago, Live It. Learn It. Love It, which showcases attractions, restaurants and hotels for those planning student and youth group travel to Chicago.

All publications are available by going to [www.choosechicago.com/travel/marketing.html](http://www.choosechicago.com/travel/marketing.html), or by calling tourism sales at the bureau (312) 567-8500.

## People

Peter R. Cohen has joined Capacity Coverage Co. of Upper Saddle River, N.J., as vice president of transportation marketing. Cohen has 25 years experience in public livery transportation, including having been chief operating officer of Paul Arnold Associates in Livingston, N.J. Capacity is a large provider of transportation insurance in the Northeast U.S.

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

# Nova Bus president commits to strengthening competitiveness

ST. EUSTACHE, Quebec — The new president of Nova Bus says the company is determined to grow and expand by strengthening its competitive advantages.

"By staying ahead of the competition in our research and development activities ... we will always have the kind of innovations in the product pipeline that make full use of our ISO manufacturing capacity and capabilities,

while ensuring healthy prospects for the future," says Gilles Dion. "All of this to safeguard our customers and shareholders invest-

Gilles Dion



ments for the long term."

Dion became president and CEO of Nova Bus on Jan. 1. However, he continues to act as vice president of the aftermarket division of both Nova Bus and its parent company, Prevost Car.

In addition to improving Nova Bus' competitiveness, Dion says there are three other areas where the company needs to focus.

"I intend to see that Nova Bus

goes on leading the way by following three key priorities: employee empowerment, markets development and customer relationships. I want to be sure our organization provides our employees everything they need to maximize at all times their contribution to the overall performance of the company."

Dion, who has nearly 30 years of experience in senior management positions at Prevost Car, also

is focused on customer requirements and expectations.

"We have to keep customers and their needs at the forefront of everything we do. When I say Nova Bus is customer driven, I'm not just talking about our buses.

"To deliver maximum customer satisfaction at every turn, we must treat our customers as the essential partners they are in growing our business and in our success."

## Greyhound

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Plus, Greyhound is talking with overnight package delivery companies about increasing its own package delivery business by working with them, and the company is looking at ways it can bolster its tour and charter operation.

As part of the assessment of every segment of the business, Greyhound already has abandoned such long-time practices as trying to bulk up revenues by increasing passenger counts and filling seats without much regard to profitability. Maximizing profits is the new operating mantra.

The shift in philosophy already has produced increased yields — the average fare has gone to \$42 from \$39, plus there have been changes in advance ticket purchasing and companion ticket policies. The change is being credited with income gains made during the last two quarters.

In the fourth quarter of fiscal 2003, which included the busy summer season, income at Greyhound rose to \$61.2 million from \$20.8 million in the same quarter the previous year. And, in the first quarter of fiscal 2004, income was \$10.6 million, compared to a loss of \$1.5 million in the like quarter a year ago.

"And we did that while carrying fewer passengers and traveling fewer miles," Ms. Lewensohn points out.

### Laidlaw warnings

That Greyhound needs to make changes, of that there is little doubt.

Laidlaw regularly issues warnings in its quarterly filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission that Greyhound's financial situation is precarious and an economic or business setback could send the carrier into bankruptcy or even cause it to cease operations.

In Laidlaw's latest filing with

## Tentative accord at Greyhound

WASHINGTON — Greyhound Lines and Local 1700 of the Amalgamated Transit Union have reached a tentative agreement on a multi-year contract.

The agreement was reached after nearly two months of on-again, off-again negotiations. It is the third agreement reached by the company and the union since they began talks last spring.

The two previous contract proposals were roundly rejected by Greyhound drivers and nearly 300 mechanics covered by the agreements. The current Greyhound-ATU contract expired Jan. 31.

Along with the latest agreement, the two sides also announced they have agreed on a contract extension letter that extends current employee benefits and protections until March 26, when voting on the latest

contract proposal is expected to be completed.

The union's executive committee is recommending ratification of the new agreement. The committee had recommended approval of the first contract in May but had vetoed the second one in October.

Although terms of the latest deal were not immediately available, the proposed contract is thought to be similar to the proposal that was rejected last fall.

One source said the agreement would freeze wages for two years, with a 2 percent hourly increase in March 2006.

The cost-split on premiums for health benefits, a major sticking point, reportedly is set at 64 percent company and 36 percent employees in the latest agreement. Employees not using the company health plan reportedly

will be paid \$500 annually.

The ratification vote on the proposed contract reportedly also will carry a strike vote.

Nearly 87 percent of the Greyhound drivers and mechanics who participated in the balloting last fall voted no. In May, the tentative contract was rejected by the 62-to-38 percent margin.

Currently, Greyhound drivers with five or more years experience operating on scheduled routes are paid \$19.85 hourly. A driver with more than a year of service but less than two years earns 90 percent of the experienced rate. Charter pay is 75 percent of the schedule rate.

An experienced Greyhound mechanic in Syracuse, N.Y., is paid \$15.43 hourly, while a company mechanic in Seattle earns \$22.14 an hour.

the SEC, the company said Greyhound may try to restructure its debt and credit requirements, noting it has been successful in the past in obtaining necessary amendments and extensions, but that there is no assurance it will be successful again.

"Management is closely monitoring this situation and is intent on requesting covenant amendments should it appear likely such amendments will be necessary to remain in compliance with the covenants," the company told the SEC.

Greyhound will be seeking an extension of its \$125 million revolving credit agreement, which expires in October.

### Banks are key

If banks balk at modifying or extending Greyhound's credit agreements it could impact the company's ability to continue operating as a "going concern," Laidlaw cautions.

Laidlaw, which emerged itself from two years of bankruptcy protection last July, is required to meet certain performance levels as part of its revolving credit agreements. At the same time, its Chapter 11 reorganization plan limits its investment in Greyhound to \$15 million through 2006.

Greyhound, which posted annual losses six times between 1994 and 2002, has been hit hard by a host of negative factors, ranging from the weak economy, to lingering traveler security concern, to competition from discount airlines whose low rates have attracted potential bus riders.

"The best option for Laidlaw is to recognize that the service that Greyhound has provided has outlived its usefulness," Pittsburgh-based transportation consultant Satish Jindel told a regional business publication, *Crain's Chicago*, last month.

### An optimistic view

Meanwhile, a New York finan-

cial analyst says Greyhound is headed in the right direction and has a good chance to recover and return to profitability.

"My take is that Greyhound is struggling at the bottom of the economy the way every debt-laden transportation company has been struggling. So this is nothing special," says Jeff Kauffman of Fulcrum Global Partners.

"Having said that, the economy is getting better, ridership is increasing and I think this management team is doing the prudent things that it can do to improve the company."

Like Ms. Lewensohn, he cites the improving financial picture as reflected by the two most recent quarterly results, which he says were much stronger than most people had expected.

However, he cautions that Greyhound's labor negotiations with the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1700, which represents drivers and 300 mechanics,

represents a major unknown and uncertainty.

The six-year contract between the company and the union expired Jan. 31, but the terms of that agreement have been extended into March. (See related story on this page.)

"Giving the situation the company is in financially, this is not a contract where the drivers should expect to get paid well, but rather a contract where they probably are going to have take wage reductions," Kauffman stressed.

"I don't think the drivers have a lot of leverage here because one of the things that happened in the bankruptcy is that Laidlaw can shut down Greyhound with almost no recourse to Laidlaw."

Kauffman says that if drivers strike or create issues sometimes associated with labor negotiations, the company could be shut down.

"I don't think that's going to happen, but the drivers have to realize that they're not in a position to strike at this point and everyone should do what the company needs to do to get back on its feet and then worry about labor issues and getting paid," he adds.

Local 1700 President Greg Herbold and other union officials were not available for comment.

### Interim changes

Greyhound has announced a handful of cost-cutting moves since the hiring last July of Greyhound President Stephen Gorman, former president of North American operations for Krispy Kreme Doughnuts.

Since the summer, Greyhound has removed about 300 buses from its fleet, abandoned 13 of its 2,000 routes, and reduced the frequency of buses on 75 routes.

It also cut its administrative staff level by about 300 and let an unknown number of drivers and mechanics go.

Those were short-term fixes, notes Ms. Lewensohn. Long-term changes are still in the works.



## Manufacturing facility is opened by PennTex

FORT WORTH, Texas — PennTex Industries Inc., manufacturer of alternators, regulators, high idlers and other mobile electronic devices, has opened a new manufacturing plant in Fort Worth.

PennTex, which will mark its 10th anniversary in business later this year, opened the “state-of-the-art” facility so it could expand production of its growing product line.

The new plant employs 30 people and all PennTex charging system products are manufactured there, including the new PX-8 series air-

cooled alternator, a replacement for the oil-cooled 50DN alternator that has been the standard on motorcoaches and transit buses for more than a decade.

With over 14,000-square-feet of manufacturing and administration space, the new location will serve not only the growing bus market, but the emergency services, marine and industrial markets as well.

The company was founded in October 1994, by Glen Stroud and Tom Lucas, who had combined experience of more than 35 years in the transportation industry.

Corporate headquarters for PennTex are in Manchester, Pa.

Today, the company produces nearly a dozen models of high-amp, heavy-duty alternators and charging systems, plus a high-idler device, charging system monitor and voltage regulators.

“Our motto: ‘performance, endurance, and satisfaction’ is not just words, but the way we do business on a daily basis,” says company Vice President Tom Lucas.

Information about the company and its products can be found at [www.penntexusa.com](http://www.penntexusa.com).

## MCI offers new emergency roadside assistance program

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — MCI Fleet Support, the service and parts arm of Motor Coach Industries, has begun offering a free 24-hour Emergency Roadside Assistance program for all owners and operators of MCI coaches.

The service is available seven days a week, including holidays.

Drivers experiencing trouble on the road can call a toll-free number — (800) 241-2947 — that will connect them to MCI’s in-house technical support call center. At the other end of the line will be a Fleet Support technical support person who will help the driver to the extent needed.

The technical support center can tap into a large database to help diagnose and monitor breakdowns; find assistant; coordinate service and parts; arrange towing, and locate other services if needed.

MCI coach operators pay for the cost of parts and all services furnished by others. There is no charge for any assistance provided by the technical support center.

“By bringing our ERSA service in-house, we’re able to provide MCI coach owners with a new level of assistance to help them ... cope with disabling events on the road,” said Mike Evans, MCI director of technical support.

## Philly bridges keep E-ZPass discounts

CAMDEN, N.J. — The Delaware River Port Authority — the body that oversees four east-west bridges in metro Philadelphia — has decided to retain its E-ZPass discounts for commercial vehicles; it removed them for passenger cars.

The agency board took the action during its approval of the organization’s budget. Earlier, it had said it might eliminate all E-ZPass discounts to help close a budget shortfall of \$15 million. E-ZPass is an electronic toll system.

## DaimlerChrysler adds dealer for Rocky Mountain region

GREENSBORO, N.C. — DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses N.C. has added Davey Coach Sales Inc. of Sedalia, Colo., to its dealer network. Located just south of Denver, Davey Coach will handle the full line of small and midsize buses manufactured by DaimlerChrysler, including the SLF 200 low-floor bus, CL 100 shuttle bus and the Sprinter Shuttle.

Davey Coach’s sales and service territory covers Colorado, Montana and Wyoming.

Established a dozen years ago by Tom Davey, the company president and CEO, Davey Coach offers bus sales, parts, maintenance, graphics, leasing, and rental services. The company focuses on providing good service and quality products to maintain its

97 percent customer retention rate.

“Many companies have forgotten how to treat customers,” says Tom Davey. “It’s our goal for customers to come away from the buying, leasing, rental or service experience with a good feeling from start to finish.”

The company Davey heads is family owned and operated with more than 6,000 square feet of offices and service facilities on two acres.

“We’re pleased to offer our customers the high level of support they will receive from Davey Coach Sales,” said Jeff Shank, vice president of sales and marketing for DaimlerChrysler.

Information about Davey Coach is available at [www.daveycoach.com](http://www.daveycoach.com), or by calling (800) 873-1856.

## Heavy trucker gets job back

COLUMBUS, Ohio — A 412-pound truck driver who said he was fired because he could not fit behind the wheel of a delivery truck has received an apology from his employer and a bigger rig.

Walter Geter, 49, also received back pay from the over-the-road trucking company, USF Holland Inc., to cover wages since his firing last month.

Geter’s problems developed when

he arrived at a company terminal in Columbus, where he learned his regular truck had broken down.

Managers told him to head for Milwaukee in a smaller truck used mainly for local deliveries.

Geter said he was fired after asking the chief dispatcher if he could switch to a larger truck.

He filed a grievance through the Teamsters union.

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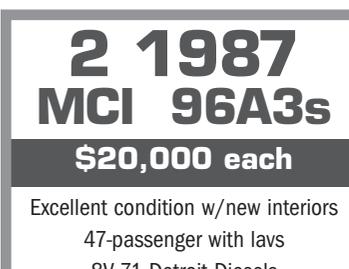
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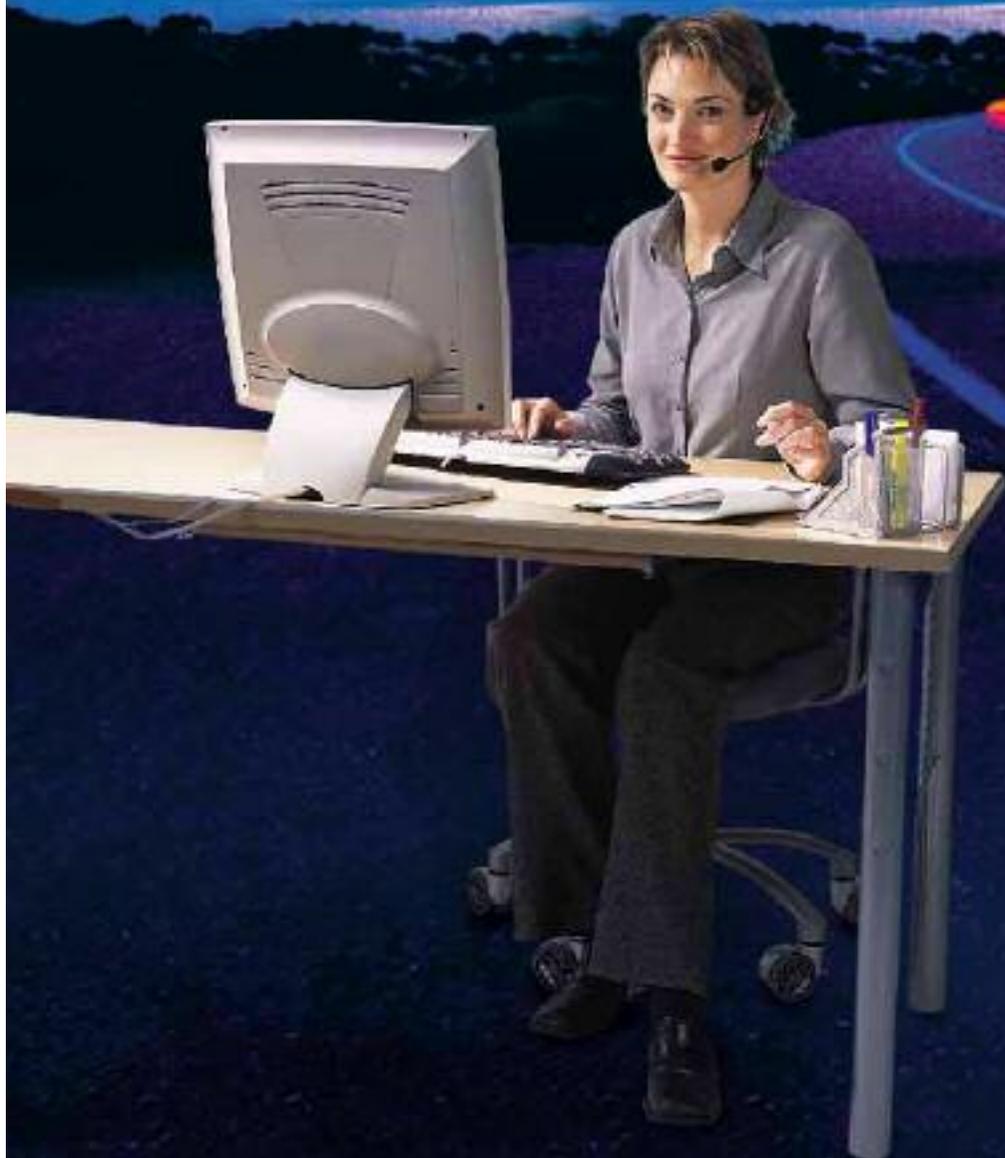


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