

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF MOTORCOACH EXPO 2005

## What's New At Expo?

### Mike Sodrel will appear

LAS VEGAS — U.S. Rep. Mike Sodrel, a former motorcoach operator who successfully ran for Congress in November, will speak at Motorcoach Expo 2005 later this month and appear at a fund-raiser in connection with Expo.

Victor Parra, president and CEO of the United Motorcoach Association, and Steve Klika, president of International Motor Coach Group, announced that Sodrel will be guest of honor at a fund-raising reception Tuesday evening, Feb. 22, and will be a featured speaker the next morning during Expo's Legislative and

#### Regulatory Update.

Sodrel is the former owner of The Free Enterprise System, a coach company based in Jeffersonville, Ind., and a co-founder of IMG. The motorcoach marketing organization is conducting its annual Maintenance & Safety Forum in Las Vegas in the days leading up to Motorcoach Expo.

The Sodrel reception will be from approximately 5 to 6 p.m. at the Las Vegas Hilton, the headquarters hotel of Expo 2005, while his remarks during the legislative-regulatory session will be after 10 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 23, in the



Mike Sodrel

Las Vegas Convention Center.

Both events, but especially the reception, will give Sodrel an opportunity to meet and talk with old friends, plus discuss critical industry issues, said a Sodrel campaign official.

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## Prevost adds advanced multiplexing

STE. CLAIRE, Quebec — Prevost Car will use Motorcoach Expo 2005 to launch a new era of more reliable coaches.

The increased reliability will be gained through the addition of proprietary multiplex technology to Prevost coaches, with H3-45s models the first to get the new electrical system.

Prevost production coaches with multiplexed electrical systems will be on display at Motorcoach Expo later this month,



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along with a new suburban coach from Nova Bus, a Prevost subsidiary. (See story Page 6.)

Also at the Prevost stand will be Rusty Wallace, driver of the No. 2 Miller Lite Dodge on the NASCAR circuit for the Penske

racing team.

Prevost says it spent nearly five years developing its new multiplex system based on technology developed by its parent company, Volvo Group and Volvo Bus Corp.

"We evaluated many commercial systems — Actia, Thoreb, I/O Controls, Volvo and others," said Michael Power, product line manager at Prevost. "We chose Volvo because of its failure management capabilities, versatility, software

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## Setra sets mark, has new options

GREENSBORO, N.C. — Continuing strong demand for the luxury Setra S 417 coach helped Setra of North America post another year of record-breaking revenue and unit sales.

Patrick Scully, chief commercial officer of Daimler Chrysler Commercial Buses N.A., reported that total sales of the S 417 during 2004 were up 15 percent for the year. In 2003, Setra delivered 100 units, which was the previous yearly best.

The S 417 is now entering its third year in the North American

market.

"Our sales last year included new customers and repeat orders from our existing Setra S 417 customer base," said Scully. "Our motorcoach provides operators with a distinctive image, setting them apart from their competition."

Daimler Chrysler and Setra will be unveiling new options for the S 417 at Motorcoach Expo 2005 later this month in Las Vegas, including a see-through roof. Here's what will be new at the Setra stand:

**TopSky:** A glass roof running the length of the S 417 center aisle, enabling passengers to see everything from skyscrapers during the day, to starry skies at night, said Scully. The double-glazed, tinted roof is 2 percent translucent, meaning it is comparable to the visibility of ski goggles.

**Scenic View:** A new-for-Setra system giving passengers an unobstructed view of the road ahead from the front of the

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## ABA board slows move to combine ABA, UMA

CHICAGO — Members of the American Bus Association won't be voting anytime soon on the proposed unification of the ABA with the United Motorcoach Association.

The ABA board, meeting at the association's annual Marketplace here earlier this month, said it needs a more detailed transition plan before it can ask members to vote on combining the organizations.

The outcome of the ABA board meeting was similar to when the board met in Jacksonville, Fla., in December. At that meeting, the ABA board approved a proposal to unify the associations — subject to development of a detailed transition plan.

Since the December meeting, members of a joint task force — composed of five board members

from both associations — has been working to develop a transition plan that would satisfy the ABA board. The task force thought it had succeeded at a meeting in Chicago on Jan. 25.

The January meeting was scheduled to last from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. but by 2 p.m. the session broke up because all of the "details" had been covered and resolved, a source familiar with the meeting told *Bus & Motorcoach News*.

"The task force has completed all of the work needed to put this to a vote of members of both associations," said the source. "The safety here is that, after the vote, if the details aren't being worked out properly, if irreconcilable differences are found, either board could rescind its unification authorization

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**INSTANT FAME** — A \$100 million television advertising campaign for Sprint PCS wireless telephones has made this MCI G4500 coach the most-recognized bus in America. The TV spots feature the coach and Sprint's famous man in black. See story Page 19.

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# Criminal charges filed in wake of fatal N.Y. crash

## *NTSB, State Police probe events*

GENESEO, N.Y. — A Canadian bus driver has been charged criminally after the coach he was driving plowed into the rear of a tractor-trailer late last month, killing four people.

The crash generated extraordinary media and public attention because of its viciousness and because the Coach Canada bus was carrying members of a young women's hockey team from Windsor, Ont.

The impact nearly sliced the 1996 MCI D3 in half lengthwise, and pushed the tractor-trailer the bus hit nearly 300 feet down the road. The crash happened on Interstate 390, 37 miles south of Rochester, N.Y.

The Coach Canada bus being driven by Ryan Comfort, 24, veered off the road and

ran right smack into the rear of the semi. The sidewall of the trailer acted as a giant knife, splitting the bus from the front windshield back to near the drive axle.

Within four days of the crash, investigators brought criminal charges against Comfort for making an unsafe lane change and falsifying his log book.

A federal investigator was quoted by local media as saying police had found four false statements in Comfort's log book for the 72 hours preceding the crash, which occurred about 4:30 p.m. Police had gone to Canada to interview witnesses and check on Com-

fort's activities prior to the crash.

He could face other charges as the investigation continues.

Both the New York State Police and the National Transportation Safety Board are investigating. The NTSB sent a three-person team to the crash site. Comfort's employer also was investigating.

The bus Comfort was driving was owned by Erie Coach Lines of London, Ont., which operates as Coach Canada. This was the 20-year-old company's first fatal accident. Comfort had gone to work for the company in December; he was a former school bus driver.

There was no sign Comfort was impaired by drugs or alcohol.

A preliminary check of the bus did not turn up any mechanical problems. The company said it had been inspected before leaving Canada. There were no skid marks apparent prior to the crash, and the weather was clear and the pavement dry.

Police immediate speculated that Comfort might have fallen asleep and let the coach drift off the interstate.

However, Comfort told investigators he hit something in the road, causing him to swerve and ram into the truck, which was parked along the highway. Comfort suffered a knee injury, and police kept him under guard

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## UMA, NSTA offer new workers compensation program

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association and the National School Transportation Association have developed a new workers compensation insurance program that will benefit members of both associations.

The new version of UMA's long-time UMACOMP workers compensation program is the first tangible member benefit to result from the new partnership between NSTA and UMA.

The two associations signed a partnership agreement late last year that — among other things — is designed to leverage the combined strength of both organizations, bringing new and expanded benefits to NSTA and UMA members.

Finding cost-effective workers compensation insurance has been a continuing challenge for both motorcoach and school bus

operators during the past decade. The joint UMA-NSTA workers comp program is expected to save operators money, as well as fully protect their workers.

The new program will be marketed by the William H. Co., a Boston-based international insurance brokerage firm that specializes in casualty and property insurance.

Headed by company president William Halowack Jr., the William H. Co. has established a reputation for tailoring insurance coverage to clients' specific needs. The firm seeks to put its knowledge of underwriting to work for clients.

"When clients come to us for expertise in purchasing insurance protection, we don't forget their need to protect corporate profits," says Halowack. ... "With the William H. Company, you can count on a partnership offering innovative approaches, expertise in

purchasing, and a keen awareness of your insurance needs."

The program will be underwritten by American International Group – AIG, one of the largest underwriters of commercial and industrial insurance in the U.S.

"We're excited about this new program," said Victor Parra, president and CEO of UMA. "In recent years, workers compensation insurance has been particularly difficult

to get, with many companies that once insured bus operators no longer providing coverage."

The goal of the new program is to provide school bus and coach operators with workers compensation insurance that offers competitive upfront pricing and long-term stability.

"Meeting that goal will minimize operators' costs, making them more competitive," said Parra.

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# THE DOCKET

## Maryland MVA to launch program that monitors fleet drivers' records

GLEN BURNIE, Md. — The Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration is launching a program that will allow bus operators to receive daily, weekly or monthly updates on their drivers' CDL records.

Two members of the Maryland Motorcoach Association, including association president Al Spence of A.S. Midway Trailways of Baltimore, told *Bus & Motorcoach News* they would be interested in participating in the program.

"I think it would be great," said Spence. "I think it would be wonderful," added Barbara Bayer, general manager of Woodlawn Motorcoach in Baltimore, a board member of the Maryland Motorcoach Association.

U.S. Department of Transportation regulations require coach companies that employ drivers with commercial driver licenses to examine each driver's record once a year. Most coach operators, like A.S. Tours and Woodlawn, are believed to do it more often.

However, drivers who've had their licenses suspended or incurred other problems between the annual or semi-annual checks might go unnoticed for several months.

"In six months, anything can happen," noted Spence.

"If somebody is going to drive your vehicle, you need to know

## Expanded oil drilling in Alaska is favored

WASHINGTON — Plans to explore for more oil on Alaska's North Slope are moving ahead, while the new head of the U.S. Department of Energy supports drilling in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The Bureau of Land Management announced it had approved drilling to explore for more oil on the North Slope.

The agency, part of the Interior Department, said that more than 400,000 acres surrounding Lake Teshekpuk, in the National Petroleum Reserve in Alaska's northeast corner, should be opened to drilling — with restrictions.

that they have a valid driver's license," said Barbara Bentley, a section manager in driver services at Maryland MVA.

The need for more frequent checks led the MVA to develop the program that was supposed to be launched last month but now is expected to be up and running by April, a spokeswoman in the driver services unit said.

Any company employing individuals who hold CDLs will be able to send MVA a list of drivers it wants to monitor. Once the program is operating, MVA will send the company back a record with a three-year driving history for their drivers and will monitor the drivers for the next year.

The program also provides for MVA to send e-mail updates to as many as four people at participating companies. Companies will be able to choose how to receive the updates — daily, weekly or monthly.

Initial enrollment in the program is expected to cost \$9 for each driver and give the company access to drivers' three-year history. Updates would cost an additional 5 cents, but the fee is charged only when an action is taken against a driver's license.

Operators interested in participating in the program can request a registration packet by calling MVA at (410) 768-7233.

## North Dakota, Arkansas eye fuel tax hikes

Two more states — North Dakota and Arkansas — are considering raising fuel taxes to pay for roadway improvements.

North Dakota lawmakers may support raising the state's motor fuel tax instead of adopting a \$15 increase in motor vehicle registration fees that Gov. John Hoeven prefers, according to a survey conducted by a news wire service.

The diesel fuel and gasoline tax in North Dakota currently is 21 cents per gallon.

The state Transportation Department said Gov. Hoeven's proposed \$15 increase in registration fees would bring in \$20.1 million over two years. A penny increase in the fuel tax would bring in about \$10.2 million during the same period.

In Arkansas, Gov. Mike Huckabee is calling for a new \$1 billion highway construction program.

Funding for the program would likely come from a combination of increases in motor fuel taxes and driver-related fees totaling up to \$100 million a year.

In 1999, voters approved a program that is spending \$1 billion to improve the state's interstates. Huckabee says the state needs to take the next step, using another \$1 billion to improve roads leading to the interstates.

## Transits seek charter firms

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 appropriate operators to take the time to respond to these notices:

**Sumter, S.C.** Deadline: Feb. 24, 2005. Write to: SWRTA Executive Director, Santee Wateree Regional Transportation Authority, P.O. Box 2462, Sumter, SC 29151. Phone: (803) 934-9947.

**Southwestern New Hampshire.** Deadline: Feb. 25, 2005. Write to: Harry Costick, Transportation Manager, The City Express/Home Health Care, Hospice & Community Services, P.O. Box 564, Keene, NH 03431. Phone: (603) 352-2253.

## New York, MTA accused of bait and switch in plan to take over private firms

NEW YORK CITY — The drama over the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority takeover of dozens of commuter bus routes being operated by private companies continues to take new twists and turns.

While the private carriers step up their bargaining with New York City and MTA officials, 130 non-union employees of four of the seven companies are fighting for their jobs.

They've submitted their arguments to binding arbitration in hopes of forcing the transit authority to abide by federal work rules that would require it to give the workers similar jobs with comparable pay and benefits or provide them with job training or cash settlements.

"We're trying to protect them and their families from the economic devastation created by the takeover," said Steven A. Diaz, a Washington D.C. attorney representing the employees of Command Bus Co., Green Bus Lines, Jamaica Buses and Triboro Coach Corp.

The four companies are among seven being taken over by MTA as part of a city scheme to put their routes in the hands of MTA. The regional transit authority is scheduled to take over the four companies April 30. The authority began operating routes formerly run by Liberty Lines Express last month, and is due to take over Queens Surface Corp. routes Feb. 26 and New York Bus Co. routes March 26.

Diaz called the conduct of the city and the MTA a game of "bait and switch."

The takeovers, which have been plagued with troubles for months, come as the result of the city dropping franchise agreements it had with the private companies for more than 25 years. The city said it wanted to make the move so service could be improved and it could save the \$100 million to \$150 million annual subsidy it had been providing the private companies to run 80 daily commuter routes in and out of the city.

The private companies, some of which want to continue to operate the runs, claim the city hindered the service by refusing to

replace the 18- to 20-year-old, city-owned buses they have been operating on the routes.

Diaz says the nonunion employees are entitled to job offers or other benefits under the Federal Transit Act, which requires cities and transit agencies to afford "fair and equitable" protections to employees affected by the use of federal transit grants.

He said the 13C provision of the law affects New York and the MTA because a \$132 million federal transit grant originally issued to the city some time ago for replacement buses for the seven private companies has been redirected to the MTA and now is being used to buy buses for the same routes the MTA is taking over from the private companies.

Diaz cited a press release issued in November by New York Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg and MTA Chairman Peter S. Kalikow in which they announced that \$132 million in federal money had been allocated to buy as many as 300 buses to improve service on routes being operated by the private companies.

Since then, says Diaz, they have switched positions and now claim the money actually would be used to purchase train cars and only MTA capital funds would be used to acquire the buses.

Diaz called the conduct of the city and the MTA a game of "bait and switch."

"The city intended all along to use its parked grant to facilitate the subject takeover and has disingenuously protested otherwise in a clear effort to mislead the government and this proceeding," Diaz said. "The manner in which this scheme has come to light through the reprogramming process is proof of the city's deliberate attempts to mischaracterize its intent and the true nature of its actions from the very beginning."

G. Kent Woodman, a Washington D.C. attorney representing the city in the arbitration case, disputes the allegations, insisting the MTA has a long-standing policy of using only local funds for bus pur-

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# Driver is (finally) charged in band dumping incident

CHICAGO — Investigators and prosecutors are finally getting to the bottom of the nasty episode involving alleged illegal lavatory dumping by the driver for a tour coach operated by the Dave Matthews Band.

Nearly six months after the incident, the driver has been charged with dumping 800 pounds of waste onto a sightseeing boat that was cruising the Chicago River last summer.

Stefan Wohl was charged with misdemeanor counts of reckless conduct and discharging contaminants to cause water pollution. The charges carry a maximum penalty of one year in jail and a \$10,000 fine.

Wohl, 42, of Selma, Texas, turned himself in to Chicago police last month and was released on his own recognizance.

Authorities say Wohl was driving alone to a downtown hotel Aug. 8 when he emptied the bus lavatory tank as it crossed the metal grates of a bridge.

The waste poured through the grates and onto the open deck of the Chicago Little Lady tour boat, which was passing below with more than 100 people on board.

Prosecutors used surveillance tapes and consulted with engineers about the dumping before filing charges. "We were satisfied with what they told us that it could not have been an accident," said prosecutor Robert Egan.

No one was physically hurt in the incident but many boat passengers, like Nancy Todor, said the waste made her "physically ill" and "extremely nauseous." She is suing the band.

The Chicago Architectural Foundation, which operates the boat tour, said they received many angry calls from passengers demanding compensation for clothing and personal items.

Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan has filed a lawsuit seeking \$70,000 in damages against the band and driver Wohl, alleging they violated state environmental laws.

At the time, a band spokesman said Wohl had said he was not involved with the incident. The driver reportedly has cooperated with investigators, although he has not admitted to the dumping.

The investigation has been especially lengthy in part because the bus was traveling with the band and had to be returned to Chicago to be examined.

In October, the band posted a notice on its Web site saying that although "we still do not have a

definitive understanding of what happened," the band would work with affected passengers to "make things right for all concerned" and make \$50,000 donations to both

the Chicago Park District and Friends of the Chicago River.

The band's statement said the incident "is awful and it goes against so many principles we hold

dear: environmentalism, accountability and, mostly, principles of humanity."

Prosecutors said the band has cooperated in the investigation,

including flying violinist Boyd Tinsley, who used the bus, from California to Chicago to be interviewed, and bringing the bus back to the Chicago area for inspection.



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## INDUSTRY NEWS

# Nova Bus launches suburban model

SAINT EUSTACHE, Quebec — Nova Bus will unveil its new Nova LFS Suburban at Motorcoach Expo on Feb. 23.

The 40-foot bus is designed to provide high-capacity suburban service with the convenience of low-floor access but with one of the

most comfortable rides in urban transportation.

It has a host of features, including wide entry doors, that Expo attendees will experience first-hand.

"This initiative is part of our ongoing strategy to bring innovative solutions to both private and

public operators in North America," commented Gilles Dion, president and CEO of Nova Bus.

"The Nova LFS has proven its reliability and durability with nearly 3,000 units sold in the last eight years. We feel this new suburban vehicle will respond to our clients'

growing needs and we are convinced the Suburban will be an added value vehicle to any fleet," Dion added.

Nova Bus is a division of Prevost Car and one of the largest manufacturers of suburban, shuttle and city buses in North America.

## Prevost

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

management in the vehicle, and cost."

Prevost began its search for a multiplex electrical system in 2000; developed a test-bed vehicle three years ago, and built four prototypes last year. The test vehicles have accumulated more than 170,000 miles. That testing is backed by years of trials and over-the-road application by Volvo.

"We have had very positive results," said Power. "The tests have helped us correct a few flaws before introduction."

Unlike conventional electrical systems that have separate circuits and relays for each electrical component, a multiplex system relies on modules to route multiple signals over a single control-area-network line.

The Prevost system requires only 16 modules per coach, reducing wiring, splices, terminals, relays and connections on each coach by one-third. Plus, it increases reliability and saves space and weight.

The easy-to-access system also incorporates a number of special features designed to enhance performance and facilitate maintenance, according to Power. They include:

- Automated protective functions, including automatic shutdown to prevent battery discharge.
- Clear-and-concise text diagnostic read-outs in the dashboard, a unique feature that means no deciphering of codes.
- An audible test mode for switches and sensors

Dozens of coach functions will be controlled by the Prevost multiplex system, including entrance door, kneeling, tag axle, HVAC system, exterior and interior lighting, wipers, telltale lights, engine start-up, horn, battery charging system, fire alarm, toilet fan, radiator fan clutch, pre-heater, emergency window-open sensors, baggage compartment door-ajar sensors, wheelchair lift and many more.

"Best of all, Prevost's multiplex system makes it easy to get your vehicle back on the road quickly in the unlikely event of an electrical problem," said Power. "First, the vehicle remains operational if a network or master module fails. Second, with complete vehicle program backups onboard each coach, you can readily replace the master module with an unprogrammed off-the-shelf product. And third, Prevost's self-programming feature enables you to easily replace I/O modules without any special reprogramming tools," he added.

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## CrossSphere: What's in a name change

In November, the board of directors of the National Tour Association approved changing the organization's name to CrossSphere, The Global Association for Packaged Travel. Yes, CrossSphere.

Since then, the 4,000 members of the association have been in a tizzy, so much so that a special election has been called so members can vote on the name.

Meeting last month in California, the organization's board decided to conduct the referendum on the name. Meanwhile, CrossSphere will be the DBA name of the association.

Much of the January meeting of the CrossSphere board and Leadership Team in Costa Mesa, Calif., was devoted to reviewing the history leading up to the new name and brand, and member feedback.

There was a consensus among the Leadership Team, a 60-member council that includes the board of directors, that most members support the association's strategic direction that resulted in the name change and rebranding.

In a survey of Leadership Team members, 94 percent supported the name change, 81 percent supported CrossSphere as the new name, and 63 percent said members should be allowed to vote on the issue.

One motorcoach industry executive who attended the meeting said that some of the strongest opposition to the new name was voiced by former top leaders of the organization. He said it was clear the association had not done a very good job of educating former presidents and others as to why the



name change was needed and why CrossSphere was a good name.

Since the name was launched, the association has gotten lots feedback — both pro and con — from rank-and-file members.

"After listening to feedback from the members and the Leadership Team, the board has elected to proceed with a bylaw vote proposing to formally establish CrossSphere as the name, follow-

**"A brand is so much more than just a name and a logo... it is the result of strategic considerations about the association's value and its culture."**

ing a communications and informational period," said CrossSphere Chairwoman Ann Thomas.

Tour operator members of the association vote on bylaw amendments, with passage requiring a two-thirds majority of those voting.

The "communications and informational period" will include a "member outreach program to further educate members about the branding process and name change."

The vote is expected to occur after the CrossSphere Tour Operator Spring Meet in Sacramento, Calif., March 30-April 2.

"The board of directors stands behind the brand platform, and CrossSphere is the best name to help us communicate this brand and our strategic direction," said Thomas. "I'm definitely encouraging our tour operator members to support this amendment."

Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown & Russell, a branding, research and public relations firm based in Orlando, Fla., was hired to help rebrand and reposition the National Tour Association. YPB&R conducted member and industry interviews, meetings to gather input, and an assessment of NTA's positioning in relation to other travel-related associations.

"A brand is so much more than just a name and a logo," said Bradley Nix, executive director of corporate and brand identity at YPB&R. "It is the result of strategic considerations about the association's value and its culture. A strong brand enables you to differentiate yourself in the marketplace, while making certain the association remains relevant."

CrossSphere (nee National Tour Association) is a 50-year-old organization composed of travel professionals involved in the packaged-travel industry. Its members sell travel packages; represent attractions, destinations and travel services, and are employed by tourism promotion offices, convention and visitor bureaus, and chambers of commerce.

For more information, go to [www.CrossSphere.com](http://www.CrossSphere.com).

## Keeping your lawyer honest



By Thomas D. DeMatteo  
Vice President &  
General Counsel  
ABC Companies

minutes and most are less than 15 minutes. A large amount of minimum entries may also inflate fees (i.e. mass mailing of a letter with a minimum charge for each letter).

### Clerical Tasks

There seems to be a trend towards charging for secretarial and other clerical tasks. You should challenge this because administrative overhead should be included in the lawyer's hourly rate.

### Legal Research

This can be very costly and should be done only with your approval after a thorough explanation of why the research is needed. You don't want to pay for theoretical issues unless they are directly applicable and important to your matter.

### Multiple Timekeepers

This is my personal pet peeve — a bunch of lawyers sitting around the law firm talking about your matter and each billing the file. The aforementioned example is a stretch but many times you have a junior and senior lawyer in the same meeting or on the same call. You should feel free to let your lawyers know that two lawyers are not required at the same meeting, unless each are bringing different areas of expertise.

Bottom line: Always feel free to discuss fees and invoices with your lawyer.

Thomas D. DeMatteo is also an adjunct professor at Hamline University School of Law in St. Paul, Minn.

**Footnotes:** Peahle, Robert, In-House Semaphore, Corporate Counsel (March 2002).

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A PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED MOTORCOACH ASSOCIATION

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## FTA documents clarify rules, aid school operators

WASHINGTON — Thanks to prodding by the National School Transportation Association, the Federal Transit Administration has released a brochure that explains federal rules limiting the use of transit buses for transporting students and a letter encouraging transit agencies to consider using school buses to supplement their services.

The School Bus Brochure and letter from FTA Administrator Jenna Dorn are the result of more than two years' collaboration between the FTA and the NSTA.

Dale N. Krapf, NSTA president, said the association had two goals in pursuing the issues with the federal agency: To clarify for school administrators, school bus operators and transit authorities the rules governing the use of transit buses for school transportation, and to promote the use of school bus companies in transit operations.

Development of the brochure and letter mean both goals have largely been realized, said Krapf. The brochure is "a valuable weapon in protecting school transportation contracts against increasingly aggressive marketing by both urban and rural transit agencies," Krapf noted.

The School Bus Brochure uses a question-and-answer format to explain the nuances of using transit

buses to transport students. For example, transit agencies cannot contract with school districts for student activity trips as long as there are private companies willing and able to provide the service.

Transit agencies will be on the receiving end of the letter from Dorn. In the letter, Dorn advises transit agencies that "working with private school bus operators to provide supplemental public transportation services can help communities make more efficient use of their resources while increasing mobility for community residents." It encourages agencies to include school bus operators in their planning processes.

Krapf said the letter is important to school bus companies interested in providing transit or para-transit services.

"So often we are the forgotten segment in transportation planning," said school bus operator Terry Thomas, president of Community Bus Services in Youngstown, Ohio. "We are grateful that Administrator Dorn sees the value we can bring to public transportation."

NSTA is developing a guide for school bus contractors to help them pursue transit opportunities. *Finding Your Seat at the Transit Table: A Guide for School Bus Companies* is expected to be available next month.



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## Expo Shuttle: Gray Line offers service

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attendees may be staying. The round-trip price is \$9.50 per person.

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

### New York MTA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

chases.

"None of the federal funds being reprogrammed will be used for the purchase of buses or for the improvement of any bus facilities used by the MTA, including those

in the service area of the private companies," he said in a filing with the arbitrator.

MTA spokesman Tom Kelly said the agency routinely does not use federal money for bus purchases because it has a special pre-qualification testing program for new buses that the Federal Transit

Administration says is not allowed when federal grants are used.

Motor Coach Industries, which is filling an order for 125 buses for MTA, supported the transit agency's position, noting that the buses it is selling the MTA are being paid with capital funds, not federal money. "They have not

used federal money for new buses for years," he said.

Ten of the new buses have been placed in service on the routes operated by Liberty Lines and the remainder will be delivered by the end of the summer.

Still, Diaz contends the city and MTA are not using the grant

money properly and the city should be held responsible for the nonunion employees under the transit act. "They appear to be speaking out of both sides of their mouths and somebody is being mislead, which is a very serious matter when you are talking about \$132 million," Diaz added.

The arbitrator is expected to rule on a series of preliminary motions at any time and issue a final ruling on the nonunion employee question later.

Meantime, representatives of Command, Green, Jamaica and Triboro continue negotiations with the city.

Jerry Cooper, head of an alliance formed by the four companies, said only one key issue – pensions – has been settled so far. "They've challenged us on our valuation of our real property, on our tangibles and of the nonunion work force, the whole nine yards," he said.

Still, he thinks the issues are likely to be settled, although he is not confident that a final takeover agreement will be completed by the April 30 deadline. "I do think it (the takeover) will happen though," he said. "They can't condemn us because it would take too long, so I believe they will give us what we want."

Cooper continues to maintain that the move will not benefit the city or bus riders. (See Nov. 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*). He insists the MTA will reduce service, raise fares and continue to use the same rundown buses that are being used now. "But nobody is letting me voice my opinion and, if they are, they certainly don't agree with me."

He has urged the city to abandon the takeover plan and allow the private companies to continue operating the routes under a new franchise contract.

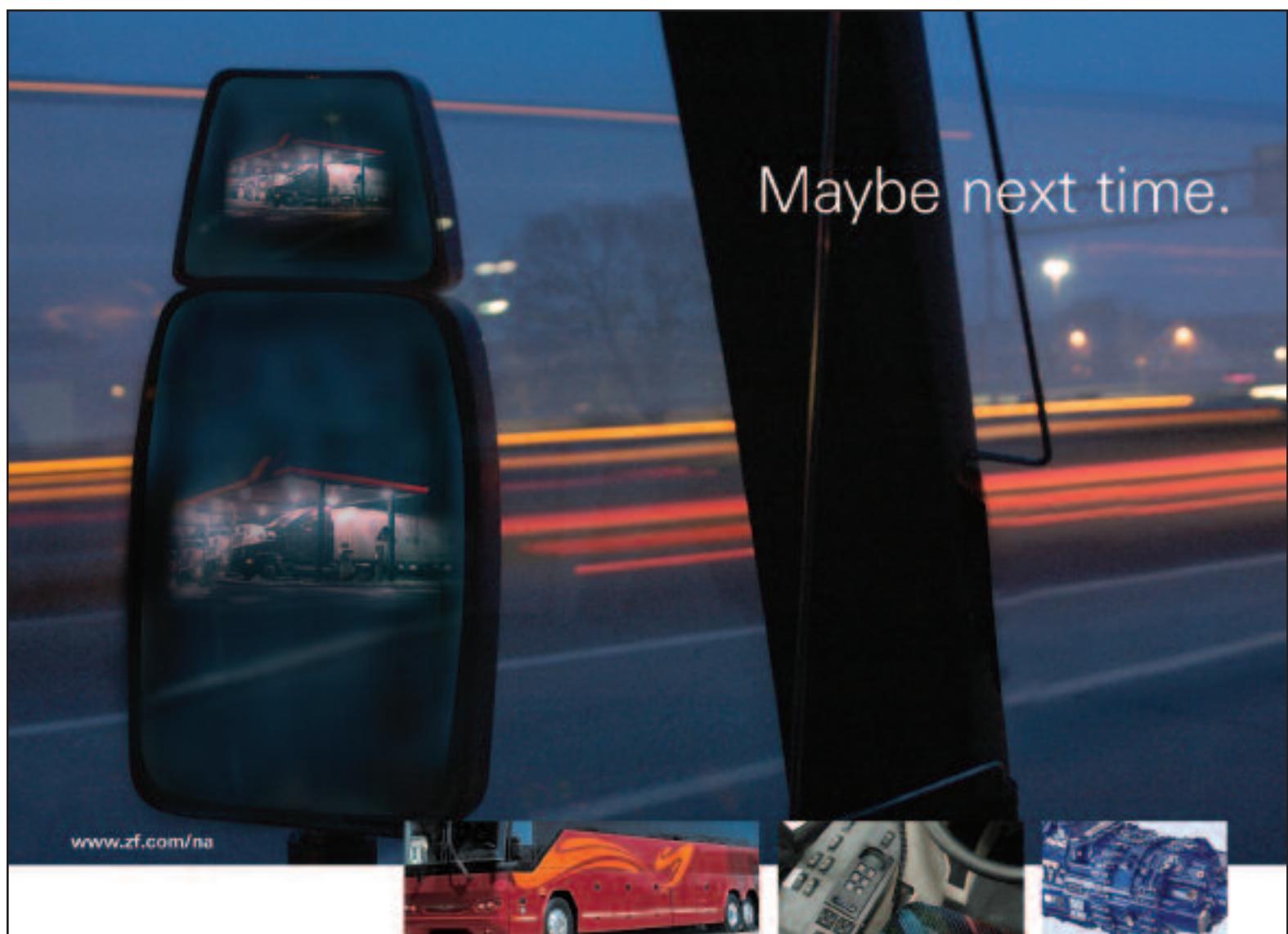
### Crash charges

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

while he was in the hospital.

Nineteen of the 22 people on the bus required hospitalization. Besides the three passengers that were killed, the driver of the tractor-trailer, Ernest Zeiset of Womelsdorf, Pa., also was fatally injured. He was standing in front of his rig when it was slammed by the coach. His wife was inside the cab of the truck and was injured.

It took emergency workers nearly two hours to get everyone out of the bus. Many were trapped by seats and other wreckage. The first eight or nine rows of seats came loose and were piled on top of passengers.



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## Setra

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

coach. The video system uses a small camera mounted on the dashboard near the driver and transmits a video image of what the driver sees on the TV monitors throughout the cabin.

**Swivel Seats:** Four reversible

seats that can be easily rotated from a forward facing position to one facing an installed card table. "The flexibility will enhance passenger enjoyment," said Scully.

"These new options will add to passengers' overall experience and enable coach operators to differentiate their business from competitors," he added.

Setras were marketed in Canada for the first time last year and sales were made to:

- Tripmate Tours of Toronto, which purchased two S 417s, becoming the first Canadian buyer of the coach.
- Skypoint in Quebec City, which took delivery of one S 417.

Also during the year, Setra had

large fleet orders from:

- Sun Diego Charter Co., which took delivery of 15 S 417s.
- A Yankee Line of Boston, which took delivery of 14 S 417s.
- Colonial Coach Company of Illinois, which took 23 Setra additional S 417 coaches, giving it a total of 32 in its fleet.
- Premier Coach Company of Vermont, which took delivery of an additional 11 S 417s.
- Other repeat S 417 customers included:
  - Arrow Stage Lines of Nebraska, which added six.
  - University of Maryland, which added one.
  - Holiday Tours of Georgia, which purchased three.

## ABA-UMA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and abort the process. That should be all the insurance either side needs at this point," said this source.

At its December meeting in Florida, the ABA board voted 23-6 to place the unification issue before its membership by March 31. ABA sources have said that opposition to the consolidation has primarily come from the so-called line-haul/super-carrier faction of the ABA board. There was even talk after the December meeting of the big line-haul operator members of ABA forming their own association if ABA and UMA members approve consolidation.

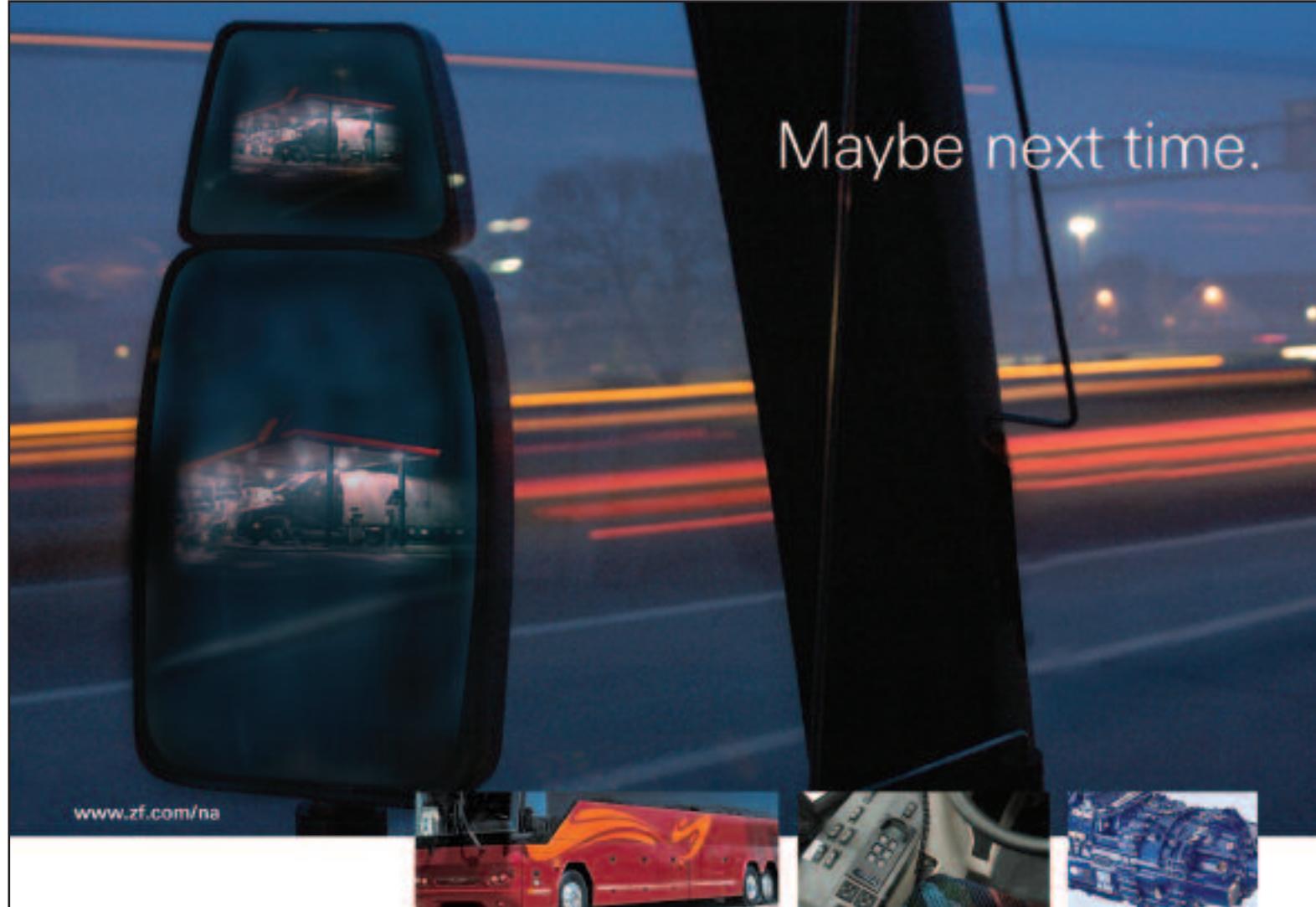
The ABA board meeting this month did not rescind its December vote but it appears that a minority of ABA directors are holding up progress on the issue.

After this month's board meeting, the ABA released a statement attributed to the association's new chairman, Ron Eyre. In the terse announcement, the ABA said its members of the Unification Task Force had reported to the ABA board "on the progress being made toward unification of the associations."

"The board recognized and appreciated the hard work of the task force," the ABA statement said. "Although the board is not recommending a vote of the membership at this time, the board looks forward to additional meetings and a more detailed plan."

It is believed that ABA members of the Unification Task Force will attempt to schedule a meeting of the task force before or during Motorcoach Expo 2005 later this month in Las Vegas. That could prove difficult because UMA board members have a near nonstop schedule during Expo, with their activities arranged months in advance.

Eyre, president of Eyre Bus Lines in Glenelg, Md., succeeded Charles Zelle, president of Jefferson Lines of Minneapolis, as chairman of the ABA at the board meeting in Chicago. Eyre moves up from vice chairman.



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# National Interstate goes public

## Sale of shares nets firm \$40 million

RICHFIELD, Ohio — National Interstate Corp., the second-largest insurer of motorcoaches in the U.S., made a public stock offering at the end of last month, selling more than 3.8 million shares at \$13.50 per share.

The sale netted nearly \$40.6 million for the company, which it intends to use to pay off a \$15 million loan from its majority stockholder, Great American Insurance Co. of Cincinnati. The loan was used to build the capital and surplus of insurance subsidiaries of National Interstate.

The remaining \$25 million will be used as the company sees fit and to pay off three small loans.

National Interstate's offering created measured interest on Wall Street. In the days immediately following the sale, National Interstate shares were trading substantially higher than the initial offering price in the NASDAQ National Market. The stock is traded under the symbol NATL.

National Interstate now has

18,879,000 shares of its common stock outstanding, with 10.2 million shares (or 54 percent) owned by Great American Insurance and 3.08 million shares (or 16+ percent) owned by Alan Spachman, founder, chairman and president of National Interstate.

Although the offering raised a total of nearly \$52 million, roughly \$11.4 million of that amount goes to three groups: stockholders of National Interstate who sold about 500,000 of their personal shares; the three brokerage houses that managed the offering, and lawyers, accountants and others involved in the underwriting.

The stock sale makes National Interstate one of the very few publicly owned companies in the motorcoach industry.

For the uninitiated, National Interstate was founded by Spachman 16 years ago. It describes itself as the second-largest provider of specialty property and casualty insurance coverage for the U.S. ground transportation industry.

Typically, about half the company business has come from insuring motorcoach, limousine, transit, paratransit, shuttle and school bus operators, truckers and other ground transportation providers. The other half has come from so-called captive programs for coach operators, truckers and others (28 percent); recreational vehicles (about 12 percent) and transportation and general commercial insurance in Hawaii (11 percent).

During the first nine months of last year, the percentage of premium income from National Interstate's transportation component dropped to about 38 percent from its traditional 48 to 50+ percent. During the year, percentages grew for both the group captive and RV segments.

Also last year, the company expanded its horizons by offering coverage to owners of boats and other personal watercraft, and providing group captive insurance services to propane distribution

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ►

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

# National Motorcoach Network relocates, picks top stops

MOUNT JACKSON, Va. — National Motorcoach Network, one of North America's largest motorcoach marketing organizations, has moved its headquarters from suburban Washington to rural Virginia.

The network, which operates the [motorcoach.com](http://motorcoach.com) National Reservation Center, providing quotations for charter bus service in every market in North America, and *Byways*, a motorcoach destinations magazine, had been located in

the suburbs of Washington for the past 22 years.

The new headquarters is in Mount Jackson, a community of 1,600 about midway between Harrisonburg and Winchester on Interstate 81 in Northern Virginia.

The community is roughly 90 miles west of Washington.

Network President Steve Kirchner said the move will reduce costs, as well as provide a fresh perspective on motorcoach travel.

"As part of the transformation,

we will be focusing on great motorcoach destinations, such as the Shenandoah Valley, in future issues (of *Byways*), and as always we will give equal attention to the smaller communities which not only provide great motorcoach group experiences but also provide a large number of our customers on those charters and tours," said Kirchner.

In the latest issue of *Byways*, the publication has named its top motorcoach destinations for 2005. Tied for the top spot, as they often are in such surveys, were Washington, D.C., and Branson, Mo.

Other locations making the magazine's survey of leading coach destinations were New York City, Nashville, New Orleans, Niagara Falls, Williamsburg, Orlando, Atlanta and Pigeon Forge, Tenn. Forty other locales also were ranked.

The magazine also identifies leading restaurant chains (No. 1, Cracker Barrel), motorcoach friendly hotel chains (No. 1, Best Western), national attractions (No. 1, Niagara Falls), and man-made attractions (No. 1, the monuments in Washington).

The network's 35 operator members, plus travel resource members and industry suppliers, will gather in July for the National Motorcoach Network annual Invitational 100 Meeting in North Little Rock, Ark. A highlight of the gathering will be a meeting in the new Clinton Presidential Center.

The new address for network is P.O. Box 1088, Mount Jackson, VA 22842. The new phone is (540) 477-3323. For information go to [www.motorcoach.com](http://www.motorcoach.com), or call (888) 733-5287.

## Refinery output to lag demand

PARIS — The International Energy Agency says energy prices will remain high this year because global demand for oil products will rise faster than oil refineries' capacity.

A total of 1 million barrels a day in new capacity won't match the 1.44 million barrels in new demand expected this year, IEA said in its monthly report.

Last year, 700,000 barrels a day were added to global refining capacity, while the global demand grew at 2.65 million barrels a day, causing crude prices last year to average more than \$41 a barrel in New York and \$38 in London, both records.

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

# Tour operators booklet is released

TORONTO — The Ontario Motor Coach Association has released an updated version of a booklet designed to help hotels, restaurants, attractions and other destinations draw more business from the packaged travel market.

The publication, *How to Sell to Tour Operators*, is designed to assist suppliers who want to attract business from the packaged travel market.

OMCA says the updated booklet addresses such questions as:

- What are tour operators looking for from suppliers?
- What sales techniques appeal most to tour operators?
- How can suppliers gain the most benefit from sales meetings, telephone calls and Marketplace

appointments?

- How to get the most out of membership in OMCA or any other group tour association.

For more information, call (416) 229-6622 or go to [www.omca.com](http://www.omca.com).

## National Interstate

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

companies. Both are new fields for the company.

Despite the cyclical nature of the motorcoach industry, earnings at National Interstate have grown steadily and substantially. It has been profitable every year since 1990, the year following its founding, and has outperformed industry averages during that period.

Net income has grown from \$2.54 million in 1999, to \$4.475 million in 2000, dipping to \$1.21 million in 2001, back to \$8.29 million in 2002 and \$19.84 million in 2003. During the first nine months of last year, it earned \$16.11 million, compared to \$14.56 million for the same nine months in 2003.

During the five years ended 2003, return on shareholder equity ranged from 5.4 percent in 2001, to 49.9 percent in 2003, 31.2 percent in 2002, 23.2 percent in 2000 and 14.4 percent in 1999. During the first nine months of last year, the return on stockholder equity was 35.4 percent.

Now that the offering is behind it, the company plans to institute a dividend program, initially paying four cents per share annually.

National Interstate operates in all states but writes half its business in eight states — California, Hawaii, North Carolina, Florida, Texas, Ohio and Pennsylvania. The other 42 states account for the remaining half of the company premium income. California, by itself, is responsible for about 15 percent of its business.

Alan Spachman founded National Interstate in 1989 after spending five years at Progressive Corp., where he started that company's passenger transportation insurance business. Prior to joining Progressive, he worked in human resources and labor relations. He holds an MBA from the University of Rhode Island.

Last year, the company paid Spachman a salary of \$312,000 and he earned a bonus of \$249,000. His 3 million shares make him National Interstate's largest individual stockholder.

Second in command at National Interstate is David Michelson, senior vice president of the commercial lines business.

National Interstate is based in Richfield, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, and it employs about 250 people.

Copies of the prospectus for the National Interstate offering are available via the Internet from the Web site of the Securities & Exchange Commission, and may be requested by contacting Merrill Lynch & Co., 4 World Financial Center, New York City, NY 10080. Phone: (212) 449-1000.

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Find the Fast or Free parts list at [www.mcicoach.com](http://www.mcicoach.com), by contacting an MCI Fleet Support Manager, or by calling 800-323-1238 in the U.S. and 800-665-0155 in Canada. Restrictions apply.



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**INDUSTRY NEWS**

## ABC Companies announces 2005 Van Hool training

FARIBAULT, Minn. — ABC Companies has announced its 2005 Technical Training Programs for Van Hool motorcoaches.

ABC said the seminars are available — at no charge — to seasoned technicians who know the general principles and operations of coach systems and components. The seminars are conducted at ABC's regional service and sales center in Winter Garden, Fla., and are conducted by factory-trained personnel.

Two separate seminar sessions are being offered this year.

The first session will provide training on the Van Hool multiplex electrical system, along with a special orientation seminar on the

ZF AS-Tronic transmission. These seminars are being offered March 7-9 and March 9-11.

The second sessions will be available March 21-25, Aug. 1-5, or Nov. 7-11. These sessions will focus on the design and features of Van Hool coaches and how to identify problems, troubleshoot and make appropriate repairs. In addition, representatives from other manufacturers and suppliers will be on hand to provide training on their products.

Additional details about the sessions are available at ABC's Web site — [www.abc-companies.com](http://www.abc-companies.com). Click on Service. Or, call (800) 222-2871 Ext. 7230.

## New Travel Institute courses

WELLESLEY, Mass. — The Travel Institute has added two courses, Adventure Travel and Luxury Travel.

The courses join others in a new line of specialist courses that reflect trends in consumer travel planning.

Adventure Travel teaches non-traditional strategies for marketing

your specialty and selling to a defined audience of adventure travelers.

Luxury Travel is designed to give travel professionals an intimate knowledge of the luxury travel product, of the sales process and of needs of consumers.

For more information, go to [www.thetravelinstitute.com](http://www.thetravelinstitute.com).



## Six Flags bus ads dance to the top

OKLAHOMA CITY — A series of television commercials featuring a bus — a 50-year-old bus — and a dancing old man have been judged among the top ads of 2004.

Six Flags, the amusement park chain, hired a new ad agency last year that created TV spots featuring an elderly gent dressed in a tuxedo who drives his vintage GM PD4103 into neighborhoods and dances.

The whirling dervish, who is called Mr. Six by his creators, prances to the song *We Want to Party*, recorded by a rock group called the Vengaboys. The message

Mr. Six imparts in the ads is that overworked people need to get out and have some fun. He beckons time-starved families on board his colorful bus and whisk them off to one of Six Flags' theme parks.

*USA Today*, which tracks the effectiveness and likeability of television commercials in a weekly consumer poll throughout the year, reports the Mr. Six ads were the second-most popular and effective commercials to air last year. Only Dairy Queen's ads showing a baby trying to steal his father's cheesecake sundae and a man who starts fires after eating a Dairy Queen "flamethrow-

er" burger polled better than the Six Flags' spots.

The Six Flags ads, created by Doner/Detroit, struck a cord with Americans, spawning bobblehead dolls, look-alike contests, and lots of media attention. (See May 1 and 15 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

In a phone interview, a spokeswoman for Six Flags said Mr. Six would be back this spring and summer promoting the company's 30 amusement and water parks. "The bus will be making a comeback," she said.

Along with that dancing fool, the enigmatic Mr. Six.

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# Sprint coach becomes high-visibility symbol

LOS ALAMITOS, Calif. — Owing to the power of television — and \$100 million, that most rare of contemporary MCI coaches, the G4500, has become the most-famous bus in America.

It is almost impossible to watch TV for very long these days without catching multiple glimpses of the "Sprint Bus," which is integral to a \$100-million advertising campaign to promote Sprint PCS wireless telephone plans.

The splashy Sprint G4500 has red, white and black livery with a huge video screen built into the passenger-door side and a large destination sign that simply reads "Better."

In a typical Sprint commercial, the coach pulls up to a group of people and the Sprint Man, actor Brian Baker in his signature black trench coat worn over a black suit, steps from the bus to save a group of people from paying too much for their cell phone service.

A key moment in each commercial occurs when Baker asks the crowd to look up at the giant TV screen built on the side of the

coach. Video immediately comes on the screen promoting a Sprint PCS cell-phone plan.

The campaign began running in the late fall and has continued during the first quarter of this year. The coach and Sprint Man Baker also are featured in flyers being distributed by the phone company.

The Motor Coach Industries-Sprint connection began late last summer when Hollywood producer Kenyon Robertson, representing Brownstone Productions, walked into MCI's Fleet Support center in Los Alamitos, Calif., on a Monday, asking for a coach shell — right then and there.

After talking, Robertson settled on the G4500, largely because it was immediately available — except for one small detail: It was at the MCI service center in Loudonville, Ohio, and the production team needed it in California.

MCI Regional Sales Manager Marshall Deems handled the deal. He said new-coach sales administrator Kathy Leech and Loudonville manager Walt Novak and oth-



ers crammed what is normally about a three-week process into a matter of days. Then, John Maloney drove the coach to California in near-record time.

By the end of the week, the staff of Brownstone Productions was busy getting the coach ready for the commercials, including cutting a hole in the side for the video screen, which is more complicated than it appears on TV. The video display is really 18 or so, 20-inch TV monitors mounted on a dolly that is rolled up to the hole in the sidewall during the shooting of

commercials.

When the coach is on the highway, the hole is covered and the dolly pulled back away from the side. The production team also handled the wrap, and installed extra air conditioning and two generators to handle the increased electrical load.

Deems said it was little short of amazing what was done in a matter of 48 hours of around-the-clock work to get the coach ready for filming. "It was no non-sense; just get it done. A real high level of energy."

## Sodrel

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Klika said the events will give operators and vendors an opportunity to congratulate Sodrel on his win, and express their appreciation for his support.

Sodrel, a Republican, sits on two House committees that are important to the coach industry, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and the Small Business Committee. He also has a seat on the Science Committee.

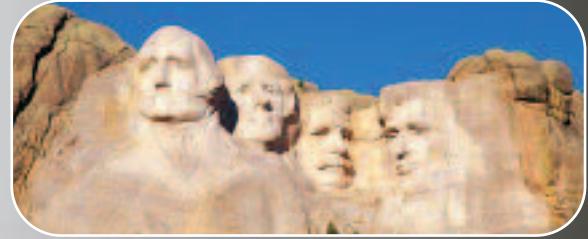
The Transportation Committee has played a key role in developing the House version of the stalled highway and public transportation reauthorization bill. (See Feb. 1 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.) The legislation deals with a whole range of issues critical to the coach industry, including the providing of charter bus service by public transit agencies.

In addition to its Maintenance and Safety Forum, IMG will use its Las Vegas meeting as a platform for a sales meeting and two meetings involving groups of 20 of its members.

"This is the second year IMG has held its Maintenance & Safety Forum in conjunction with Motorcoach Expo," said Klika. "The arrangement gives our members, as well as vendors, an opportunity to attend both meetings."



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## INDUSTRY NEWS

# Robert Brown of Sunrise Coach dies

CUTCHOGUE, N.Y. — Robert W. Brown, president of Sunrise Coach Lines Inc. of Greenport, N.Y., died Jan. 31 in a Long Island hospital from injuries suffered in an auto accident Jan. 28. He was 71.

Sunrise Coach, which Mr. Brown operated with his wife, Christa, was founded by Mr. Brown's father in 1932, and began offering tour bus services in 1937. Today, the company has a fleet of 100 buses, including 15 motorcoaches, plus transit, school and midsize buses and vans.

Mr. Brown was born, reared and

lived most of his life in the North Fork area of Long Island. He graduated from St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y., and in the mid-1950s served in the Army, including a tour overseas.

He joined the family motorcoach company and eventually took over the business. The company offers charters and school trips; operates a tour division, Tour About Excursions; has a school bus service, and provides daily express runs from Long Island to Queens and New York City.

Mr. Brown had a reputation for

running a first-rate company, respected by peers and competitors. He was a long-time member of the United Motorcoach Association and American Bus Association.

Besides his widow, Mr. Brown is survived by two daughters, Corinne Fitting and Michelle Leonard, and a granddaughter Shannon Leonard.

Memorials have been established with the Robert W. Brown Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 628, East Marion, NY 11939, and the North Fork Animal Welfare League, P.O. Box 297, Southold, NY 11971.

# Calendar

**FEBRUARY 2005**

**20-22** International Motorcoach Group Maintenance and Safety Forum, Las Vegas. Info: (913) 906-0111 or go to [www.imgcoach.com](http://www.imgcoach.com).

**22-24** Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Conference, La Quinta, Calif. Info: (626) 744-5686 or e-mail: [sromeo@calstart.org](mailto:sromeo@calstart.org).

**22-26** 2005 Motorcoach Expo, Las Vegas Hilton, Las Vegas. Info: United Motorcoach Association, (800) 424-8262, or [www.uma.org](http://www.uma.org).

**MARCH 2005**

**15-17** Busworld Asia 2005, Shanghai New International Expo Centre, Pudong (Shanghai), China. Info: Go to [www.busworld.org](http://www.busworld.org).

**16** Virginia Motorcoach Association Board of Directors, Howard Johnson Hotel, Fredericksburg, Va. Info: (434) 376-1150 or go to [www.vamotorcoach.com](http://www.vamotorcoach.com).

**16-19** Trailways 69th Annual Conference & Meeting, Casino Magic Casino & Golf Resort, Bay St. Louis, Miss. Info: Trailways Transportation System, (703) 691-3052 or go to [www.trailways.com](http://www.trailways.com).

**30** Pennsylvania Bus Association Marketplace 2005, York Expo Center, York, Pa. Info: (717) 236-9042 or go to [www.pabus.org](http://www.pabus.org).

**30-April 3** National Tour Association Tour Operator Spring Meet, Sacramento, Calif. Contact: (800) 682-8886, or go to [www.ntaonline.com](http://www.ntaonline.com).

**APRIL 2005**

**11-14** Society of Automotive Engineers 2005 World Congress, Cobo Center, Detroit. Info: (724) 776-4841 or go to [www.sae.org](http://www.sae.org).

**16-21** Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance Annual Conference, Hyatt Regency Albuquerque and Albuquerque Convention Center, Albuquerque, N.M. Info: [www.cvs.org](http://www.cvs.org).

**23-24** The Motor Bus Society Convention, San Francisco. Info: Go to [www.motorbussociety.org](http://www.motorbussociety.org), or e-mail [glsquier@comcast.net](mailto:glsquier@comcast.net).

**MAY 2005**

**3-7** Travel Industry Association 37th Annual International Pow Wow, New York City. Info: (202) 408-8422 or go to [www.tia.org](http://www.tia.org).

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**CONTACT**

Jana Van Antwerp, Vice President, Human Resources and Strategic Planning  
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[jana.vanantwerp@coachusa.us](mailto:jana.vanantwerp@coachusa.us) Phone: 972-354-3514 Fax: 972-354-3525





## Ramblin Express Colorado Springs

Ramblin Express, a charter, line-haul, shuttle and limousine operator, has taken delivery of two new MCI J4500 coaches and two pre-owned J4500s.

The new J coaches, which are equipped with Caterpillar engines and ZF AS-Tronic transmissions, are serving the company's charter operations.

The 2002 pre-owned models are being deployed primarily for the company's regularly scheduled casino runs.

"Customers love the J4500," said Gary Agnes, Ramblin Express' general manager. "It's a beautiful coach."

The two new J4500s also have Amaya seats, REI A/V systems, Al-

coa wheels, Carrier A/Cs, R.C.A. flooring, Isringhausen driver seats, and Michelin tires.

Founded 11 years ago by company President Todd Holland, Ramblin Express operates 19 coaches. The company serves Denver and northern Colorado out of its office in Broomfield. Its facility in Colorado Springs serves the southern part of the state.

In addition to its charters and casino business, Ramblin Express is the official transportation provider for Colorado Springs' famed Broadmoor Hotel, and the company sponsors popular Denver Broncos' "Game Day Getaways."

It is a member of the International Motorcoach Group.

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## MCI offers parts guarantee plan

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries has upgraded its inventory management system, enabling it to offer a parts guarantee program — an industry first.

Under the Fast or Free parts guarantee, MCI guarantees that when customers order certain parts, those parts will ship by the end of the next business day. If the company fails to ship on time, it will either ship the part free or issue a credit.

The program applies to 500 frequently purchased parts for its D series, E4500 and J4500 models. The complete Fast or Free parts list can be found at [www.mcicoach.com](http://www.mcicoach.com),

by contacting a MCI Fleet Support manager, or by calling (800) 323-1238 in the U.S., and (800) 665-0155 in Canada.

To make the program work, MCI says it invested millions of dollars in its inventory management system and increased inventory levels to assure the most frequently ordered parts are on hand to meet demand.

"We encourage tour and charter operators to put us to the test," said Todd Pankey, MCI vice president of service parts. "MCI truly understands that time is money and that getting the right part shipped quickly allows operators to run

their business more efficiently.... We carry the parts, so operators can carry the people."

The program has conditions. For example, it does not apply to on-line purchases. Details about the terms and conditions can be found at [www.mcicoach.com](http://www.mcicoach.com).

In addition to the parts guarantee program, MCI Fleet Support will continue to offer monthly and seasonal parts specials.

MCI maintains the industry's largest inventory of parts, cataloging more than 160,000 parts, including OEM parts for nearly all makes and models of coaches and transit buses.

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

**MCI picks John Morrison to head used coach sales**

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries has turned to a veteran company executive, John Morrison, to head its pre-owned motorcoach sales program.

Morrison, who has been with the company for 12 years, has been

named vice president of coach sales. He has spent the last few years developing information technology at MCI.

Morrison also has experience running a family-owned motor coach business.

In his new position, Morrison will be responsible for used coaches sales at all six MCI sales locations in the U.S. and Canada, and a new initiative called the Certified Pre-owned coach program.

In addition, he will continue to

expand MCI's conventional and electronic marketing of its used-coach inventory and leasing programs. He will report to Pete Cotter, senior vice president, coach sales.

"John brings a tremendous

amount of knowledge and talent to this position," said Tom Sorrells, president and CEO of MCI. "He took

MCI's IT capabilities to the next level and we expect him to do the same for MCI's pre-owned coach division... . We're determined to make MCI Sales and Service locations and our Web site the first places operators turn to for quality pre-owned coaches. Morrison understands every aspect of operators' expectations and the ways MCI can meet them."

*John Morrison*

During the years he led the company IT function, Morrison was responsible for e-sales, online warranty and parts tracking, IT service for the service centers, and logistics integration at the MCI Louisville parts warehouse.

Prior to that he served as product line manager and assisted with the launch of two MCI models. He joined the company in 1993 as a regional sales manager and became regional vice president of sales. Earlier, he worked for the family motorcoach business in St. Louis, a company founded by his great-grandfather and grandfather.

## ARI-HETRA introduces new inflation cage

FAIRFAX, Va.—ARI-HETRA has introduced a safety inflation cage for servicing large tires and multi-piece wheel rims.

The model WS-35026 inflation cage, manufactured at ARI-HETRA's Cincinnati, Ohio facility, helps shops meet OSHA regulations by providing a safe method of servicing large tires and wheels.

Its features help increase safety, productivity and reduce physical strain, said ARI President Robert Penenburgh.

The cage will enclose up to 50-inch diameter tires, and features a safety locking mechanism and "walk-away" automatic preset inflator that reduces over or under inflation. Its design allows effortlessly opening and closing.

ARI-HETRA also produces heavy-duty mobile lifting equipment, exhaust extraction systems, and wheel service equipment.

For more information go to [www.ari-hetra.com](http://www.ari-hetra.com), or call (800) 562-3250.



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\*Include Las Vegas Hilton confirmation number and receive \$25 off each registration! See below for details.

#### Industry Role

- Please check only one:
- Operator** ~ Motorcoach owner, operator, or staff person who is an active part of a motorcoach company recognized by the USDOT.
  - Travel Partner** ~ Companies that are involved in the travel and tourism market- hotels, destinations, rest stops, etc.
  - Non-Exhibiting Supplier** ~ Companies that sell/supply to the motorcoach industry but are NOT exhibiting on the show floor at Motorcoach Expo 2005.

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<b>Operator</b>	\$325 / \$375	<b>Marketing and Sales:</b> Selling 101- The Sales Process	<b>Finance:</b> Raising your Rates
<b>Travel Partner</b>	\$350 / \$400	<b>Marketing and Sales:</b> How to get the phone ringing using cost effective marketing channels	<b>Operations:</b> Instilling a Safety Culture
<b>Non-Exhibiting Supplier</b>	\$650 / \$750	<b>Marketing and Sales:</b> Making your website an integral part of your marketing and sales effort	<b>Operations:</b> Process of securing contract work
<b>Spouse</b>	\$250 / \$300	<b>1:15 PM - 4:15 PM</b>	<b>Operations:</b> Recruiting and training new drivers
<b>Child</b>	\$125 / \$150	<b>2:00 PM - 3:00 PM</b>	<b>NEW</b>
<b>**Package Deal:</b> \$825		<b>4:30 PM - 7:30 PM</b>	<b>Operator Luncheon</b>
<b>CANCELLATION POLICY:</b> There is a \$50 processing fee for all cancellations. This fee is assessed on a per person basis. There is no refund for cancellations made after 12/31/04. All refund requests are up to the discretion of Expo Management.		<b>Marketing Lessons from Other Industries</b>	

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05EXPO8

## Motorcoach Expo 2005—

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#### Schedule of Events

**Sunday – Tuesday, February 20-22, 2005**

IMG Maintenance & Safety Forum

**Tuesday – February 22, 2005**

2:00 PM - 5:00 PM State Association Summit **NEW**

6:00 PM - 9:00 PM Welcome Reception

**Wednesday – February 23, 2005**

9:00 AM - 4:30 PM Maintenance Interchange

9:00 AM - 10:00 AM Motorcoach Industry Panel

(Building a Strong Foundation)

10:00 AM - 10:45 AM Legislative and Regulatory Update

11:00 AM - 4:15 PM Education Sessions (Concurrent Sessions) **NEW**

**11:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

Selling 101-

The Sales Process

**2:00 PM - 3:00 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**3:15 PM - 4:15 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

Making your website

an integral part of

your marketing and

sales effort

**12:00 PM - 1:45 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**1:45 PM - 3:00 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**3:00 PM - 4:15 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**4:15 PM - 5:30 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**5:30 PM - 6:00 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**6:00 PM - 9:00 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**9:00 AM - 10:00 AM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**10:00 AM - 11:00 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**11:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**12:00 PM - 1:45 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**1:45 PM - 3:00 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**3:00 PM - 4:15 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

How to get the phone

ringing using cost

effective marketing

channels

**4:15 PM - 5:30 PM**

**Marketing and Sales:**

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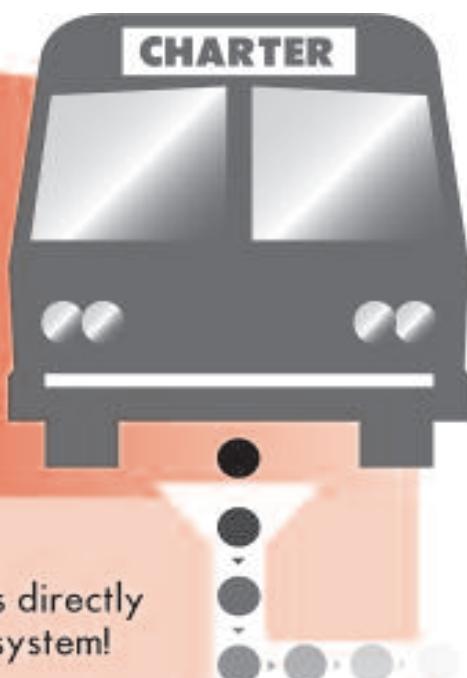
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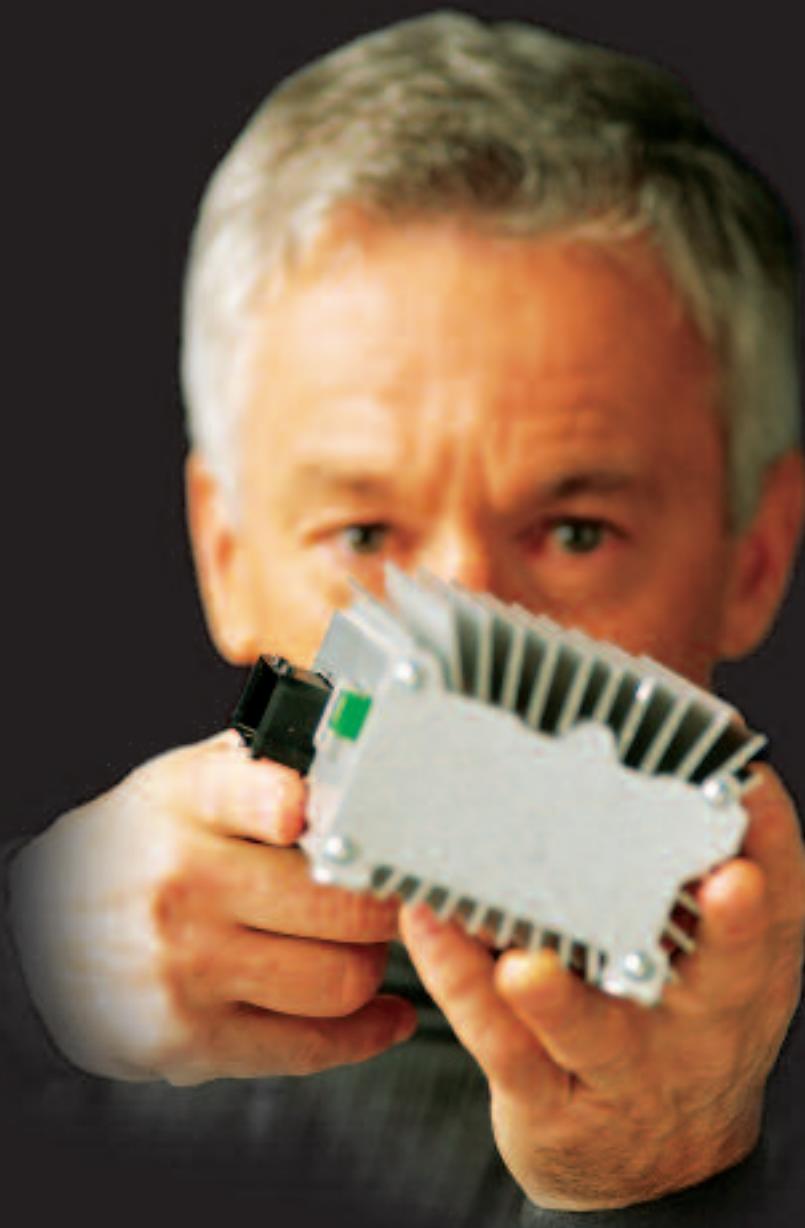


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