

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

March 15, 2003

THE NEWS RESOURCE FOR THE BUS AND MOTORCOACH INDUSTRY

## Coach industry wins axle-weight exemption

### *Thank You, Senator Thomas*

In an extraordinary victory for the motorcoach industry, over-the-road buses and coaches are now exempt from axle-weight limits on the federal interstate and highway system.

The long-sought exemption was granted when President Bush signed the fiscal 2003 appropriations bill that Congress adopted last month. Buried in the 1,200-page bill is language that exempts

motorcoaches from federal axle-weight limits.

"This is huge," gushed one operator.

Lobbyists for the United Motorcoach Association, the American Bus Association and others have been trying for more than a decade to win exemption for over-the-road buses from

weighing on the national network of highways. The struggle finally paid off when both the House and Senate adopted joint spending resolutions containing the fiscal 2003 budget for the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Section 347 of the bill contains an amendment to the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency

Act of 1991, that extends the weight exemption to motorcoaches.

The amendment uses the Americans with Disabilities Act definition of an over-the-road bus, saying it is a bus characterized by an elevated passenger deck over a baggage compartment.

The axle-weight language was inserted into the 2003 Transportation Department appropriations

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## INSIDE THE DOCKET

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### Hours of Service

An appeals court and FMCSA agree that new hours of service rules will be released by the end of May. **Page 6**

## Outrageous

### Parking fines soar for coaches in Washington

With all of the pressures piling up in Washington, the good folks on the District of Columbia city council have completely forgotten that a little hospitality can go a long way and that the rules of Economics 101 are immutable.

Now since the motorcoach industry is comprised of nice, well-mannered and thoughtful people, we're volunteering to refresh their memory. We regret, however, they ignored our warning last October and decided to shoot their foot off anyway.

On the first day of this month, new parking fines went into effect in the District of Columbia, including raising the fine for parking a bus or motorcoach in front of a residence or other restricted space from \$20 to \$500. That's no misprint: It went from 1 Andrew Jackson to 25 Andrews Jacksons.

In addition, fines for six other parking violations also were raised but not nearly by

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**Expo Excels** *Motorcoach Expo 2003, the coach industry's largest trade show, exceeded the expectations of many who feared the industry recession would cut attendance and dampen enthusiasm. The Orlando show was well attended and operators were buying. Stories and photos on Page 12.*

## Lobbying effort seeks to change Illinois licensing law

The United Motorcoach Association and the American Bus Association have hired a lobbyist in a bid to revise an onerous new law that requires motorcoach operators in Illinois to have school-bus drivers licenses before they can transport children on school trips.

By the time you read this, bills likely will have been introduced in the Illinois General Assembly to modify the law. The goal is to develop legislation that will help

legislators protect school children while at the same reduce the oppressive nature of the new law.

The Illinois school bus driver license law went into effect at the first of the year despite efforts by Illinois operators, with support from UMA, to seek a six-month delay so it could be reconsidered.

Its impact has been disastrous for scores of non-Illinois-based operators that traditionally have transported thousands of Illinois school children. The law essential-

ly blocks operators in states surrounding Illinois from contracting with Illinois schools to take children on school trips.

Drivers for the out-of-state operators can't get an Illinois school bus drivers license because their employers cannot obtain in Illinois employer number. Operators from Indiana, Wisconsin, Missouri, Iowa and Kentucky are being hurt most by the law.

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## COMPLETE EXPO WRAP-UP

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## Winter 2003 storms exact toll on industry

By Karen Crabtree

Motorcoach operators in the Northeast typically face a slow February, but business was slowed even more this year when the region was hit by the worst winter storm in seven years.

Many states reported the snowiest February on record, or very near it. Up to four feet was recorded in several cities, with Philadelphia, New York City and Washington D.C., receiving up to two feet during the Presidents Day storm.

Business was completely shut down for two-to-three days for many operators during the worst of the snow. At Premier Coach in New York City, the staff waited four days for a plow—just to clear its yard.

“The storm was so bad,” said Tony Alibegu, a dispatcher with the 14-bus charter company. “We called everyone we knew with a plow.” Finally, help was found in the Yellow Pages. “We were so desperate, whatever he asked we were willing to pay.” Fifteen hundred dollars later, Premier could at least turn its buses around.

However, every trip was canceled with little chance of rescheduling. “We took it as a business loss,” said Alibegu. “But it wasn’t only us.”

Other operators, whose buses also were snowed in, asked Premier to pick up passengers stranded at area airports. “Even if our buses were outside we wouldn’t send them,” Alibegu said. “It wasn’t

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ▶



## Stout's Buys Central Jersey Bus

TRENTON, N.J.—Stout's Charter Service, which is marking its 20th years as an operator, has expanded into northern New Jersey by purchasing Central Jersey Bus of Basking Ridge.

“The purchase allowed us to move into the north Jersey area without having to open an office or do anything else,” said Stout's Operations Manager Vivian Tuccillo-Giglio. “Our exposure in the northern part of the state (already) has proved to be a good move for Stout's.”

The company Stout's purchased, Central Jersey Bus, traced its roots back 65 years. It was founded in 1927 as a line-run service operating between Newark and Elizabeth, N.J. In 1994, Chet Furmonek purchased the company, which had become a tour and charter operator serving northern and central New Jersey.

Central Jersey Bus was best

known among bus aficionados for its fleet of vintage buses that it rented for movies and other uses. Buses from its 1940s-through-1980s fleet appeared in such movies as *A League of Their Own*, *Forrest Gump*, *Malcolm X* and *A House on Carroll Street*. The purchase did not include the historic buses.

Stout's did purchase two contemporary coaches operated by Central Jersey Bus, which it turned around and sold. Stout's also purchased the company's customer base and phone numbers.

Stout's operates a fleet of 24 motorcoaches, 20 Van Hools and 4 MCIs, from its headquarters in Trenton. A separate company, Stout's Bus Service, operates 75 school buses.

Heading both companies is Harry Stout, president, and Tim Stout, vice president. The charter operation has 18 full-time employees, plus 40 drivers.

## Diesel fuel price soars, 33% in year

Motorcoach operators are paying one-third more for diesel fuel than they were a year ago as prices continue their relentless climb to record highs.

The national average price of diesel fuel rose nearly 2 cents a gallon during the second week in March, to \$1.77 per gallon, the U.S. Department of Energy reported in its weekly survey of fueling stations.

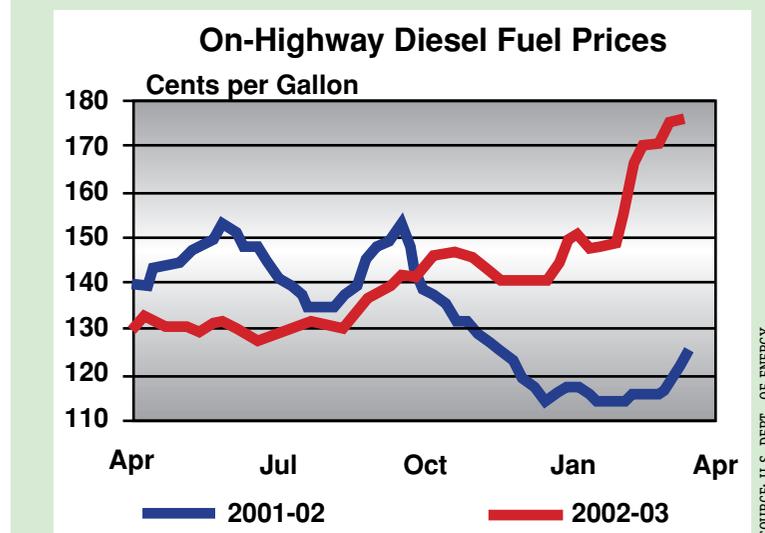
The highest prices are in the New England and central Atlantic states where diesel is fast approaching \$2 per gallon. Elsewhere, the price ranges from an average of \$1.70 a gallon along the Gulf Coast, to \$1.89 on the West Coast.

As is typical during periods of fuel price spikes and international tension, there are conflicting views both about the outlook for diesel supplies and its price.

Since the middle of December when prices began crawling non-stop higher, the increases have been blamed on everything from the crisis in the Middle East to the political turmoil in Venezuela, a major supplier to the U.S. market.

More recently, the severe winter weather in the northeast and freezing temperatures in the middle Atlantic states have been blamed. Since diesel fuel and home heating oil are both made from distillates, less diesel is produced in winter because of higher demand for heating oil, driving up the price of diesel.

With the end of winter approaching, many observers say



SOURCE: U.S. DEPT. OF ENERGY

### Diesel Fuel Prices

Cents per Gallon	Price	Change from	
		Week Ago	Year Ago
U.S.	177.1	▲ 1.8	▲ 55.5
East Coast	181.5	▲ 2.0	▲ 58.8
New England	200.1	▲ 4.7	▲ 69.7
Central Atlantic	195.9	▲ 3.8	▲ 66.0
Lower Atlantic	173.7	▲ 1.1	▲ 54.8
Midwest	173.8	▲ 0.3	▲ 54.5
Gulf Coast	169.7	▼ -0.3	▲ 51.1
Rocky Mountain	178.2	▲ 4.6	▲ 58.5
West Coast	188.6	▲ 8.1	▲ 55.9
California	186.6	▲ 3.4	▲ 47.8

demand for home heating oil will lessen, allowing refiners to switch more production to diesel, reducing the price. That scenario may be less pronounced this year because supplies of home heating oil have been significantly reduced because of the heavy demand caused by the cold and storms.

Additionally, because diesel fuel and gasoline are commodities whose price invariably reflects future events, the crisis in the Middle East guarantees high prices for weeks, if not months, to come.

The latest increases mark the 13th straight weekly price jump

incurred by motorcoach operators since Dec. 16.

The soaring prices mean motorcoach operators should be implementing fuel surcharges in their charter contracts or ticket prices. Surcharges are a tough way to cover incremental cost increases but the pressure mounts every time a motorcoach pulls up to a fuel pump.

Because legal requirements differ in almost every state, operators should consult a contract attorney to make certain they are meeting local laws when implementing surcharges or other changes.

## Chicago offers travel guide, motorcoach parking maps

The Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau has released two publications that expand its resources for bus and other travel professionals: *The 2003 Motorcoach Parking Map & Information Guide* and the 2003 edition of the *Travel Professionals Guide*.

Additionally, the bureau is offering special incentives to those who book group travel in Chicago.

The Motorcoach Parking Map & Guide features the locations of free downtown motorcoach parking lots, on-street parking areas, and the numerous loading zones throughout the city.

The map also lists affordable restaurants that are close to the free motorcoach parking lot at 631 W. Kinzie St., as well as other valuable information for groups.

*The Travel Professionals Guide* is a comprehensive publication specifically for tour operators, group leaders and other travel professionals who plan individual and group leisure travel. The latest edition contains the most up-to-date information on Chicago hotels, restaurants, attractions and destination management companies.

It's designed both to sell the city to those who are considering

developing a Chicago tour product and to provide resources to those who have already decided on Chicago.

To request a copy of the TPG and motorcoach guide online: Go to [www.choosechicago.com/traveltrade.htm](http://www.choosechicago.com/traveltrade.htm).

To request copies by phone, fax or e-mail: Phone: 312-567-8578. Fax requests: 312-567-8504. E-mail: [lcastillo@choosechicago.com](mailto:lcastillo@choosechicago.com)

For information about incentives, contact: Joleen Domaracki, tourism sales representative. Phone: 312-567-8571. E-mail: [jdomaracki@choosechicago.com](mailto:jdomaracki@choosechicago.com).

# THE DOCKET

## NTSB criticizes FMCSA in wake of Greyhound crash

The National Transportation Safety Board has strongly criticized the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration for contributing to the crash of a Greyhound coach that killed three people.

In a special report on the accident, NTSB investigators zeroed in on what they said was the FMCSA's failure to properly monitor the safe operation of new bus and truck companies. The safety board even criticized the FMCSA's new-entrant safety rules that went into effect Jan. 1.

The NTSB said that despite the new rules the FMCSA still lacks the ability to keep unsafe bus and truck companies from entering the business. In fact, the NTSB said new carriers should not be allowed to operate until they've clearly demonstrated their safety fitness. Instead, the FMCSA's new rules give start-up companies a free ticket for a maximum of 18 months before they face a safety inspection and audit.

"As the system works now, anyone can become a motor carrier for at least 18 months," said Jim LeBerte, an NTSB accident investigator.

The crash that led to the NTSB report occurred June 9, 2002, at shortly after 5 a.m., near Lorraine, Texas. A MC-12 operated by Greyhound Lines and occupied by the driver and 37 passengers, was traveling east on Interstate 20, on a run from El Paso to Abilene, Texas. The driver-reported a speed of 65 to 67 mph.

An over-the-road truck, which was being operated by a driver in training with a co-driver in the sleeper berth, was entering I-20 from a picnic area

at a driver-estimated speed of 40 mph. The investigation concluded the actual speed of the truck was closer to 15 to 18 mph. The Greyhound rear-ended the semi, pushing the truck and trailer nearly the length of a football field.

The NTSB investigation determined that the probable cause of the crash was the unnecessarily slow acceleration of the unlighted semitrailer onto the high-speed interstate by an inexperienced and unsupervised driver who was impaired by cocaine.

The NTSB investigators were so exercised by what they found

**NTSB investigators were so exercised by what they found...they decided to make it a poster child of FMCSA failings.**

when they investigated the crash they decided to make it a poster child of the FMCSA failings and issue a special report that both details shortcomings and makes strong safety recommendations. As part of its investigation, the NTSB concluded that: The FMCSA's Form MCS-150A, Safety Certification for Application for U.S. DOT Number, does not allow the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to determine a motor carrier's level of safety fitness prior to operation because it does not require applicants to provide detailed information on operations. Further, no mechanism is in place to verify the validity of an applicant's statements.

The current Safety Status Measurement System (SafeStat, which is operated under the aegis of the FMCSA) does not accurately reflect a new motor carrier's safety posture because the composite score is based on areas in which a new motor carrier may not be rated and therefore is unlikely to provide FMCSA inspectors enough data to determine whether a safety audit should be performed sooner rather than later.

## Key congressmen want to increase federal fuel taxes

Despite seemingly strong opposition from the Bush Administration, two key members of Congress are moving ahead with plans to boost fuel taxes.

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Don Young (R-Alaska) and ranking committee member James L. Oberstar (D-Minn.) want to hike highway and transit system spending and use higher fuel taxes to pay for the increased spending.

The key element of their plan is to index the federal motor fuel user fee to the consumer price index.

The Bush Administration, however, has indicated it is adamantly opposed to raising fuel taxes in any form. President Bush stated his personal opposition in a meeting with truckers last month. A month earlier, the president's Office of Management and Budget issued a formal statement of policy, saying it "strongly opposes" higher taxes.

The congressmen contend they are trying to "protect the purchasing power" of federal fuel taxes, which have remained unchanged for a decade. Due to inflation, the purchasing power of the fuel tax is down 25 percent, say congressional aides.

The preliminary plan favored by Young and Oberstar calls for immediately adding more than 5 cents to the fuel tax to bring the purchasing power back to its 1993 level and then protect against further erosion by indexing.

By conducting safety audits up to 18 months after carriers begin operation, the FMCSA potentially allows unsafe carriers to operate without oversight and without the benefit of the educational and technical assistance that the FMCSA provides during a safety audit.

To correct the situation, the NTSB recommended that new motor carriers seeking operating authority demonstrate their safety fitness.

## Job safety agency to get aggressive with enforcement

A top official in the U.S. Department of Labor says the Occupational Safety and Health Administration plans to begin using court orders to get tough with employers who fail to comply with federal health and safety regulations.

In addition, the agency intends to more aggressively pursue employers who attempt to hide behind the corporate veil to avoid compliance.

Criminal prosecutions and incarceration will be considered – and used, when necessary – as part of the get-tough strategy.

The enhanced enforcement strategy was unveiled by Ron Whiting, deputy solicitor of labor, who spoke earlier this month at an American Bar Association meeting in Florida on occupational safety and health law.

The key tool in the expanded effort is Section 11(b) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Under that section, the Secretary of Labor can petition a federal appeals court to enforce a final order from the Occupational Safety and Health Review

Commission. The benefit of using the courts is that they have many more sanctions available to deal with noncomplaint employers, says Whiting.

For example, violating a federal court of appeals order constitutes contempt of court and the penalties can range from fines and court costs to incarceration.

"So, 11(b) orders are a strong enforcement mechanism," Whiting says. The expanded use of Section 11(b) already is being applied by the Labor Department.

Also according to Whiting, many companies cited by OSHA are being dissolved by the owners only to be reformed and the hazardous practices continued. In these cases, OSHA will attempt to pierce the corporate veil and hold the individuals personally liable.

Currently, criminal prosecutions under the OSHA Act are difficult because criminal violations are misdemeanors. Still, the Secretary of Labor will continue to attempt to attain indictments when they are necessary, says Whiting.

## Congress balks No money for new ergonomic rules

Congress has stripped all money from the U.S. Department of Labor that had been earmarked for issuing new workplace safety regulations.

The fiscal 2003 budget for the department that had been approved by the Senate included \$2 million to write regulations designed to help protect workers against certain injuries caused by repetitive motion, lifting, use of force, vibration and awkward postures. The House budget bill did not include the spending, however.

When Congress approved a merged spending bill the money was dropped.

One of the last acts of the Clinton Administration on its way out the door in January 2001, was to issue new ergonomic standards that would have cost motorcoach

companies thousands, including \$800 to \$1,000 per employee in first-year worker training costs. It also would have made staying at home more profitable than going to work for many workers who had been injured on the job, and it would have neutered many state worker compensation programs while doubling employer worker comp costs.

The United Motorcoach Association was one of the first organizations to blow the whistle on the boondoggle, leading the bus industry charge against the standards.

The Bush Administration has proposed that industries develop voluntary guidelines to protect against job-related injuries. No such guidelines have been developed for the bus industry.

## Bus security bill clears first hurdle, \$99 million sought

A new effort to wrangle money from Congress for over-the-road bus security has met with initial success. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee moved along legislation that would authorize \$99 million in security funding for the industry.

The Over-the-Road Bus Security and Safety Act of 2003 (H.R. 875) would authorize a total of \$99 million for fiscal 2003 and 2004 for discretionary grants to private intercity operators for security. Leading the lobbying effort on the bill is the American Bus Association and Greyhound.

The new bill is about \$500 million less than similar legislation that failed to win widespread support during the 107th Congress.

The money would come from the General Fund and could be used to construct or modify terminals, bus garages and other facilities to assure security; protect or isolate bus drivers; upgrade, purchase or install passenger ticketing secu-

rity systems; train employees; hire security officers; install video surveillance equipment on buses and in facilities; create employee ID programs; establish emergency communication systems and implement passenger screening

programs.

Among other things, the bill also contains language specifically instructing how Congress wants the money spent.

The latest bill was introduced by Rep. Don Young (R-Alaska)

with the support of the Transportation Committee's ranking Democrat, James L. Oberstar (Minn.), House Highways, Transit and Pipe-lines Subcommittee Chairman Thomas E. Petri (R-Wis.), and subcommittee ranking

member William O. Lipinski (D-Ill.). Numerous other committee members signed on to the bill.

The bill goes to the House for consideration. A Senate version will be introduced.

## Bus safety training in Atlantic City

The South Jersey Transportation Authority is sponsoring an afternoon training program Wednesday, March 26, on several aspects of safe motorcoach driving.

The 12:30 to 3 p.m. program, which includes lunch, is free.

The 2-hour session will cover inclement weather driving, fatigue, game plans for aging and stress busters.

Each attendee will receive a certificate. It will be conducted at Wash's Catering Service Inc., 128 N. New Road, Pleasantville, N.J., which is six miles northwest of Atlantic City on the Atlantic City Expressway.

Shuttle service to Wash's from the Atlantic City Transportation Center and Ruffu Ford bus parking lots will be provided.

To sign up, (609) 345-5572, Ext. 423 or (888) 565-7582, Ext. 423.



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# THE DOCKET

## Deadline nears to apply for ADA lift grants

The last Friday of this month is the deadline for applying for federal money to pay part of the cost of installing wheelchair lifts or buying wheelchair-lift equipped coaches.

The Federal Transit Administration has nearly \$7 million in grants available this year for coach operators to help make their fleets more disabled accessible.

The FTA awarded just over \$7 million in Over-the-Road Bus Accessibility Program Grants to 74 motorcoach companies last year. Of that amount, \$5.3 million went to intercity bus operators and \$1.8 million was given to charter, tour and commuter operators.

Ninety-one operators applied for grants, with some money going to "all qualified applicants." All but about a half million dollars went to help offset the purchase of 149 new coaches and the retrofitting of 68 buses. The remainder went for training.

Because of the high demand, most applicants received less money than they requested. That is likely to occur again this year.

Complete applications for the Over-the-Road Bus Accessibility Program Grants must be submitted to the FTA regional office that covers the state where the applicant is based. There are 10 regional FTA offices and their locations are listed in the announcement of the grants that was published in the Federal Register. The announcement also spells out the application process. The deadline is March 28.

You can find the FTA announcement online at [www.access.gpo.gov](http://www.access.gpo.gov). Click on GPO Access, click on Federal Register under Quick Links, check 2003 Federal Register, under Search Terms type in the words: Over-the-Road Bus Accessibility Program Grants. Scroll down to the Over-the-Road Bus Accessibility grants announcement. Or, you can check at your local library for the Feb. 7 Federal Register.

## SBA lifts 7(a) loan cap, adds \$\$\$

The U.S. Small Business Administration has raised the cap on SBA-backed loans and asked banks or other lenders to resume submitting applications for guaranteed loans up to the \$2 million statutory limit.

The return to higher limits was made possible when President Bush signed legislation that allows the agency to implement a revised econometric subsidy model that more accurately forecasts the actual costs of the 7(a) program. The change was applied retroactively to the beginning of fiscal 2003.

The SBA had lowered the limit on loans to \$500,000 because of budget constraints and an outdated econometric model

that forecast loan losses.

The new econometric model, combined with the higher appropriation levels contained in the fiscal 2003 federal budget, will allow the SBA to approve more than \$9.4 billion in 7(a) loans during the current year, an increase of \$1 billion.

"We are happy to be able to help small businesses looking for access to capital, and we are proud to do our part helping them to create new jobs for Americans," said SBA Administrator Hector V. Barreto. "The \$500,000 cap on our maximum loan size was a management tool we had to adopt to address the funding limitations placed on the agency in October while maintaining continued serv-

ice to the maximum number of small businesses," Barreto added.

The United Motorcoach Association championed both the higher limits and the changes needed to make more money available under the 7(a) program, which is popular with motorcoach operators. UMA was a key member of a coalition headed by the Small Business Policy unit of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which was the lead lobbying organization pushing the changes.

•For more information about SBA programs for small businesses, call the SBA Answer Desk at 1-800 U ASK SBA. Or, visit the SBA's extensive Web site at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).

## Hours-of-service rules' deadline is set by court

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has agreed to issue new hours of service rules for commercial motor carriers by May 31.

The date was fixed to help settle a lawsuit filed by safety advocates against the FMCSA for failing to meet statutory deadlines for several rulemaking actions. The statutory deadline for updating the hours-of-service rules was 1998.

Since late last year, the new rules crafted by the FMCSA to govern the hours commercial bus and truck drivers can work have been bottled up in the Bush Administration Office of Management and Budget. The OMB has been examining the costs and benefits of the proposed rules.

Now, the FMCSA has agreed to release them by May 31.

There has been widespread speculation about whether the new rules will be released in the form of a supplemental notice of proposal rule making, or a final rule. The difference is important.

A supplemental notice would include an extended comment period, allowing the agency flexibility to react to criticism of its proposal. A final rule, on the other hand, likely would generate a firestorm of criticism and trigger lawsuits seeking an injunction to block the rule. That could doom the process.

Norm Littler, senior vice president of government affairs and industry relations at the United Motorcoach Association, is concerned the FMCSA and DOT may opt to issue a final rule. "If they bring it out as a final rule, there's going to be a line-up at the courthouse door," Littler predicted.

Members of the staff of the American Bus Association have met with and written White House officials to share industry concerns about the inclusion of the coach industry in the hours-of-service rulemaking.

## Amtrak opens money mouth . . . wider

Congress' failure to let Amtrak die last year when it nearly ran out of money appears to have emboldened the rail system's administrators to the point they are asking for a 50 percent increase in the federal subsidy for the rail line.

In a letter of Vice President Dick Cheney and House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.), Amtrak President David Gunn says the railroad needs \$1.8 billion in federal operating and capital investment grants in fiscal 2004 to stabilize the company, improve reliability and halt the deterioration of track and equipment.

Amtrak is to receive \$1.2 billion during the current fiscal year. Gunn's proposal for fiscal '04 includes \$1.04 billion for capital needs and \$768 million to support operations.

In the seven years from 1997 to 2003, combined federal capital

and operating support for Amtrak averaged \$1.1 billion annually. According to Gunn this level of funding "was insufficient to support Amtrak's true capital and operating needs.

Consequently, the company's previous management increased Amtrak's debt by more than \$2.5 billion and slowed or halted important capital projects and deferred maintenance during this period to keep trains running and avoid insolvency," says Gunn.

The deferred investment resulted in a deterioration of rail equipment and infrastructure, and Amtrak's increased borrowing resulted in annual debt service that has ballooned to more than \$250 million.

"Amtrak's past practice of borrowing money and deferring capital investment to make payroll cannot be sustained," says Gunn.

"We must address the deteriorated assets and, over the next several years, return our equipment and infrastructure to a state of good repair if operation is to continue."

Among the proposed major capital initiatives for fiscal '04 are the repair of 20 damaged coaches and 10 locomotives, reconstruction of five major interlockings, initial reconstruction of three important bridges, the installation of 120,000 new ties and investments in several maintenance facilities.

Since last summer, Amtrak's workforce has been reduced by more than 600 employees, the phase-out of an unprofitable express business has begun and the closure of a reservation center, saving \$3 million annually, has been announced.

Amtrak has no plans to propose route cuts.

## Two public agencies search for private charter providers

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

Operators are urged to take the time to respond to these public notices.

Janesville, Wis. Deadline: April 18, 2003. Write to David J. Mumma, Transit Director, Janesville Transit System, 900 North Parker Drive, Janesville, WI

53545-0710. Phone: (608) 755-3150.

Wall Walla, Wash. Deadline: March 24, 2003. Write to: Richard Fondahn, General Manager, Valley Transit, 1401 W. Rose St., Walla Walla, WA 99362. Phone: (509) 525-9140.

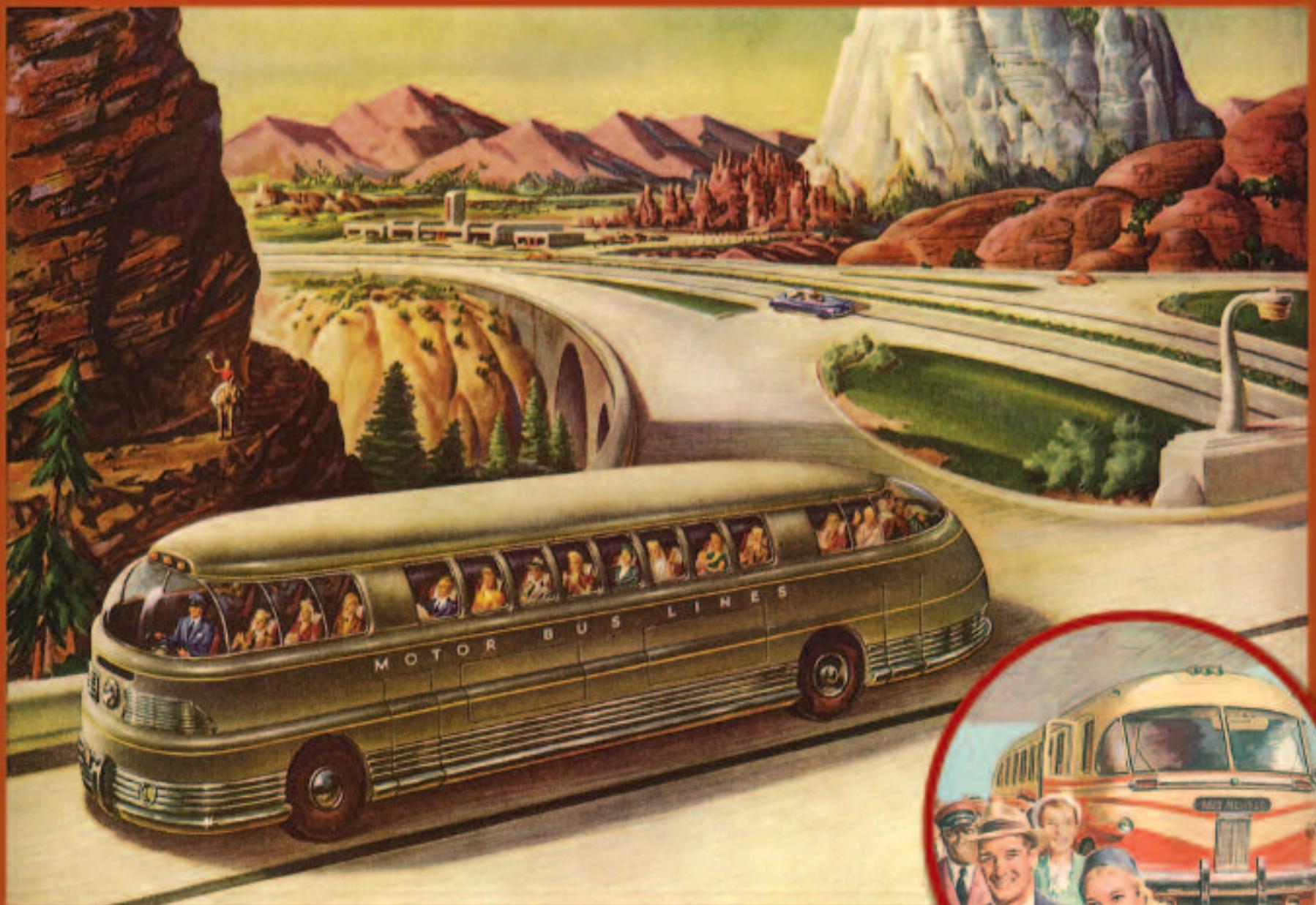


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## OPINION

# Watch out for (unfair) competition

In most Top 10 lists of smart business practices you'll invariably find this one: Keep an eye on the competition. In the coach industry it's always a good idea to keep an eye out for someone who isn't supposed to be your competitor but may, be just the same.

For the past 16 years, since the Federal Transit Administration revised its charter service regulations (49 CFR Part 604), public transit agencies have been largely prohibited from providing charter bus service. The prohibition is based on the principle that federally funded equipment and facilities should not be used to compete (unfairly) with private charter operators. Transit agencies by and large abide by the regulation.

Nonetheless, there have been occasional violators. A rogue agency, managed by an over-zealous executive director, decides he can supplement fare box revenue by violating the regulation. When violations have been documented, complaints have been filed with the FTA, and the practice abated.

The current operating environment for transit systems, like that for private operators, is anything but optimum. In many locales, transit agency revenues are coming under severe pressure as states and cities fight huge budget shortfalls. Those pressures could tempt one or two transit managers to cast about for ways to supplement their budgets with charter revenues.

Catching violators is hard. The really bad actors disguise their charters. They claim they're "shuttles" or they're providing "special services."

The FTA is not a watchdog agency, so it is incumbent on coach operators to monitor their local transit system. Operators should be vigilant but not obsessive. Enlist your drivers to be your eyes. Ask them to watch for unusual circumstances, including transit buses that are not on fixed routes or traveling off the beaten path.

If telltale indications pop up, here's what to do. First, make sure the transit agency is aware of the charter service rule. Contact the United Motorcoach Association, American Bus Association or one of the marketing organizations (if you're member) for a copy of the rule. If the transit agency isn't responsive, appeal to the regional FTA counsel. That's usually sufficient under the current FTA leadership.

Always keep in mind there are exceptions under which transit agencies can provide charter service. They're permitted if the transit system can't honestly find a willing and able private operator to handle the work, or if the private charter operator doesn't have the capacity for a particular charter, or if the private operator can't provide equipment accessible to the elderly and disabled.

Since the FTA rules were adopted in 1987, they have been under assault. In the late 1980s, the rules were amended in three areas. The changes allowed nonprofit social service agencies that work with the disabled to contract for service directly with public transit agencies; nonurbanized areas could provide direct charters for the elderly, and public transits could provide charters if they reached an agreement with local private charter operators under the willing-and-able provisions of the regulations.

In 1991, transit forces were able to insert a provision in the massive transit funding bill, known as ISTEA, calling for a demonstration program that would give transit systems more "flexibility." Based on the demonstration program, an effort was made in 1997, to water down the rules. More than four years after the changes were proposed, they were withdrawn by the FTA. The FTA concluded the private sector was doing a good job of meeting demand and there was no consensus the changes would really help transit operators utilize the exceptions.

Some believe a new effort to weaken the rules may be mounted in connection with the reauthorization of the TEA-21 bill this year. ABA and UMA certainly will work to head off any such effort and it does not appear the American Public Transportation Association is supporting such a move. UMA has taken the initiative in recent weeks to open up a dialog with the Federal Transit Administration, asking the agency to—among other things—host a roundtable with participants from the public and private sectors discussing ways of creating mutually beneficial partnerships.

So, here's this week's No. 1 Business Operating Tip: Keep your eyes open. You don't need another competitor, especially one whose operations are propped up with tax dollars.



Wolf Rinke

## Leadership— How to attract, keep the best

Dr. Wolf Rinke, management consultant and author, was one of the key Solution Seminar Speakers at Motorcoach Expo. Here's some of what he has to say about Winning Leadership: Tomorrow, analyze your calendar to figure out how much time you are spending with your team members and your customers. If it is less than 70 percent, you need to take action. Set up an action plan to increase the time you spend with your team members and customers by 5 percent each month until it is up to an average of 70 percent.

Check your compensation practices to see if there is a clear connection between how well a job is done and the reward received. If your top performers get the same compensation and recognition as the slackers, do something about it now.

When assigning projects to your team members, break down the projects into manageable steps, remind them of when they succeeded before, and express your confidence in their ability. Then take your hands off until they ask

you for help.

Analyze how much time you're spending with troublemakers and top achievers. If you are spending more than 50 percent of your employee coaching time with troublemakers, begin to decrease that time by 5 percent. Then, decrease it by another 5 percent for the next several months until virtually all of your time is spent with the team members who are responsible for your success.

Take a look at how people are told they have done a good job in your organization. If fewer than two-thirds of your team members have been publicly recognized during the past year, change your recognition program so that ultimately 75 percent of all team members receive public recognition every year.

During the next five days, keep a written record of how many times you say something positive or negative to your team members. If the positives do not outweigh the negatives ten to one, set up an action plan, which will force you to practice leadership by appreciation. Track your progress on a chart.

If you have not conducted a comprehensive employee satisfaction survey during the past 12 months, conduct one during the next month. Address any unsatisfactory ratings immediately. Then, let employees know what you have done to address their concerns. Get aggressive about consistently exceeding your team members' expectations by repeating this process every six months thereafter.

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## Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

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## INDUSTRY NEWS

## Winter storms

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

safe, it wasn't worth it."

The February storm was in sharp contrast with last winter which didn't bring much snow. In fact, no snow fell at all in Philadelphia. Winter this year started early, in November in many areas, and it had a major impact on business.

"This winter was a tough one," said David Benedict, president of David Thomas Tours in Philadelphia. "It started early and it set the tone with the seniors, who hold off booking trips."

Benedict's company, a 24-bus charter, tour and line-run operation, saw a marked decrease in mid-week day trips in January and February, compared to the same time last year. Once the big snow storm hit last month, everything stopped. Most trips were canceled and half of the line-runs halted. Even when the buses finally got out that didn't mean people could get to them.

"We never cancel line-runs because of low ridership," said Benedict of the company's trips to Atlantic City. "But (Presidents Day weekend) there was nobody. The buses were moving by Tuesday but people couldn't get out of their houses."

Major storms cause more economic damage than just canceled trips. They also impact future sales when phones aren't being answered and the maintenance crew is removing snow instead of repairing coaches.

"It disrupts the whole office," said Benedict. "We are in a big selling season and we had to shut-down because nobody could get to work. That's lost opportunity."

At Passaic Valley Coaches in Chatham, N.J., everything was canceled for two or three days, said



David Thomas Tours in Philadelphia didn't cancel its line runs even though most customers couldn't get to its buses.

## Quick Facts

Philadelphia: Snowiest February since 1899, breaking that record of 31.5 inches.

New York City: Presidents Day storm was fourth largest snowstorm in city history. NYC sanitation crews plowed 6,300 miles of city streets and roadways within 24 hours of the storm

Atlantic City International Airport: Received 33.2 inches in February, second snowiest February ever.

General Manager Wayne Braunwarth. "Drivers didn't get paid because they are paid on commission and we had a lot of snow to clean up," he said.

Passaic Valley was able to reschedule many of the charter trips that were canceled but because they'll be in the busy spring season, Braunwarth may not have enough coaches to handle them. To keep his customers, Braunwarth will hire other coaches to help. That means the trips won't be moneymaking ventures.

"It's a service we provide so the customers come back to us.

But...it doesn't cover the work and time we put in. We really pass any money on to anybody we hire."

Canceled school trips are often the most common trips that can't be rescheduled. But the snow's impact on school also causes a ripple effect on the industry.

Schools now have snow days to make up, said Stephen Story, president of James River Bus Lines in Richmond, Va. "This is where it really hurts us," Story said. "At the schools . . . they've canceled their future field trips and that's very unusual."

Richmond received very little snow but lots of freezing sleet and rain. Either way, it was felt at Story's business, he said. James River Bus Lines has a contract with Amtrak for rail transfers. Amtrak trains were canceled when the track switches were frozen.

Once everything was back to normal for a few days, then the flooding began and the trains were called off due to flooded tracks. All in all, 10 Amtrak trips were canceled.

Additionally, for two days, virtually everything was canceled, including corporate trips, airport transfers, ski trips and school field trips. Story estimates 70 percent of that business won't be rescheduled.

But you've got to look for the bright spot, said Story. This year's storm occurred in the middle of a driver training school. Usually they can't find snow to practice driving in. That wasn't a problem this year. "The drivers got some good experience. That was a good thing for us."

## 3 new directors join UMA board

Three new directors have joined the board of the United Motorcoach Association.

Attending their first UMA board meeting since their elections in November were Daryl G. Johnson, co-owner of J & J Charters in Crosby, Texas, and T. Ralph Young, chairman and president of Young Transportation/Young Tours in Asheville, N.C.

Also joining the board for the first time was Robert Foley, chief operating officer of ABC Companies in Faribault, Minn. Foley was elected to a three-year term as the lone coachbuilder representative on the UMA board.

He was selected at a meeting of coachbuilders and coach sales companies attending Motorcoach Expo 2003. He succeeds James P. Bernacchi who became the first coachbuilder representative to sit on UMA's board when he was elected at Motorcoach Expo '97.

Directors who were re-elected in November were Bob Hume of Travel Mates of Virginia in Harrisonburg; Godfrey LeBron of Paradise Trailways in West Hempstead, N.Y.; Joan Libby of Cavalier Coach in Boston, and Tom Ready of Ready Bus Lines in LaCrescent, Minn.

Re-elected board officers were LeBron, who remains board secretary, and Brian Scott of Escot Bus Lines in Largo, Fla., who was re-elected board treasurer.

Two UMA directors who did not seek re-election to the board in November and were honored at Motorcoach Expo were Ian Patton of Star of Indiana in Bloomington and Sandra Allen of Royal Coach Tours in San Jose, Calif.

They and Bernacchi received crystal gifts.

## Axle weight

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

bill thanks to the persistent efforts of Sen. Craig Thomas (R-Wyo.). "Sen. Thomas refused to give up; he kept on it; he dug in his heels," said Norm Littler, senior vice president of government and industry relations at UMA.

Thomas got involved in the issue at the behest of a long-time friend, Donna Zanetti of Zanetti Bus & Fast Express in Rock Spring, Wyo. Mrs. Zanetti and her late husband, Pete, operated Zanetti Bus and were active politically in Wyoming. Sen. Thomas

and Pete Zanetti worked together when both were members of the Wyoming legislature. Zanetti also was a founding director of UMA (previously known as the United Bus Owners of America).

In addition to UMA, whose responsibility in the lobbying effort was to deliver the Senate, others playing critical roles in the effort to win approval of the axle-weight exemption were ABC Companies/Van Hool, Motor Coach Industries and the American Bus Association.

ABC Companies and Van Hool were vital in keeping the Federal Highway Administration neutral

on the issue.

Engineers from Van Hool shared computer models that allowed Federal Highway Administration engineers to essentially run a fully loaded 45-foot motorcoach over every bridge in the federal highway system.

Passing that test was essential and the ABC/Van Hool program made it happen. "They convinced Federal Highway that axle weights were not a problem," said Littler.

MCI hired a lobbyist, at no small expense, who effectively worked both houses of Congress on the issue.

Finally, the American Bus Association successfully worked its responsibility, the House of Representatives.

"This demonstrated that a few people can get things done," said Littler.

The ink from the president's signature had barely dried when Littler wrote a letter to the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance asking it to inform its member jurisdictions of the change to the law.

"As you know, the inability of our industry to get tandem-axle status granted to the rear-axle grouping on motorcoaches has

been a major problem and is the reason behind our push to the change the law," Littler said in a letter to CVSA's top executive, Stephen Campbell.

"Unfortunately, if we have to wait for a memorandum from the Federal Highway Administration to grind through the system it could be many months before those that need to know are made fully aware," wrote Littler. "This is the reason we are asking CVSA to take the lead on notifying the enforcement community."

Still, it may be weeks before word of the exemption reaches every weigh station across the U.S.

## D.C. parking

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the order of magnitude of the increase meted out to buses and coaches that stop in front of a house or other prohibited spot, including a crosswalk, no-parking or loading zone, or near a firehouse or hydrant.

For the past 18 months, countless district officials and businesses have decried the decline in tourism in Washington. Instead of working with groups, like motorcoach operators, who bring thousands of tourists, a majority of the District council decided that what are really need are outrageous new fines. Well guess what folks, there are cheaper, friendlier and much more hospitable places for motorcoach travelers to visit.

The higher fines were adopted by the D.C. city council last fall but couldn't be applied until Congress approved the budget for the district. Once that happened last month, the fines could go into effect, which they did on March 1.

In adopting the higher penalties, the District said its fines had remained constant for the past decade and had fallen behind those of neighboring jurisdictions and "lost much of their deterrent effect."

That was one interpretation of the council action. There are other views. Like those who say the majority of council members are simply attempting to turn law enforcement into a profit center to make up for a budget shortfall.

For years, the motorcoach industry has attempted to work positively with the D.C. mayor and city council to solve the District's parking challenges. All the industry has gotten for its effort have been vague promises and assurances the city was working on a solution. The only visible action has been more hassling and ticketing.

Finally, last fall, at about the time the D.C. council was approving the higher fines, a new public-private partnership, called The District of Columbia Tour Bus Management Initiative, was formed. The partnership contracted with the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center to

conduct a nine-month study of D.C.'s bus parking problems and to develop long-term recommendations for resolving the motorcoach management and parking issues.

The first deliverable from Volpe is to be a set of "Early Implementation Strategies" designed to help cope with this spring's tourist season. That is to be followed by more long-range plans.

As any tour operator who has ever brought a coachload of sightseers to Washington, D.C., knows, finding a legal parking space or loading and unloading zone is Headache No. 1. Until fairly recently there's been no information to give operators guidance. Now, however, the District of Columbia Department of Transportation has dedicated a Web page to assisting operators.

The page lists all current parking and tour bus regulations that would impact drivers operating in the district. Additionally, it lists

points of contact for specific visitor sites so tour bus operators can access additional information regarding those locations.

The info can be accessed by going to <http://ddot.dc.gov/main/shtm>. Click on Information. It's not a lot but it's a start. And, it is part of the Tour Bus Management

Initiative.

As the United Motorcoach Association and others have noted time and again, none of the problems ever get adequately addressed, with most "solutions" coming in the form of stepped up enforcement of parking restrictions, onerous fees and new fines.

There likely are more law enforcement agencies authorized to write parking tickets in the District of Columbia than in any other municipality in the U.S. More than 20 different agencies can write parking citations. That means, of course, that at every turn there is a different badgewearer handing out citations.

To let official Washington know what you think of its policies and practices, contact your Congressman or, better yet, locate a list of District of Columbia council members by going to [www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us](http://www.dccouncil.washington.dc.us). Click on Contact Us.

**None of the problems ever get adequately addressed, with most "solutions" coming in the form of stepped-up enforcement of parking restrictions and new fines.**



## Illinois BBB honors Peoria Charter Coach

Peoria Charter Coach Company has received the Central Illinois Better Business Bureau 2002 Torch Award for business integrity.

The award recognizes high standards of ethical business behavior in relationships with consumers, employees, suppliers, stockholders and the community. Peoria Charter Coach was picked in the category of companies with

fewer than 150 employees.

Two employees, staff accountant Shirley Gergin and reservationist Donna Wasielewski, took the initiative to nominate their company, unbeknownst to Peoria Charter Coach President Bill Winkler. "If your employees believe in you, that says a lot," says Winkler.

The award makes Peoria Charter Coach eligible for the BBB's national Torch Award com-

petition.

Peoria Charter Coach is a 62-year-old company that was founded by Winkler's grandfather, Walt. Today, the firm is owned and managed by Bill Winkler and his wife, Cindy, vice president and secretary. In January, Metro magazine ranked the company No. 43 out of the nation's 50 largest coach operators. It has a fleet of nearly 50 coaches.

## Driver loses CDL, serves probation due to bus crash

The driver of a motorcoach that crashed two years ago on Interstate 95 in Georgia, injuring all 46 passengers, has been prohibited from driving for 10 years and ordered to pay a \$1,000 fine and serve a 10-year probation.

Darol Britt had pleaded no contest in a Georgia Superior Court to reckless driving and causing serious injury by vehicle when the

coach he was driving crashed the first week in April 2001.

The bus Britt was operating was carrying parents, teachers and students from Massey Hill Classical High School in Fayetteville, N.C., to a band competition in Florida. AMA Tours of Fayetteville booked two buses for the trip.

Britt had been charged with reckless driving and also with

being aware that the bus he was operating had unsafe brakes. The day before the crash he had shopped for brake repairs to the bus. Additionally, he was accused of not getting enough sleep before leaving on the trip.

Initially, it was reported that a car swerved in front of the bus, which rolled on its side near the Georgia-Florida state line.

## Illinois law

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Illinois operators also must comply with the law's requirement that motorcoach operators must have a school bus license before they can transport children to and from school-related activities. UMA organized a strategy session last month at Motorcoach Expo 2003 in Orlando to deal with the issue. Operators and representatives of other trade groups attended. Out of the meeting developed

a plan for hiring a lobbyist to work with the Illinois legislators to change the law.

The board of directors of UMA meet the final day of Expo and voted to authorize the association to hire a lobbyist. ABA was invited to participate in the effort and readily agree. UMA and ABA are sharing the cost of the lobbyist.

There was an unsuccessful effort made early this year to postpone the law but it was stymied by key legislators who blocked the bill delaying the law. One impor-

tant representative feared there would be an accident and the General Assembly would look stupid.

To comply with the law, Illinois operators must make sure their drivers have both a CDL and a state school-bus license. To get the school license they must obtain an FBI fingerprinting background check, complete a 6-to-8 hour training course, take an annual 3-hour refresher and get a physical. Plus, there are written and driving tests.

# UMA Motorcoach EXPO 2003 SCRAPBOOK

## Attendance, show exceed expectations

Motorcoach Expo 2003: The trade show that exceeded expectations.

Despite being the biggest event of its kind in the motorcoach industry, many approached this year's Expo with a mixture of anxiety, apprehension and outright angst. No surprise there.

After all, the industry had just finished its fourth straight year of declining new coach sales. Everyone knows operators are being pinched at every turn. The economy continues to sputter, war fills the front pages, and consumer confidence is not the least bit robust.

Then, just days before Expo opened, the worst winter storm in a half-dozen years hit the north-eastern and middle-Atlantic states casting doubt on the ability of many attendees to make it to Orlando.

Clearly, not a great year, a great time or a great environment for a big trade show.

Well, someone forgot to tell the hundreds of operators and vendors who descended on the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando during the third week in February. Motorcoach Expo 2003, as it turns out, was better than almost anyone expected.

One UMA official reported that only 45 operators who were pre-registered failed to show up and they were replaced by walk-ins.

"Despite everything thrown at us—insurance rates, low-balling, the economy, the storm—we're

still here and we're still a strong industry," said Victor Parra, president and CEO of the United Motorcoach Association, sponsor and organizer of Motorcoach Expo.

The trade show's heavy schedule of educational forums and seminars, Parra promised, would help operators be successful. He was right. The sessions offered an abundance of thought-provoking material.

In spite of the misgivings about the show and worries that the big eastern storm would put a dent in attendance, vendors generally appeared pleased with the attendance and the interest attendees exhibited.

"We are totally elated with the quality of customers who're attending," said Michael Rochette, the no-nonsense vice president of marketing and sales administration at Prevost Car. "We were able to sell here, which we haven't been able to do for some years."

Rochette's views were echoed time and again by top executives from virtually every coach manufacturer with buses on the show floor.

"It was a very good show; we wrote some business," said Ron Cornell, president and CEO of ABC Companies.

"It was a good show for us," noted Greg Berg, vice president of sales and marketing at Motor Coach Industries. "We were always really busy."

"It has been excellent," added



Pianist plays and pedals during Expo Show Preview.



Bill Harnett of RBS Systems demonstrates software.



Drawings such as this one at the Big Rig Collision were popular at Expo 2003.



UMA President & CEO Victor Parra.



Ronnie Vance, operations manager of Corporate Transportation n Tours of Phoenix (left) and Juan Lepe of Prevost relax during the opening reception.

Patrick Scully president and CEO of Setra of North America. "We targeted this show for the launch of our new coach (the Setra S417) and we got great attention and response."

Not all vendors shared those sentiments, of course. But it's nearly impossible to determine in

advance what will excite attendees and what they will chose to overlook. Two small vendors, with adjoining booths, offered almost diametrically opposite views. Said one: "We got a lot of pass-by traffic." Said his neighbor: "We didn't get enough traffic."

The top marketing executive

for one supplier of specialty equipment, asked to comment on his experience, said the show was much better than he expected. He then asked that his name or product not be identified "because I don't want to tip off my competitors to how good the show really was," he said.

## EXPO 2003 SCRAPBOOK



PHOTO: EASTERN STATES PHOTOGRAPHY

**The exhibit floor at Expo was busier than many vendors expected.**



PHOTO: EASTERN STATES PHOTOGRAPHY

**Several Expo social events took advantage of Orlando's mild winter weather.**



PHOTO: G. REID HELMS/BSMN



PHOTO: EASTERN STATES PHOTOGRAPHY

**Expo attendees relaxed on the show floor between forays to vendor booths.**

**Football and broadcast legend John Madden was interviewed by Expo attendees via close-circuit satellite TV at MCI's booth on Friday afternoon.**

# Bus security chief promises to work closely with motorcoach industry

The top bus security official at the Transportation Security Administration says his new agency will work closely with the motorcoach industry in developing security measures for the industry.

Highway Passenger Security Branch Chief Dan Commiato delivered that message at the Legislative and Regulatory Update Session at Motorcoach Expo.

"You know the industry," Commiato said. "We need your input; you know what works and what doesn't work."

As the bus security boss for

TSA, Commiato is part of the TSA effort to set national security standards for the over-the-road bus industry.

The goal of the standards, according to Commiato, is to protect passengers and enhance security with minimum impact on the efficiency and convenience of industry.

"It will be a team effort," he said. Commiato is relatively new to TSA, having joined the security agency after spending 20 years with Yellow Transportation, the nation's largest less-than-truck-load freight hauler. He was a senior director of Yellow's e-commerce business and

previously headed its operation in Charlotte, N.C.

In previous meetings with officials from the United Motorcoach Association, Commiato indicated the TSA would be mindful of the coach industry's current economic situation as it develops policies that might impact operators.

A key component of the effort to develop security standards for the coach industry is a study under way by the Volpe National Transportation Systems Center in Boston. Researchers at Volpe are looking at the threat vulnerabilities of the coach industry, as well as security plans, training, readi-

ness and preparedness to deal with a terrorist strike.

Commiato said the industry must assist the TSA and law enforcement agencies in preventing terrorist attacks. "We need everybody to be alert," he said. "If you see something that doesn't seem right, contact local law enforcement."

"Just like when you perform a safety check. If you see something wrong, you let somebody know. You must stay ahead of the curve," he told Expo attendees.

Contact Commiato at (571) 227-1229, or by e-mail at dan.commiato@tsa.dot.gov.



PHOTO: G. REID HELMS/BSMN

**Dan Commiato**

# UMA Motorcoach EXPO 2 • 0 • 0 • 3 SCRAPBOOK

## New at Expo Here's what was creating a buzz

Every year at Motorcoach Expo there are new products and services that seem to create more than their share of buzz among show attendees. This year was no exception.

Despite the economic downturn that has unsettled the industry for most of the past three years, Expo 2003 appeared to see an upswing in new product offerings emanating from suppliers (other than the coach builders. Separate stories on these pages recount what the OEMs were showcasing.)

At booth after booth, there were new and improved products and services to whet the appetite of operators looking for an edge, an upgrade or a change.

Few booths saw more action than that of **ZF Industries**, the German transmission builder that has created a stir with its ASTronic transmission. The interest in the ASTronic was evident

even before Expo officially opened.

On Wednesday, the day prior to Expo's first full day, Motor Coach Industries sponsored a well-attended seminar for operators interested in learning more not only about the ASTronic but also Caterpillar engines and Vansco electronic multiplexing systems.

According to MCI and at least one other coach builder, the ZF ASTronic is gaining fans across North America. So many, in fact, MCI has begun offering the ASTronic as a no-additional-cost option on its E4500 and J4500 coaches.

MCI projects ASTronic-equipped coaches traveling 100,000 miles a year can save up to \$3,296 in fuel, oil and maintenance costs during the first year, and up to \$16,650 over five years compared to coaches with an automatic transmission.

The ASTronic is essentially an

electronically controlled 10-speed mechanical gearbox that offers the operational ease of an automatic. The clutch is controlled internally, so drivers don't have to operate a clutch pedal. According to ZF, the transmission is about 250 pounds lighter than an automatic, uses no filter, holds less oil and can go 185,000 miles between oil changes.

Because sensors pick the best gear, coaches with the transmission also tend to suffer less clutch wear, according to ZF. A control panel nevertheless allows drivers to override the system's gear choice, and self diagnostics help drivers and mechanics respond to malfunctions.

"The ZF ASTronic transmission is smooth, smart, limber and quick," says Greg Berg, MCI vice president of sales and marketing. "It's easy to learn, and operators should enjoy driving it as much as they will appreciate its economy."

Elsewhere on the Expo show floor:

At the **Allison Transmission** booth, representatives were talking about extended transmission oil changes made possible with TranSynd transmission fluid and Allison's new Gold Filter technology.

Allison says its Gold Series filters have a more effective filter medium and a higher filtration capacity. This means filter change intervals can be tripled or quadrupled depending on the application and severity of duty.

For a B500 with a deep dump operating in a severe duty environment, that can mean an oil change interval of 75,000 miles with TranSynd in the transmission. Double that mileage in the general duty environment.

**Amaya Astron Seating** was showcasing its Model 2+1 VIP seats. Available in either a double-seat configuration or single seat, the 2+1 VIP offers luxury seating for executive commuter coaches.

The seat's features include adjustable wing-style headrest, mechanical recline mechanism, upholstery with fabric or leather, tufting for backrest and cushion, standard fold-up food tray, and center console for the two-by-two seating arrangement.

**Beam Industries** was displaying its improved Motor Coach On-Board Vacuum System, including the 24-volt system that directly connects to the coach batteries, eliminating the need for an expensive inverter.

"Eliminating the inverter makes the Beam built-in motor-coach vacuum a superior value



Caterpillar exhibited at Expo for the first time in a half-dozen years.

compared to commercial portable vacuums," said Beam's vice president of sales and marketing Quintin Rottering. "It also gives the added advantage of allowing the operator to clean the coach while in service, eliminating the need to return to the garage."

Beam units mount on any new or used coach. Also, prices have been reduced.

**The Braun Corporation** was offering the UVL2000XT wheelchair lift. The lift features a space-saving design and convenient operation.

**Caterpillar**, the giant construction equipment and diesel engine maker, was exhibiting at Expo for the first time in a half-dozen years. Cat has been receiving encouragement for months from at least two coach builders to get back in the motorcoach sector, which it essentially abandoned in the mid-1990s.

Cat was featured along with ZF and Vansco at a pre-Expo seminar conducted by MCI. And, a Cat engine is standard equipment in the new Blue Bird Express 4500 coach that was unveiled at Expo.

Cat's engine for the coach sector is the C-12, a 12-liter powerplant designed for the trucking market. Cat says the C-12 has the best horsepower-to-weight ratio in the industry. The engine is available in versions ranging from 335 to 430 horsepower and it weighs 2,700 pounds.

Caterpillar also used Expo to introduce the industry to its new emissions technology called ACERT, or Advanced Combustion Emission Reduction Technology. ACERT is designed to meet the latest engine emissions standards without using cooled exhaust gas recirculation technology.

**Dialight** was showing three new products this year: LED backup lamps in two sizes, LED stairwell lamps and an Ultra Thin

High Mount Stop Lamp.

**Firestone**, the coach sector's No. 1 tire supplier, unveiled a new tire — the FS400 — for over-the-road coaches. The FS400 replaces the HP-3000 as an all-position tire. It's specifically designed for intercity coach operations. Its features include:

- Deep original tread depth and cross-rib siping for longer life and high traction capabilities in all weather conditions.
- Four full steel belts and strong ejectors in the grooves for improved durability and retreadability.
- Dense groove and cap/base compounding for improved irregular wear resistance in line-haul operations.

Chip Springer, director of motorcoach maintenance at Mears Transportation Group in Orlando, says Mear's drivers like the FS400 because of its handling and ride characteristics.

**Freedman Seating** introduced its newest seat: The Patriot. This seat for the midsize bus market has an easy-to-fold-down aisle arm, conveniently located recliner buttons and levers, molded contoured back foam with side bolsters and full lumbar support, molded seat cushion with leg support and side bolster, knee-saver back design and powder-coated frames and legs.

**J.J. Keller** introduced safety-training videos developed specifically for motorcoach drivers. The videos address key safety-related and training issues. Also on display was Keller's new Motorcoach Driver's Safety Handbook, a 168-page safety reference designed to enhance and reinforce training.

**Lift-U**, a major long-time supplier of wheelchair lifts to the transit sector, chose Expo to introduce the Model LU-7 Tour Lift.

Designed specifically for the tour, commuter and intercity market, the LU-7 lift is lightweight and requires just 25 percent of one



ZF's ASTronic transmission was the focus of considerable Expo attention.

## EXPO 2003 SCRAPBOOK

### Prevost unveils removable lift, could save operators thousands

baggage compartment. Automatic and manual features make the LU-7 easy to operate and maintain, said Lift-U Service Representative Jon Durham. The LU-7 is available for OEM or retrofit.

**Motorcoach Manager Software Systems** unveiled Motorcoach Shuttle Manager, which combines the latest version of the company's charter module with a new scheduled airport shuttle module. It can be combined with maintenance or tour modules.

**RBS** was showcasing its newest charter and tour management software. GoTour Online is an Internet-enabled, Windows-based tour management system.

**Safety-Step** introduced the Folding Safety Step, which has the same anti-tip, self-leveling features as other models, plus the added convenience of easy storage.

**Transit Sales International** introduced its Shuttle Bus Leasing program, providing used city transit buses for various leasing options.

As the motorcoach operator stood beside the shiny new Prevost H3-45 coach on the floor of Motorcoach Expo 2003, his own words seemed to amaze him:

"This thing will save me \$70,000 a year," he said.

The thing he was referring to was one of the most-talked-about innovations at Motorcoach Expo 2003: A removable wheelchair lift that can be shuffled from coach to coach depending on the need.

The operator said he buys six new coaches annually. So, instead of buying six lift-equipped coaches he can now buy six "lift-ready coaches," which cost substantially less. In other words, he only has to buy one coach with a lift which he can remove and slip it in a coach when a customer needs it.

"For operators, the No. 1 benefit of our removable wheelchair lift is that it is shareable, making any lift-ready Prevost H-Series or XLII



PHOTO: G. REID HELMS/BS&N

premium motorcoach ADA accessible," said Abel Zacharie, Prevost marketing manager. "So, there's no weight penalty when coaches are not required to be ADA complaint."

The total time needed to move the unit from one lift-ready coach to another is 30 minutes. It takes half that time or less to install if the unit is sitting on its portable

legs on the shop floor.

The Ricon-made removable wheelchair lift is self contained in what Prevost calls a cassette. It uses a simple plug-and-play hook-up, which includes its own hydraulic system so there's no time-consuming bleeding when moving it from coach to coach. Four adjustable carrying legs, which are an option, make it easy to install, remove and store.

The removal process requires undoing eight bolts, sliding the lift out on built-in rails, and affixing the support legs. A box-end wrench and a ratchet with an extension are the only tools needed.

The lift-ready option adds \$16,510 to the price of a new Prevost. Buying a complete lift-ready coach with the wheelchair-lift cassette costs \$30,510. The legs are a \$500 option. All prices are in U.S. dollars.

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# UMA Motorcoach EXPO 2003 SCRAPBOOK

## Manufacturers showcase coaches, choices run the price, style gamut

The big excitement at Motorcoach Expo most often is found on the exhibit floor and at the stands operated by the major coach manufacturers. Here's what the coach builders were showcasing this year:

### ABC Companies / Van Hool

One of the special aspects of Expo is to see the innovative graphics and themes the manufacturers develop each year to outfit their coaches. At the ABC/Van Hool stand, the theme this year was "magic," and the livery was striking.

On display were four coaches: A Van Hool C2045L, a Van Hool T2145, an ABC M1030 and an ABC M1035. The flag ship T2145 was equipped with a Cummins 400-horsepower engine and REI's suite of A/V equipment. The C2045L was equipped with a Stewart & Stevenson Bay Lift wheelchair lift, a 370-horsepower Detroit Diesel with Jake Brake, Goodyear tires and REI A/V system.

The M coaches are ABC's mid-size, luxury cutaway buses built on Freightliner chassis. The M1000 series coaches are now standard



ABC Companies displayed two of its M-model cutaway coaches.

PHOTO: G. REID HELMS/BRANIN

with Mercedes Benz engines and Allison 2400 transmissions with parking pawl. The M models feature oversized Excel tinted windows, rear air suspensions, ABS, and optional restroom and wheelchair lift.

Outside, ABC was offering test rides in a prototype of its new M500 coach that it unveiled at Motorcoach Expo. The new cutaway is expected to have a GVWR of 19,500 pounds, versus 26,000 for the M1000 coaches. Like its big brother, the M500 will feature steel cage construction with fiberglass exterior sidewalls, luxury seating, bi-fold electric door, and roof-mounted air conditioning.

### Motor Coach Industries

The largest stand at Expo was that of MCI, the No. 1 supplier of over-the-road buses in North America. A total of seven coaches were on display, including three MCI-Busscar concept vehicles (see story below) and four of MCI's

popular over-the-road models.

Two coaches on display, the E4500 and J4500, have been given what MCI calls mini-makeovers for 2003, including taking out 1,000 pounds of weight and adding multiplex electrical systems.

The weight was removed by modifying the coaches' frames and using far less wiring by adopting multiplexing, which is designed to

increase electrical system reliability while reducing diagnostics and troubleshooting.

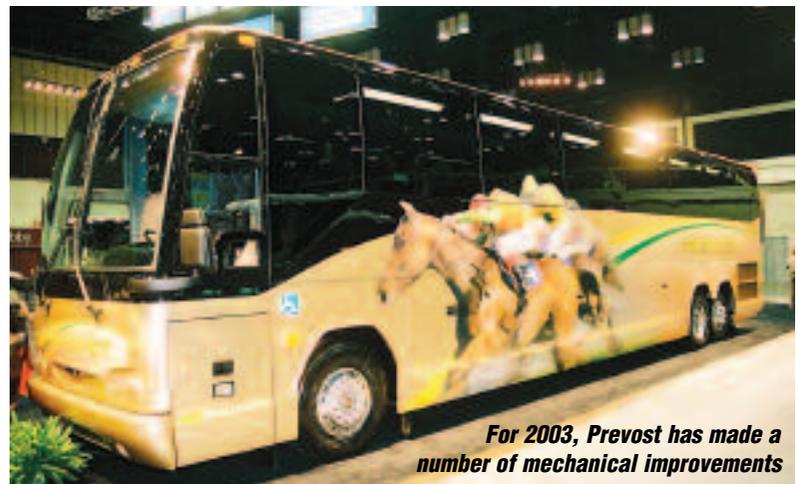
The fuel tanks on the E4500 and J4500 coaches have been increased by 40 gallons, to 222 gallons. Other changes include simplification of the E4500 dash and redesign of the HVAC systems, incorporating a single, high-capacity evaporator.

Also on display at the MCI stand were F3500 and G4500 coaches.

### Prevost Car

Three distinctly different coaches were on display at the Prevost Car stand—an H3-45 model with mid-coach mounted wheelchair lift, a LeMirage XLII and a LSF low-floor commuter bus from Prevost Car's Nova Bus subsidiary.

Prevost has made a number of upgrades to its H3 and LeMirage models for 2003, including increasing the cooling capacity,



For 2003, Prevost has made a number of mechanical improvements

PHOTO: G. REID HELMS/BRANIN

## MCI sizes up future, offers concept buses

Attendees at Motorcoach Expo 2003 got a kick-the-tires glimpse of what Motor Coach Industries may be offering in the way of future product offerings.

Three distinctly different concept vehicles developed jointly by MCI, North America's largest over-the-road coach builder, and Brazilian bus manufacturer Busscar Onibus S.A., occupied a large corner of MCI's stand at Expo. On display was the:

- Micruss, a 22-foot minibus that would be made available in executive or city versions.
- Metruss, a 30-foot midsize vehicle available either as a low-floor city transport or high-floor coach.
- Urbanuss, a 40-foot, low-floor transit vehicle, also available in an articulated configuration.

"We are in the early stages of



MCI and its partner, Busscar Onibus of Brazil, had three concept vehicles on display at Expo.

PHOTO: G. REID HELMS/BRANIN

developing these concept vehicles for the North American market," said Joe Vandiver, vice president of

business development for MCI. "These vehicles will offer the opportunity to broaden our prod-

uct offerings to fill niches in the tour, charter, line-haul and transit markets."

"It's our intention to first gauge the concepts' market potential," said Vandiver. "UMA EXPO provides a great opportunity to hear first hand what operators think about these innovative vehicles."

A year ago, at Motorcoach Expo 2002 in Indianapolis, MCI announced it was developing a partnership with Busscar. Then, this past September, the companies announced plans to develop concept models, focusing on co-manufacturing, shared technology, branding, marketing and parts sourcing.

MCI expects to bring to the joint venture its manufacturing expertise; established parts distribution network; technical product support infrastructure, and its sales and marketing teams.

Busscar is a private, family-owned, vertically integrated manufacturer, producing its own bus bodies, seats, air-conditioning, fiberglass, windows and multiplex systems. Its product line ranges from 12-passenger mini-buses, to low-floor shuttles, to 50-foot, four-axle, double-decker intercity coaches.

## EXPO 2003 SCRAPBOOK

switching to a new starting motor, and adding ZF's ASTronic transmission as an option.

To handle the hotter-running Series 60 Detroit Diesel engines that meet the latest federal emissions standards, Prevost has increased radiator capacity of its coaches 30 percent by adopting high-capacity Valeo Radiators, which are commonly used in the trucking industry.

Other mechanical improvement for this year include adopting a stronger fan clutch; trading the Delco Remy starting motor for a Malco, which Prevost says is more reliable, and simplifying the air conditioner controls.

The engine compartments have been opened up and fins added to compartment doors to improve air circulation around the engine and the compressor for the A/C system. The openness also improves maintainability.

The XLII has added LED lights in the rear of the bus.

#### Setra

A highlight of Expo 2003 was the unveiling of Setra's new S417 coach. The S417 is the culmination of months of development work and the investment of \$15 million by Setra's parent company, DaimlerChrysler.

At a news conference at Expo's headquarters hotel, top executives of Setra outlined long-range plans by DaimlerChrysler to expand its product offerings in the North American market, including adding cutaway, city and school buses, plus additional coach variations. None of this is going to happen very quickly, but customers and competitors can expect to see a full product range from DaimlerChrysler, said Patrick Scully, president of Setra of North American and other Setra executives.

The S417 is the first of the new products to hit the market and it was unveiled for Expo attendees with dramatic music, a falling cur-

tain and plenty of white smoke. The S417 has a distinctive profile, the result of a stylized La Linea band that runs horizontally across the upper side of the coach.

The S417 offers luxury seating, indirect fluorescent lighting, multiplexed electrical system, "Top Air" HVAC system, extensive diagnostics.

Scully says Setra has been very careful about the launch of the S417 "to make sure we get off the ground right."

Part of the launch process was to introduce the coach on a 30-city tour of the U.S. The tour was completed within days of the start of Motorcoach Expo.

Setra expects to see steady growth from its modest U.S. base in the years ahead, climbing to 100 units this year and expanding upward from that.

#### Craftsman LimBusine

New to Expo this year is the LimBusine, a 40-foot coach built on a Freightliner XB rear-engine, rail chassis.

Developed by a company that has specialized in building stretch limousines, JMRL Sales & Service of Ozark, Mo., the LimBusine is designed to offer operators an alternative to traditional mono-coque-constructed coaches.

The body-on-chassis LimBusine is available with standard coach seating for up to 40 passengers or with limo-style seating and amenities that handle 26 or more passengers.

The seated version has a list price of \$175,000, while the limousine version starts at \$10,000 more. With \$17,500 down on a seven-year lease and a 20 percent residual, the LimBusine costs \$2,125 per month, says Marc Haswell, president of JMRL Sales & Service.

The LimBusine has a 275-horsepower Cummins ISB engine, Allison B300 transmission, two Coleman roof mounted A/C units, Meritor WABCO four-channel



PHOTO: G. REID HELMS/BS&amp;N

## Blue Bird unveils express coach

A brand new motorcoach designed to carve out new niches for Blue Bird Corporation of Ft. Valley, Ga., was introduced at Motorcoach Expo 2003.

The Blue Bird Express 4500 is being touted as a reliable, versatile, high-capacity coach built of premium components, making it an optimal choice for day charters, contractors and universities.

"The coach industry has met its match with Blue Bird's all-new Express 4500," says Blue Bird commercial bus and coach product sales manager Bill Fay. "We have satisfied the need for a reliable, quality product at a price that's affordable."

Price appears to be a major competitive thrust for the Express 4500. Blue Bird says its new model offers the same level of quality and components found

in more expensive commuter coaches but with a starting price of under \$300,000, including a two-year, 150,000-mile, bumper-to-bumper warranty.

Blue Bird also notes that its new 45-foot coach is built to 12-year Altoona standards, and features a distinctly European look.

The Express 4500 has an integrated body and chassis, using all stainless steel, and seats up to 55 passengers.

Standard power for the Express 4500 is a Caterpillar C-12, 410-horsepower engine and it is cooled by a Carrier A/C 353 roof-mounted air conditioner using an 05G compressor.

The bus also uses air disc brakes and has insulated Excel windows.

Passenger comfort is enhanced with a Meritor-designed independ-

ent front suspension, American Seating highback recliners, personal reading lights and overhead adjustable A/C-heating units.

Serviceability has been addressed by using a 24-volt electrical system with I/O Controls multiplex electrical wiring. A pantographic door to the engine compartment puts important functions right at the technician's fingertips.

Options for the Express 4500 include a 430-horsepower Detroit Diesel Series 60 engine, destination sign, Ricon wheelchair lift, Webasto auxiliary heater, National Seating and aluminum wheels.

The Express 4500 is sold factory direct. Further information can be founded at [www.bluebird.com](http://www.bluebird.com).

ABS, air brakes, air rear suspension and Leece Neville 200-amp alternator.

#### Glaval Bus

Glaval manufactures a half-dozen models of cutaway buses, including the new Concorde XLT.

The Concorde is one of Glaval's largest models, with seating for up to 46 passengers on a 276-inch wheelbase. The XLT is an enhanced model that includes ride improvements, sound abatement packages, 2.5-inch tires and wheels, and has a restroom as an option.

The coach comes standard with a Caterpillar engine (Mercedes Benz is optional), Allison 2400



**The LimBusine is a new entry.**

PHOTO: G. REID HELMS/BS&amp;N

transmission, Carrier or Trans/Air air conditioning, PennTex 200-amp alternator, galvanized body frame and Altro flooring.

Options for the XLT include an all-new Suttrak 160,000-BTU rooftop electronic HVAC system, which includes baseboard heating.



PHOTO: G. REID HELMS/BS&amp;N

**Setra's S417 unveiling included smoke to add drama to the event.**



**Marcia Fields Milton of First Priority Tours in District Heights, Md., received her Vision Award from past winner Jeff Polzien.**

## Nine coach companies are selected winners of UMA Vision Awards

The fourth annual United Motorcoach Association Vision Awards saw single winners in seven categories and one category where there were two winners.

The awards were given at a special ceremony during Expo 2003 and presented by Jeff Polzien, whose company, Red Carpet Charters of Oklahoma City, has won three Vision Awards.

The Vision Awards honor companies that demonstrate excellence in operations, service, government relations, marketing, product development, innovation, social responsibility, and safety. The 2003 winners:

**Category: Becomes a solution for social issues**

Description: This award acknowledges companies for being responsible corporate citizens who are proactive in addressing social issues.

Winner: First Priority Tours, Marcia Fields Milton of District

Heights, Md.

Actions to achieve Vision: In business since July 1999, First Priority Tours has made social responsibility its first priority.

**Category: Become the preferred form of travel for enhancing lifestyles**

Description: This award recognizes operators who provide special transportation services.

Winner: Red Arrow Express, Scott James of Edmonton, Alberta.

Actions to achieve Vision: A major focus of its business is attracting and retaining the corporate traveler.

**Category: Forms an effective partnership with government**

Description: This award recognizes companies that have built mutually beneficial working relationships with government.

Winner: J&M Keleen Trans-

portation, James C. Keleen of Long Branch, N.J.

Actions taken to achieve Vision: Mr. Keleen's company was instrumental assisting with Ground Zero transportation efforts after September 11.

**Category: Provides superior service and experiences for customers**

Description: This award recognizes operators that have made a company-wide commitment to customer service.

Winner: Sun Diego Charter Company, Rich Illes of San Diego.

Actions to achieve Vision: Sun Diego Charter Company prides itself on attention to detail. The commitment to their customers is obvious in the letters they receive from clients. Many clients praise their driver's courtesy, efficiency and sense of humor. Additionally, many of their sales staff have roots in the hospitality industry, many as concierge and guest liaison staff. This background gives the sales staff the ability to meet and exceed the needs of Sun Diego Charter's clients. The most prominent aspect of its training are the "feedback boards" in the office. Three large bulletin boards are labeled as "Strike Outs," "Base Hits" and "Home Runs." Feedback is posted up and discussed by the entire team - either to congratulate the "Home Runs" or find solutions to the "Strike Outs."

**Category: Increase demand from untapped markets**

Description: This award recognizes creative marketing strategies designed to attract new motorcoach riders.

Winner: Anderson Coach & Travel, Doug Anderson of Greenville, Pa.

Actions to achieve Vision: Anderson Coach and Travel and ExecConnect America began offering executive bus service between Pittsburgh and Cleveland in the summer of 2002. The goal of this new service was to create a mode of transportation that is relaxing and as accommodating as possible.

**Category: Creatively markets the travel experience as entertainment**

Description: This award recognizes companies that promote the entertainment reach of the motorcoach industry.

Winner: Northwest Iowa Transportation, Loren Jones of Fort Dodge, Iowa

Actions to achieve Vision: The company brands its tours, for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19 ▶



**Frank Di Giacomo of Metro magazine presents the operator of the year award to Mike (center) and Rick Hillard of Tri-State Tours in Galena, Ill.**

## Special awards given at Expo, Marty Bowman is safety leader

Three special awards were given at Motorcoach Expo: BUSRide magazine presented its Motorcoach Industry Achievement Award, The Daecher Consulting Group and the United Motorcoach Association presented the Safety Leader of the Year Award, and Metro magazine gave its 12th annual Operator of the Year Award.

Winning the second annual Safety Leader of the Year Award was Marty Bowman, operations manager and supervisor of transportation at New World Tours in Lorton, Va.

Marty Bowman's story is an inspired one. He started his motorcoach industry career 15 years ago as a driver but after contracting a disease that attacked his vocal chords he switched to an office job, eventually becoming New World Tours' top safety, operations and training executive.

Besides leading New World

Tours to the highest levels of regulatory compliance, Bowman is described as having a unique capacity to inspire. He learned to speak again, and he regularly volunteers to show others how to overcome disabilities.

BUSRide Editor and Publisher Steve Cain awarded that magazine's Industry Achievement Award to Dave Brown and Holiday Tours of Randalman, N.C. Brown is a graduate of the University of North Carolina and holds an MBA from Duke University. He has been active in the North Carolina Motorcoach Association and is vice chairman of UMA.

Metro's Publisher Frank Di Giacomo presented his magazine's Operator of the Year Award to Tri-State Tours and River Trails Transit Lines of Galena, Ill., and their principals, Mike Hillard and Rick Hillard. The Hillards are cousins and Rick Hillard is chairman of UMA.



**Dave Brown (above) received BUSRide's Industry Achievement Award.**



**Christopher Crean of Peter Pan Bus Lines (left) presents the Safety Leader of the Year Award to Marty Bowman.**

## Vision awards

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 18

example, offering the AdventureQuest that appeals to outdoor and sport enthusiasts of all ages, and featuring professional sporting events such as NASCAR and outdoor experiences.

### Category: Creates new products and services based on customer preferences

Description: This award recognizes companies that uniquely tailor their services to satisfy a customer's unique tastes and demand for specially designed motorcoach services.

Winner: Anderson Coach & Tours, Doug Anderson of Greenville, Pa.

Actions to achieve Vision: This is award also honors the ExecConnect service.

Second winner: Bailey Coach, John W. Bailey of York, Pa.

Actions to achieve Vision: The company created its own database reservations and confirmations system, reducing the time spent by customers waiting for a quote. The time has been reduced from 10 minutes to 2 minutes to quote a normal trip. Confirmations can be made in 60 seconds via fax or e-mail.

### Category: Committed to acting on and achieving the Vision

Description: This final award recognizes the company that embodies the complete spirit of the Vision Awards program.

Winner: Greene Coach Company Inc., Russell Ooten of Greenville, Tenn.

Actions to achieve the Vision: The company provides charters and pre-formed tours but also packages tours to fit the needs of customers. It has a staff that has access to many resources and the quality of service makes for fun-filled tours.

The judges of this year's Vision Awards were:

Ron Eyre, Eyre Bus Lines and past Vision Award recipient; Pat Ziska, vice president of sales and marketing, Motor Coach Industries; Rick Hillard, Tri State Travel and past Vision Award Recipient; Carmen Daecher, safety consultant to the motorcoach industry; Ray Mundy, executive director of the Airport Ground Transportation Association; Steve Klika, executive director of the International Motorcoach Group; and Brenda Borwege, vice president of marketing for ABC Companies.



**Bruce Matthews (at podium) talks about his purchase of 12 Setras as Setra President Patrick Scully (right) and family and colleagues look on.**

## Upstate Tours orders 12 Setra S417s

Soon after the Setra S417 motorcoach was officially unveiled at Motorcoach Expo 2003, Upstate Tours of Saratoga Springs, N.Y., signed a purchase agreement for 12 of the luxury motorcoaches from Setra of North America. The new Setras will be delivered later this year and replace older vehicles in the company fleet. They will be equipped with 430-horsepower Detroit Diesel engines, Allison B500 transmissions with retarders, Alcoa aluminum wheels and Firestone tires.

Upstate Tours operates a fleet of 30 coaches for charters, tours and scheduled commuter service. "Over the years, to supply exceptional quality and service to our customers and be an industry leader, we make purchases to set the trend," said Bruce Matthews, chairman of Upstate Tours. "We've been able to differentiate ourselves from other operators by offering coaches with a high level of quality, safety and customer appeal. We're looking forward to their positive reaction to the S417."

Matthews Group, which purchased Upstate Tours in 1980, also owns Matthews Bus Sales of Ballston Spa, N.Y.; Matthews Distributor Services of Greensboro, N.C.; Matthews Specialty Vehicles of High Point, N.C.; and Rifled Air Conditioning Systems of Archdale, N.C.



## E&S Parking & Transportation Pittsburgh

E&S Parking and Transportation has taken delivery of five 2003 Blue Bird Xcel 102 low-floor shuttles. The 29-foot Xcel 102 buses are equipped with Cummins ISC engines, Allison B300 World transmissions, Hendrickson front and rear air-ride suspensions, Meritor axles and brakes, and Carrier RM-35 deck-mounted air conditioning systems. The buses are configured with two-step entrance stepwells, front and center air-powered doors, Freedman perimeter seating and inside, center luggage racks. E&S Parking and Transportation is located at the Greater Pittsburgh International Airport. The company provides continuous shuttle service.

## GEORGE Falls Church, Va.

Falls Church, Va., has a new transit system named GEORGE after the nation's Founding Father. The agency is using four newly delivered Thomas Dennis SLF 200 buses. Operated by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the new SLF 200s transport passengers to and from WMATA's Metrorail stations in the east and west corridors of Falls Church. The 30-foot buses are equipped with Cummins ISB engines and Allison 2000 transmissions. Thomas Dennis, maker of the SLF 200, is part of DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses.

## NEW COACH DELIVERIES

### Excursions

#### Ft. Wayne, Ind.

Excursions Inc., a three-year-old charter company, has taken delivery of the first Prevost LeMirage XLII coach equipped with a ZF ASTronic transmission. The 45-foot LeMirage is outfitted with a Detroit Diesel Series 60 engine, Prevost seats, Carrier A/C, and REI A/V system with VCR and DVD. The driver's seat is an Isringhausen. Excursions is owned by company President Thomas Bazow and Vice President Patrick O'Brian. The company serves customers throughout northern and central Indiana with a fleet of four XLIIIs.



#### Grand Junction Transit Grand Junction, Colo.

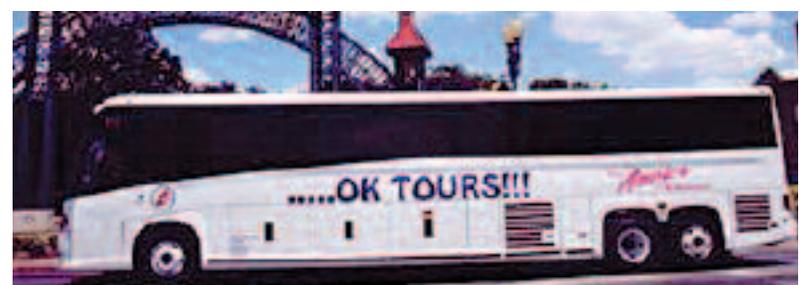
Two new Thomas Dennis SLF 200 buses are providing fixed-route transit services in Grand Junction, Colo. Grand Valley Transit was established two years ago and provides services to the area's schools, satellite communities and city residents. The new, 30-foot SLFs are equipped with Cummins ISB engines, Allison 2000 transmissions with Telma retarders, Thermo King HVAC system, Proheat auxiliary heaters, Freedman seating and Ricon slideout power ramps. The SLF's also include low-floor kneeling and 42-inch-wide front and rear doors.



#### Lakefront Lines Cleveland

Lakefront Lines, the largest privately-owned motorcoach operator serving Ohio, Michigan, Indiana and Kentucky, has taken delivery of 20 J4500 model MCI's equipped with ZF-ASTronic transmissions. The new coaches also are equipped with Detroit Diesel Series 60 engines, Carrier A/C, American Seating and REI A/V systems with VCRs, CDs and three monitors.

Cleveland-based Lakefront Lines operates a fleet of 115 over-the-road coaches. Tom Goebel, president of Lakefront Lines, said his company did its homework before picking the ZF transmissions. "We talked to people who were operating them in the trucking industry and we evaluated a test vehicle. So far we're very satisfied," he said.



#### OK Tours San Antonio

OK Tours, which specializes in providing charters and package tours into Mexico, has taken delivery of its third G4500 MCI. The latest addition is equipped with a Detroit Diesel Series 60 engine, Allison B500 transmission with retarder, Amaya-Astron Seating, Carrier HVAC, and REI A/V system with six monitors. OK Tours is an 11-year-old company that operates a fleet of MCIs and Dinas. Ana Sarmiento is president.

**INDUSTRY NEWS**

**Former VP of N. J. Transit is indicted for fraud**

TRENTON, N.J. — State Attorney General David Samson reported that Maureen A. Milan, a former vice president of New Jersey Transit, has been indicted for demanding and receiving \$17,000 in gifts and gratuities from vendors under contract to do business with the transit agency.

Her indictment followed a months-long public corruption investigation conducted by the Office of Government Integrity and the Division of Criminal Justice of the state Attorney General's Office.

Peter C. Harvey, first assistant attorney general and director of the division of criminal justice, and Edward M. Neafsey, director of the office of government integrity, said the state grand jury returned a 14-count indictment charging Milan, 53, of Westfield in Union County, with official misconduct, unlawful benefits for official behavior and receipt of illegal gratuities by a state employee.

Milan was the former vice president and general manager of New Jersey Transit's bus and light rail operations, and a well-known fig-

ure throughout the transit and commercial bus industry.

Between February 1996 and July 2002, Milan is accused of soliciting and accepting meals, hotel stays and other perks, including tickets to Broadway shows, a Madonna concert and the World Series. According to the indictment, during the seven years she was extorting gifts she maintained influence over the awarding of contracts to vendors and companies seeking to conduct business with NJ Transit. Some of the specific kickbacks include:

- The cost of accommodations at the Washington D.C. Willard Inter-Continental Hotel valued at \$878.93.
- Two tickets to Game Two of the 2000 World Series at Yankee Stadium valued at \$320.
- Two tickets to Game Seven of the 2000 World Series at Yankee Stadium valued at \$320.
- Dinner for two at Bellagio Restaurant in Las Vegas valued at \$464.14.

Hotel accommodations, food and beverage charges, laundry and pressing charges, hairdresser and health club charges, concierge

charges, transportation charges and telephone, gratuity and service charges at the Grosvenor House Hotel in London, England, valued at \$2,763.19.

- Four tickets to the Broadway production of The Producers valued at \$1,600.
- One ticket to the Broadway production of The Producers valued at \$390.
- Two tickets to a Madonna concert at Madison Square Garden valued at \$1,100.
- Two tickets to a Sade concert at the Lincoln Center valued at \$900.
- Beauty services at Ettore Salon valued at \$459.
- Two tickets to a 2001 Yankee play-off baseball game valued at \$1,100.
- Dinner at the Everest Restaurant in Chicago, valued at \$290.33.

The indictment also charges that on at least 126 additional and separate occasions, Milan accepted gifts in the form of meals and other services valued under \$200 each from at least 25 different agents employed by contract vendors.

**Obituaries**

**Rev. Ernest Anderson of Victory Travel**

The Rev. Ernest M. Anderson, who with his wife, Fannie, owned and operated Victory Travel of Glen Allen, Va., died last month. He was 52. Rev. and Mrs. Anderson founded their tour and charter business seven years ago, which primarily serves the Washington, D.C., and Williamsburg markets. Mrs. Anderson continues to operate the business.

"We mourn the loss of a fellow driver, a fellow owner, a business partner and many other descriptions that could fit Ernest Anderson," said his friend David Smith, director of marketing at Oleta Coach Lines of Williamsburg.

Rev. Anderson, an Army veteran, is survived by his widow, Fannie; his father, William, and two children.

**Rick McCarthy of Green Bus Lines**

Rick McCarthy, the senior purchasing manager of Green Bus Lines and its sister companies in Jamaica, N.Y., died Feb. 24, in Southside Hospital in Bayshore, Long Island. He was 59.

Mr. McCarthy had served Green Bus Lines and its affiliates, Command Bus, Triboro Coach, Jamaica Bus and Varsity Bus, since 1989. "Rick was a true leader in his field and a passionate advocate for public transportation," said his colleague at Green Bus, Anthony Mule. Green Bus is the 10th largest private operator.

Mr. McCarthy, an Air Force veteran, is survived by his widow, P. Gayle of the home in Bayport, N.Y.; a daughter, Meagan Janine; two stepsons, George and Christian Damm, and a brother, Robert.

A memorial has been established at Our Savior New American School, 140 Marktree Rd., Centereach, N.Y. 11720.

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## People In The News



**Dann Wiltgen**

**Dann Wiltgen**, a veteran bus sales executive, has been named national director of U.S. coach sales by Prevest Car Inc. In promoting Wiltgen, Prevest is filling a position that has been vacant for four years. Wiltgen joined Prevest five years ago and most recently held the position of national sales manager for the pre-owned coach division. He joined the coach industry almost 15 years ago with Eagle.

The White House announced that President Bush intends to nominate **Annette Sandberg** to be administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Since December, Sandberg has been acting administrator.

**Doug Anderson**, president of

Anderson Coach and Travel in Greenville, Pa., has been named chairman of the American Bus Association Marketplace 2004, which will be Jan. 16-21, in New York City.

**Anne Saliers** has joined American Seating as new business market manager. She will be responsible for research and development of new business opportunities for the company's three divisions. She previously was a product manager for Steelcase, the office furniture maker. A graduate of Iowa State University, she also holds an MBA from the University of Connecticut.

The American Highway Users Alliance has named **Diane Steed** as the organization's new president and CEO. Steed, who served as the longest-tenured administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, will lead the Highway Users during this year's reauthorization of the federal highway program.

## Escot Bus Lines in Florida opens Orlando office, promotes two

Escot Bus Lines of Largo, Fla., which is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year, has promoted two employees and announced the opening of a branch office in Orlando.

Brian Scott, vice president of Escot, said company employee Beau Langford has been promoted to manager of the new Orlando office.

Scott also announced the promotion of Martin Andujar to an office position with dispatch and supervisory responsibilities.

Pamela Scott, operations/general manager of Escot Lines, has been elected to a three-year term on the board of the Pinellas County (Fla.) Chamber of Commerce.

Escot Bus Lines was founded in 1983 by Lewis and Diane Scott, parents of Brian and Pam Scott. The company operates a fleet of more than 25 coaches.

## Setra strengthens sales team

Setra of North America Inc. has named a new top sales executive and hired a former long-time MCI executive to manage mid-western sales. Robert Jones was promoted to vice president of sales and marketing for Setra, and Carl Ekberg was hired as Midwest regional sales manager.

In his new position, Jones will oversee Setra's sales and marketing activities in the United States and Canada, including management of sales managers and sales staff. Previously, he was the sales manager in charge of new and pre-owned Setra coach sales in nine states.

Jones has more than 13 years of industry experience, including working for Coach Finance Company and Motor Coach Industries. Jones, who operated a bus company before joining Setra, has a bachelor's degree in finance from Florida State University in Tallahassee.

Ekberg is a veteran with nearly 40 years in the industry. Based in Palatine, Ill., he will oversee all new and pre-owned coach sales in Illinois, Wisconsin, Michigan,



**Robert Jones**

Minnesota, Kansas, Iowa, Mississippi, Indiana and Kentucky.

Ekberg worked 27 years for Motor Coach Industries, most recently based in California as western regional vice president. He served more than 11 years on the board of the California Bus Association. He holds a bachelor of business administration degree in marketing and advertising from Pace University in Pleasantville, N.Y.

"Adding Robert to our management team will continue our efforts of growing our business with top-caliber employees," said Patrick Scully, president and CEO of Setra of North America. "Further, we are excited about adding Carl to our team. His years of management experience and market knowledge will be key in growing our Midwest territory."

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### Safety and Courtesy Video

This video, produced by UMA, welcomes your passengers aboard your coach in a professional way. The video gives an excellent introduction to the motorcoach and informs passengers of the safety guidelines that should be followed.

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### Guide to Congress

A handy booklet directory listing all of the members of Congress.

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Call 1-800-424-8262 to see if you are eligible for any new member discount offers. You can also visit our web site [www.uma.org](http://www.uma.org) for additional membership information.

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**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

**March 2003**

19 California Bus Assn.: General Membership Meeting, Sacramento. Info: www.cbabus.com.

21-23 Family Motor Coach Assn.: Convention, Ponomo, Calif. Info: (800) 543-3622 or www.fmca.com.

26 South Jersey Transportation Authority. Driver Safety Training Course on inclement weather driving, fatigue, game plans for aging and stress. Info: (609) 345-5572, Ext. 423 or (888) 5NJ-SJTA Ext. 423.

26-30 National Tour Assn.: Tour Operator Spring Meet, Victoria, B.C. Info: (800) 682-8886. E-mail: questions@ntastaff.com, or go to www.ntaonline.com.

**APRIL 2003**

1-2 Pennsylvania Bus Assn.: Marketplace 2003, York Expo Center, York, Pa. Info: (717) 236-9042 E-mail: pba@pabus.org.

11-13 Bus Conversions Convention '03, Riverside Resort, Laughlin, Nev.

**MAY 2003**

4-8 UITP: World Congress/Mobility & City Transportation Exhibition, Madrid, Spain. Info: +32 3 663 66 56. E-mail: events@uitp.com, or go to www.uitp.com.

17-21 Travel Industry Assoc. of America: International Pow Wow, Cervantes Convention Center, St. Louis, Mo. Info: (202) 408-8422 or go to www.tia.org.

19-23 Community Transportation: Expo 2003, Pennsylvania Convention Center, Philadelphia, Pa.

30-June 1 MCI Bus Bash 2003, Louisville, Ky. Headquarters hotel: Holiday Inn Clarksville (Ind.). Info: www.bus-mag.com, click on Bus Bash link. (815) 946-2341.

**JUNE 2003**

14-18 Pennsylvania Bus Assn.: Annual Meeting, Wisp Mountain Hotel, McHenry, Pa.

19 California Bus Assn.: General Membership Meeting, Ontario, Calif. Info: www.cbabus.com.

21-24 National Motorcoach Network: 20th anniversary Network Marketing Seminar & Invitational 100, Radisson Hotel, Branson, Mo. (888) 733-5287.

22-24 Greyhound Birthplace Bus Bash 2003, Hibbing, Minn. Info will be available at: Info: www.bus-mag.com, click on Bus Bash link., or at (815) 946-2341.

**JULY 2003**

18-20 Family Motor Coach Assn.: Convention, Buffalo, N.Y. Info: (800) 543-3622 or go to www.fmca.com.

**SEPTEMBER 2003**

5-9 Virginia Motorcoach Assn.:

Annual Convention, Dover, Del. Info: (434) 376-1150, or go to www.vamotorcoach.com.

10 California Bus Assn: General Membership Meeting, LTBA, Ca. Info: www.cabus.com.

**OCTOBER 2003**

12-16 APTA: Annual Meeting, Salt Lake City, Utah. Info: (202) 496-4800, or go to www.apta.com.

17-22 Busworld, Kortrijk, Belgium. E-mail: info@busworld.org

26-28 BusCon, Las Vegas. Info: (310) 533-2556. info@bobitexpos.com.

**NOVEMBER 2003**

1-5 California Bus Assn.: Convention & Trade Show, location TBA. Info: www.cbabus.com

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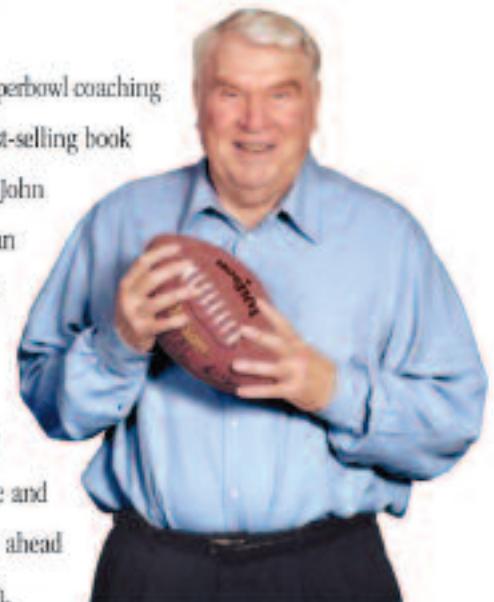


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