

Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

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THE NEWS RESOURCE FOR THE BUS AND MOTORCOACH INDUSTRY

War severely tests motorcoach industry

The war with Iraq is exacting a disastrous toll on the North American motorcoach industry.

"This is the most severe crisis this industry has ever faced," said one industry executive. "Many operators I've spoken with aren't sure they're going to make it."

Within hours of the firing of the first cruise missile and the beginning of the long, mechanized march toward Baghdad, phones

began ringing in the offices of motorcoach operators across the U.S. The calls were from groups canceling charters or seeking postponements. Most were cancellations.

One operator said he hated picking up the phone for several days after the war began because he knew what the call would be. Another operator said he had 50 days worth of charter business can-

celled in one day. A small operator (three coaches) in a middle Atlantic state said she lost \$20,000 worth of business in a week.

The situation was compounded when foreign tourists canceled in droves and schools and other organizations quickly adopted restrictive travel policies.

Typical was a school district in Virginia that said as long as the

national Code Orange security alert was in effect it was limiting field and athletic trips and after-school activities.

For example, local field trips would be permitted with restrictions. The restrictions: No trips would be permitted that involved travel through or to any areas under a Code Red alert; travel to a military installation; travel across a

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Lobbying battle moves to states; involvement key

The political battle lines have been drawn.

This time, however, they're not under the Capitol Dome in Washington, D.C.

Instead, our industry's critical legislative and regulatory battles are taking place in your backyard...in city and town halls and in state houses.

News Analysis

In recent months, much of the legislative and regulatory efforts of the United Motorcoach Association and other industry groups have expanded beyond the nation's capital to places like Springfield, Ill., Trenton, N.J., Harrisburg, Pa., Raleigh, N.C., and even the city council of the District of Columbia, where a \$500 fine was adopted for illegally parked buses.

As deficits in city and state budgets grow, the motorcoach industry has become a prime target for state legislatures and city councils seeking new ways to raise revenue.

In states like Minnesota and Ohio, increases in fuel taxes were

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On hold: ExecConnect suspends service

One of the most closely watched and potentially exciting experiments in the U.S. motorcoach industry has been put on hold.

ExecConnect America, a luxury bus service catering primarily to business executives traveling between Cleveland and Pittsburgh, has temporarily suspended service.

Doug Anderson, president of Anderson Coach and Tours of Greenville, Pa., the operating partner in ExecConnect, con-

firmed the shutdown in a telephone conversation last week. "We've put everything on hold," he said. (The shutdown occurred before the start of the war with Iraq.)

ExecConnect America was launched last July amid more fanfare and publicity than any motorcoach industry start-up in history. Television stations in both Pittsburgh and Cleveland announced the service, and newspapers ranging from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* to *The New York*

Times reported on it. There even was an item with a photo in *Time* magazine and two stories in *USA Today*.

Despite the positive publicity and ExecConnect's own marketing efforts, the service was unable to attract enough riders to sustain the route. "We had a core group of travelers who just loved the service we gave," said Anderson. But that core never grew to a break-even point.

ExecConnect is largely pat-

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...In Pennsylvania, a coalition is being formed to fight stepped up enforcement of the state franchise tax. Other related industries want to help.

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Here Today...

Here Tomorrow

The best engineering. The best designers. The best customer support.

Excellence doesn't come without a cost. And customer commitment doesn't count for much if the resources aren't there to make it happen. As the largest commercial vehicle maker in the world, DaimlerChrysler's commitment to the North American bus industry is backed by unmatched financial resources dedicated to one goal — providing you with the best products and service you'll find anywhere. To find out how to put the power of DaimlerChrysler behind your business, call us to order the free information kit, "Doing Business with DaimlerChrysler Buses." Inside you'll find more on our North American bus brands and how we're working harder than ever to ensure your success.

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Pacific Coast Bus, Peninsula Charter to merge in June

Two northern California motorcoach companies that have worked closely for nearly a dozen years, Pacific Coast Bus Service of San Francisco and Peninsula Charter Lines of East Palo Alto, have agreed to merge this summer.

From all indications, the deal is a good fit.

Mike Waters, president of Pacific Coast, said the merger will combine two companies that are similar in size—both have 11-coach fleets, and help the companies and their owners achieve business and personal goals.

“We’re excited about this,” added Mike Demeter, president of Peninsula Charter, which was purchased by his father in 1942.

Waters’ firm, which celebrated its 16th anniversary last month, has moved four times since its founding. “The problem in the Bay area is the high cost of property,” he said. Consolidating most operations at Peninsula Charter’s location in East Palo Alto will mean long-term stability.

Pacific Coast’s operation in South San Francisco will be converted to a bus storage-operations yard and driver facility.

The merger also will help Pacific Coast expand its outside



bus maintenance services, which have become a company specialty. Pacific Coast recently began maintaining shuttle buses that operate on the campus of Stanford University. Having a location in East Palo Alto, three miles from the campus, will make that business far more convenient.

Another key aspect of the deal is a desire by Mike Demeter, owner of Peninsula Charter, to back away from the bus operation and focus more attention on his real estate business. Demeter will continue to own the real estate for the combined location in East Palo Alto.

“Mike (Demeter) and I have known each other for 25 years and worked closely and well for years,” said Waters, who also is president of the California Bus Association. Demeter is a former president of the CBA.

While Pacific Coast Bus Service was established in the late 1980s, Peninsula Charter traces its roots back 97 years, to 1906, when it was

founded as a street car line. At one point, the company was owned by the Southern Pacific Railroad.

In the early 1930s, Peninsula converted to a bus service when the street car tracks were removed, operating five transit lines in Palo Alto and offering occasional charter service. It continued its transit operations until 1972 when it was condemned and forced out of the transit business. One of Peninsula’s prize possessions is a 1924 Faegol Safety Coach, the first bus to operate on the streets of Palo Alto.

From 1929 to 1978, the Demeter family also owned a taxi company in Palo Alto. When it discontinued transit service, Peninsula became a charter operator exclusively. Two of the company’s high visibility charter clients are Stanford University and the National Football League.

Following the merger, the two companies will retain their separate identities — for the foreseeable future.

Operators in heartland appear to suffer less, but work aggressively

By Karen Crabtree

Joann Milner in Topeka, Kan., hadn’t had to advertise her charter business in years, but this year she paid for spots in the local newspaper.

Chuck Hill in St. Joseph, Mo., typically has relied on small Yellow Pages ads to promote his charter, airport and shuttle business. In the past year he has increased to half-page ads, and spread the advertising to every small town telephone book he could find.

For these and other tour and charter motorcoach operators across America’s heartland, business has been rolling steadily along for most of the past year, compared to the dismal bookings that followed September 11.

But it’s come with a lot of hard work — think midwestern work ethic; altered business strategies, and aggressive marketing. All while facing timid ridership, an increase in cancellations and spiraling costs.

Jeff Polzien, president of Red Carpet Charters in Oklahoma City, reports his firm had its best year ever in 2002, thanks largely to strong selling and a regional economy that is stronger than most.

“The Oklahoma economy is not as bad as many,” says Polzien. “We don’t have the peaks and valleys. We’re not heavily high tech. We don’t depend on foreign tourists. We haven’t been hit as hard.”

After 9/11, Polzien says, “our business fell off 25 percent. We moped around for a couple of months but then decided we’re going out and get some business,” he said. “In Oklahoma, we had an attitude change.”

Direct and aggressive selling did the trick, and it was successful despite strong and new competitors.

Jeff Arnsdorf, vice president of Village Tours in Wichita, Kan., tripled his advertising budget this

year. He and his staff are marketing more creatively, he said. “I see us working a lot harder just to stay flat with last year.”

Arnsdorf is no longer relying on catalogs to sell his tours; he’s sending out special invitations for trips. He’s also added the cruise-and-coach concept, which brought 13 trips to Galveston and Houston, Texas, and New Orleans where Kansas folk can board a cruise ship. He hopes to double that number next year.

But the added business is not 100-percent growth for his 17-coach charter, tour and travel business because the traditional

bread-and-butter trips to New York and Washington, D.C., aren’t selling. “We’ve come up with these things and we’ve had to work real hard on it. The trips that have always gone have had to cancel.”

Milner’s business, King of the Road Inc. in Topeka, suffered \$100,000 worth of cancellations after September 11. Since then, she’s watched her insurance rates triple.

“It was horrible for a year,” she said of her seven-motorcoach charter operation. “It was a long, hard struggle.” But this year’s bookings for January and February were well above last year’s, and March was busy.

In an industry that’s always been competitive, it’s worse now, reports Milner. Competitors are calling her long-time customers and offering to cut her price by 10 percent. Milner says she’s keeping her prices where they are and concentrating on customer service.

“You can’t make money when you cut prices when fuel is up and insurance is going up,” she says. “You have to take a different approach. You just have to preach service, service, service to your employees.”

In St. Joseph, Mo., near Kansas City, it’s much the same story for Chuck Hill of Heartland Coaches, an 18-coach charter business.

‘You just have to preach service, service, service to your employees.’

Diesel fuel prices step back from highs in mid-March

Motorcoach operators caught a slight break during the latter days of March when diesel fuel prices declined for two consecutive weeks.

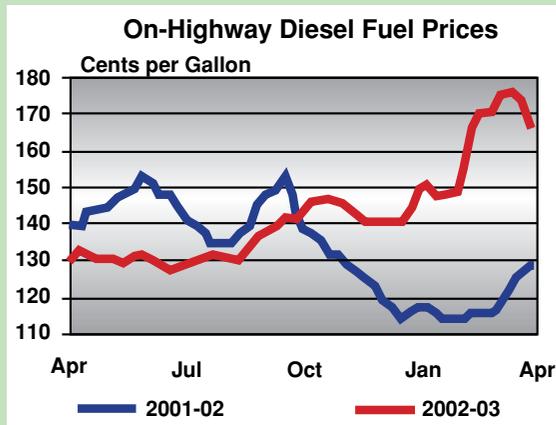
The national average price of diesel fuel dropped by 11 cents per gallon between March 10 and March 24, but remained more 38 cents per gallon higher than it was at this time last year.

The average price for a gallon of diesel fuel was \$1.66 at the start of the last full week of March, compared to \$1.77 a gallon on March 10.

Regionally, prices fell between 6 and 14 cents a gallon during the most recent two-week period, with the biggest price decline coming in the Midwest where the average price dipped to less than \$1.60 per gallon.

New England continued to be the high-price leader, with diesel fuel averaging \$1.89 per gallon in the most recent survey of fueling stations by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Energy Information Administration. Prices in central Atlantic states weren’t far behind at an average price of nearly \$1.87 per gallon.

Meanwhile, the outlook for prices continues to be anybody’s guess. Most analysts aren’t predicting significant price improvements anytime soon. But then that almost goes without saying, doesn’t it?



Diesel Fuel Prices

Cents per Gallon	Price	Change from	
		Week Ago	Year Ago
U.S.	166.2	▼-9.0	▲ 38.1
East Coast	174.1	▼-6.4	▲ 45.4
New England	189.2	▼-9.9	▲ 54.6
Central Atlantic	186.8	▼-8.1	▲ 50.3
Lower Atlantic	167.2	▼-5.5	▲ 42.4
Midwest	159.6	▼-11.2	▲ 33.7
Gulf Coast	158.4	▼-9.1	▲ 33.3
Rocky Mountain	172.9	▼-5.1	▲ 43.9
West Coast	178.5	▼-9.4	▲ 39.9
California	178.7	▼-8.2	▲ 33.7

THE DOCKET



7(a) Celebration *House Small Business Committee Chairman Don Manzullo, R-Ill. (center, rear), and staff members celebrate expansion of the SBA 7(a) loan program. Joining in is UMA Senior Vice President Norman Littler to Manzullo's right.*

Higher fuel taxes still pushed

The two determined Congressmen who head the House Transportation Committee continue to press for a sharp increase in the federal tax on diesel fuel despite strong opposition from the White House and other members of Congress.

House Majority Leader Tom DeLay, R-Texas, reportedly has started a behind-the-scenes effort to block any move to raise fuel taxes.

Also opposing the increase is the United Motorcoach Association, which represents hundreds of diesel-fuel-buying coach operators from coast to coast. "With fuel prices at record highs, this proposal is coming at the worst possible time," says Norman Littler, senior vice president for government and industry relations at UMA.

There are congressmen, however, who while generally opposing tax increases see greater highway spending as serving their constituents.

House Transportation Committee Chairman Don Young, R-Alaska, and the ranking Democratic member, James Oberstar of Minnesota, want the

federal diesel fuel tax increased by 7.2 cents per gallon. The pair say \$375 billion is needed over the next six years to maintain and make improvements to the nation's highway system. The only way to raise that much money is to raise

'The economy cannot grow without a transportation system that moves people and goods efficiently.'

taxes on diesel fuel and gasoline.

The White House wants to spend \$247 billion on highways during the same period and keep fuel taxes unchanged.

Young and Oberstar have proposed indexing both diesel fuel and gasoline taxes to inflation, retroactive to the last time federal fuel taxes were increased in 1993. That would mean an immediate jump in the diesel fuel tax from 24.4 cents per gallon to nearly 32 cents, and the gasoline tax would

go from 18.4 cents today to nearly 24 cents a gallon. State fuel taxes add an average of 22 cents to the price of a gallon.

"The economy cannot continue to grow without a transportation system that moves people and goods efficiently," Young told the House Budget Committee. He said there is no longer a choice between raising or not raising more revenues. "Rather, our choice is between different methods of adjusting them."

Young contends the purchasing power of federal fuel taxes has dropped by one-third since the diesel tax went to 24.4 cents per gallon 10 years ago. "Indexing is crucial," he says. "We should have done it in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. We made a mistake then because the purchasing power of 18.4 cents (for gasoline) then, is really 12 cents now."

Another tax proposal calls for raising the fuel tax by 2 cents a gallon each year through 2009, taxing ethanol at the same rate as gasoline, and stopping the practice of transferring interest from the highway trust fund to the general Treasury fund.

Bills propose changing Illinois licensing law

The next few days are critical for legislation introduced in the Illinois General Assembly to revise a three-month-old law that requires motorcoach drivers to have Illinois school-bus drivers licenses before they transport children on school trips.

Bills are working their way through both the Illinois House and Senate to change the law on behalf of scores of operators, based both in Illinois and in neighboring states, that have been adversely impacted by the licensing requirement.

"We're making progress," said Victor Parra, president and CEO of the United Motorcoach Association. "It isn't a slam dunk but it looks promising."

A lobbyist hired by UMA and the American Bus Association, Tim Hennessey of Consulting 4Biz Inc., is working with key legislators to educate them about the coach industry and the impact of the law on both the industry and schools, and to seek their support.

Parra reports Hennessey has been successful in turning around key legislators who stymied earlier efforts to win a delay in implementing the law. In addition, Hennessey is meeting with other associations representing industries likely to be impacted by the law to seek their support.

Seen as critical to Hennessey's effort is the support of public school districts across the state. The law clearly is detrimental to schools, forcing them to cancel trips, sever long-time relationships with trusted coach companies, and instigate time-consuming searches to find new companies that are able to comply with the law.

"The school districts need to lend their support," says Hennessey. "That's the key piece that's missing. The Catholic and

parochial schools are supporting this. We need public schools that have been hurt by this law."

Hennessey strongly urges operators that have long-time relationships with local school districts to contact administrators and ask them to contact their state legislators to support

'The school districts need to lend their support'

the revised legislation. The legislation being amended is Illinois Senate Bill 150 and Illinois House Bill 2840.

The legislative revisions would require coach drivers who transport

Illinois school children to be fingerprinted, complete a background check, and pass a written test on safety issues related to transportation of children.

In addition, the retooled law would require the Illinois Secretary of State's Office to maintain a list of approved drivers. Any driver who has completed the fingerprinting and background check and has passed the test would go on the list.

As a last resort, if the lobbying effort is not successful, opponents will have to consider seeking an injunction to block the state from enforcing the law. It is widely believed by opponents that the law violates the commerce clause of the U.S. Constitution, which prohibits states from regulating outside their borders.

No one wants to see a lawsuit, however, because of the chilling nature of such an action.

"The key now," says Parra, "is to get the attention of the legislature and get behind the two bills."

"The industry, meaning all operators, needs to push hard and seek the support of their local school districts."

Moving Kids Safely initiative includes Web information

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration has published two electronic guides and an electronic brochure to help schools, parents and other individuals who arrange student transportation make smarter decisions.

The tools are part of the Moving Kids Safely initiative launched by the FMCSA in December. The program is aimed at increasing the use of safe charter bus companies for transporting school children to and from extracurricular activities.

The materials have been posted on the FMCSA's Web site, www.fmcsa.dot.gov, and are entitled:

- *Guide for Selecting a Vehicle for your Next School Activity Trip*
- *Guide to Hiring Bus Companies for Student Extracurricular Activities*
- *Keeping Kids Safe: A Guide to Hiring Charter Transportation*

The last is essentially a brochure, providing nine different sections covering a variety of safety topics. These include:

- Is your school up to speed on safety?
- Exactly how safe is your bus company?
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Not all bus companies are equally safe.
- Check a bus company's safety record.

The FMCSA says it's important for anyone hiring a bus company to arm themselves with information and only hire a company that's willing to answer questions about safety and security. The questions that should be asked (and answered) include:

- What is the company's U.S. DOT number?
- Does your driver have a current Commercial Driver License with a "passenger" endorsement?
- Does the company have a driver drug- and alcohol-testing program that complies with U.S. DOT regulations?
- Will your trip be completed within the legal limit of 10 driving hours? If not, will a second driver or overnight rest

stop be necessary to perform the trip legally?

- Does the bus company have the required \$5 million of public liability insurance?
- Does the bus company subcontract for equipment and/or

drivers? If so, what do you know about the second company?

- What company procedures exist for roadside emergencies and breakdowns?

The federal agency warns that too many school groups hire bus

companies for extracurricular travel solely on the basis of cost.

"We believe that people who arrange for extracurricular transportation would be more concerned with safety if they knew which companies are safe and

which are unsafe," says the agency.

The FMCSA is attempting to develop a coalition of federal, state and industry partners to focus attention on the safe transportation of school children.



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SETRA

THE DOCKET

FMCSA boss is briefed on industry

The two top staff members of the United Motorcoach Association briefed the acting administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration last month on key issues facing the motorcoach industry, including the threat being posed to the industry by rogue operators.

UMA President and CEO Victor Parra and Senior Vice President of Government and Industry Relations Norman Littler met with administrator-designate Annette Sandberg for nearly an hour.

The meeting was supposed to be a get-acquainted session but talk quickly turned to substantive issues, according to Parra and Littler. "I gave her...an overview of our industry, where it is today, the issues we're struggling with — dropping equipment values, the glut of used coaches, rising insurance rates and fuel prices, the drop in ridership since 9/11 and so on," said Parra.

Also, discussed was UMA's concern about the number of illegal coach companies operating on U.S. highways, posing



Annette Sandberg

a significant safety hazard for passengers. These same rogue operators, Parra told Sandberg, also are largely responsible for the industry's declining revenues because they're able to charge less because they do not carry insurance and invest in proper maintenance to keep their coaches safe and reliable.

Sandberg, who is a recognized expert on law enforcement and traffic safety, has been acting administrator of the FMCSA since last December. President George Bush formally nominated her last week to become administrator of the agency.

Before joining the administration as deputy administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Sandberg was chief of the Washington State

Patrol for six years. She was the first woman to head a state police agency in the U.S., and she spent 17 years with the patrol.

An attorney by education, Sandberg also holds an MBA from City University in Bellevue, Wash., graduating magna cum laude.

Parra and Littler also used the meeting with Sandberg to brief her on industry initiatives to improve operator quality and voiced their concerns about schools using school buses for charter work.

Additionally, Parra extended her an invitation to attend the June UMA board meeting in Tampa, Fla., and offered her a tour of a motorcoach operation while in Tampa.

For her part, Sandberg shared with Parra and Littler her plans for implementing the FMCSA's new entrant program that went into effect in January. The program is designed to closely monitor new bus companies during their first 18 months of operation. "The meeting went very well," said Parra. "We covered a lot of ground."

FMCSA says new hours rules won't be enforced right away, more driving hours possible

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration moved last week to allay mounting concern it might adopt an unreasonable timetable for implementing new hours-of-service rules it is preparing to release next month.

In late February, when the FMCSA settled a lawsuit filed by safety advocates seeking to obtain deadlines for several FMCSA rule-makings, the agency said it would make the new rules effective within 60 days of their release.

Such a timetable clearly would not give motorcoach operators and other motor carriers enough time to adjust schedules and to deal with charter contracts that were written based on the current hours-of-service requirements.

At a briefing in Washington, D.C., this past week, the FMCSA said that while implementation of the rules will begin shortly after they are published, it will be eight months before enforcement begins.

The FMCSA said it wanted to give industries that must comply with the rules, as well as agencies and states that must enforce them, enough time to prepare for compliance.

Within eight months of publication of the rules, which must happen before May 31, or the FMCSA will be in violation of a court settlement, the FMCSA must train 8,000 federal and state motor carrier safety investigators, inspectors and auditors on the new rules.

The revised rules are currently undergoing a final review process by the Bush Administration Office of Management and Budget.

The difficulty in trying to gauge the potential impact of the new rules is that the process for drafting them has gone on in total secrecy and no one outside of the federal government has seen them, appar-

ently. In fact, no one knows for sure whether the over-the-road bus industry will be subject to—or exempt from—the revised rules. Most observers are assuming the bus industry will be included with truckers in the new rules.

The first significant details regarding the rules leaked out last week when *Transport Topics*, a trucking industry publication, quoted unnamed government sources as saying the new rules would allow commercial bus and truck drivers to stay behind the

wheel for 11 hours per day, up from 10 now.

The new rules also would allow drivers to continue using written log-books rather than be monitored through electronic on-board recorders, the source said.

If the FMCSA releases rules that are out in left field as far as the coach industry is concerned, two things are likely to happen. First, there will be an effort made to petition Congress to review the rules and outlaw them. That tactic was used last when the Clinton Administration proposed onerous new ergonomic rules as it was leaving office in 2001.

Congress and the Bush Administration blocked implementation of the rules. Second, lawsuits likely would be filed to block the rules.

Norman Littler, senior vice president of government and industry affairs at the United Motorcoach Association, thinks it's a good idea for operators to start thinking about and preparing for a possible change in the rules. Writing more flexible charter contracts with provisions that take into account possible changes to the rules would seem like a good idea, he says.

'It's a good idea to starting thinking about and preparing for a change in the rules'

Forum focuses on bus/truck safety research

A two-day forum on truck and bus safety research and technology will be conducted at mid-month in Orlando.

The International Truck & Bus Safety Research and Technology Symposium is being hosted by the University of Central Florida and its Center for Advanced Transportation Systems Simulation on April 15-16.

Both days will be filled with speakers, discussions and breakout sessions.

Topics include: Standardized CMV driver training, programs of security awareness, commercial vehicle enforcement strategies, broad-based traffic enforcement, the need for crash information, behavioral research, improving the retention of quality drivers.

There also will be sessions on using vehicle technology to enhance driver performance, methods to balance need for rest versus business needs, and collaborative efforts to standardize driver

qualifications.

Among the goals of the symposium are to review such critical transportation challenges as driver/operator performance, training and safety.

All sessions will be conducted at the Holiday Inn-University of Central Florida.

For additional information call Jack Selter at the University of Central Florida at (407) 823-2273, or go to www.dce.ucf.edu/programs/symposium.

Phone: (608) 755-3150.

Ludington, Mich. Deadline: April 12, 2003. Write to: Richard Collins, director, Ludington Mass Transportation Authority, 410 East Dowland St., Ludington, Mich. 49431. Phone: (616) 845-1231.

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.



The Ozark WildCat Wooden Roller Coaster will be the featured attraction at Celebration City when it opens next month.

Handouts aplenty for Halls of Fame

The fiscal 2003 budget of the federal government includes hundreds of thousands of dollars to upgrade popular tourist attractions in New York and Ohio, plus tens of thousands of dollars for an attraction in Fort Worth, Texas.

Among the pork barrel projects in the \$397 billion federal spending package this year are:

- \$750,000 for the Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, N.Y.,
- \$350,000 for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland, and
- \$90,000 for the National Cowgirl Museum and Hall of Fame in Fort Worth.

One Republican congressman, Jeff Flake, who represents the sixth district of Arizona, chided his congressional colleagues for doling out tax money for such projects. "I've got nothing against cowgirls, rock and roll or baseball, but why are my tax dollars paying for their halls of fame?" asks Flake.

"I'd nominate Congress for the Pork-Barrel Hall of Fame but I'm afraid the appropriators would actually try to appropriate money for it."

Progress on I-93 in Boston

A new entrance ramp from the Haymarket area of downtown Boston into the Callahan Tunnel is now open. The ramp represents the first of many roadway improvements associated with the new I-93 northbound tunnel underneath downtown Boston that opened Sunday night, March 30.

Vehicles can access the Haymarket ramp from both New Chardon and North Washington streets. Vehicles coming from the Beacon Hill, Government Center and North Station areas can take New Chardon Street towards the Central Artery to access the new ramp.

There also are tunnel entrances from downtown Boston, and vehicles on I-93 South can head into the tunnel from either Exit 24 or Exit 25.

Separately, the Mass Turnpike Authority announced that the City Square on-ramp from Rutherford Avenue in Charlestown to both I-93 South and Storrow Drive is now open. Vehicles no longer have to travel on Causeway Street.

Ozarks theme park opens next month

Celebration City, a night-time theme park being completed near Branson, Mo., opens next month. The \$40 million entertainment center adjoins the famed Silver Dollar City theme park.

Celebration City is being positioned as a night-time sequel to a day-time visit to Silver Dollar City. The multi-themed park will offer nightly adventures for families, highlighting eras of 20th century America. Among the highlights are:

- A Main Street boulevard featuring dancing water sculptures and fountains.
- Historical Route 66.
- Electric Broadwalk
- Ozark WildCat wooden roller coaster.

There will be 30 rides and attractions, including a Thunderbolt, Jack Rabbit, Fireball, Tilt-a-Whirl and Scrambler. Additionally, there will be theme restaurants and 10 retail shops. Each evening there will be a multi-media laser production called Celebrate!

A soft opening is set for later this month with the opening next month. Visit www.silverdollarcity.com.

Wisconsin to get in step with feds

The biennial state budget proposal from Wisconsin Gov. Jim Doyle includes requests to implement initiatives being pushed by federal transportation agencies.

No. 1 on the hit parade is a request that the legislature amend Wisconsin's DWI law to provide for a 0.08 blood-alcohol limit. Wisconsin is one of 17 states that have not adopted the 0.08 percent standard. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Federal Highway Administration are planning to start withholding federal highway funds from states that don't enact the lower blood-alcohol limits.

The federal government has been after all states for most of the past decade to adopt 0.08 blood-alcohol laws. Thirty-one states have gone along. The United Motorcoach Association has long supported the lower blood-alcohol standard.

Gov. Doyle also is calling for a state match to a federal grant of \$804,600 to implement provisions of the federal Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999.

Coalition is being formed to fight Pennsylvania tax

A coalition is being set up to fight Pennsylvania's stepped up program of collecting corporate franchise taxes from out-of-state motorcoach companies and making those taxes retroactive.

The coalition is being pushed by the United Motorcoach Association and supported by the Pennsylvania Tourism & Lodging Association, reports UMA President & CEO Victor Parra and Barry Wickes, president of the Pennsylvania tourism group.

"We're bringing other stakeholders into the fold," said Parra. "Attractions, hotels, restaurants, destinations—we're looking at anyone who is going to be affected."

Wickes said in a telephone interview the coalition is attempting to arrange a meeting with officials from the administration of Pennsylvania's

new governor, Edward G. Rendell, to discuss the issue. "We want to develop a consensus on how to proceed," said Wickes.

Letters also are being sent to other potential supporters.

At issue is an initiative kicked off by the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue in February to boost collection of corporate taxes from coach companies operating tours in the Keystone State. Notices were sent to out-of-state operators saying they owed back taxes, plus penalties, for 10 years. The tax enforcement program apparently was in response to a directive from the legislature.

One coach operator received a \$33,000 bill for what the state said were corporate taxes owed from that portion of the company's business it had been doing in the state since 1992. The bill included \$3,000 a year in taxes and \$300 a

year in late penalties.

Pennsylvania tax law provides that coach companies are subject to the state franchise tax if they travel more than 50,000 loaded miles in the state; have 12 or more trips into the state with pickups or deliveries, or 20 percent of their total loaded miles occur in the state. Pennsylvania has had the tax on its books for years but only began aggressively collecting it this year.

Some operators that have been hit with Pennsylvania tax bills are threatening to boycott the state as a tourist destination unless the issue is resolved.

'It's not the amount of money, it's the administrative costs.'

In the past month, Pennsylvania has tried to clarify what operators are expected to pay. The state now says its tax is like those of other states, meaning it is apportioned. That means the amount paid in Pennsylvania

can be deducted from taxes owed in the operator's home state.

Also, operators are not expected to pay the amount for which the state invoiced them. Rather, operators should contact the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue for forms that will help them calculate the correct amount.

As it turns out, the huge dollar amounts the state put on its invoices were designed as an attention-getting ruse. Which, of course, furthered outraged operators who received them.

Equally as significant as the taxes is the cost to operators of having to deal with the issue administratively. Bookkeeping, accounting and tax professionals need to be involved to handle the myriad paperwork.

"It's not the amount of money, it's the administrative costs," said Parra.

Advice: Call before coming to Washington

The United Motorcoach Association is advising operators to call or check the District of Columbia Web site before bringing coaches full of visitors into Washington.

Since the situation is fluid, we recommend operators call the city's hotline — (202) 727-4383 — to

determine if any streets have been closed or access to buildings or attractions has been curtailed, says UMA.

Updated information on tour bus parking can be found on the District's Web site: <http://www.ddot.dc.gov/information/tourbus/index.shtm>.

OPINION

Unfair Competition: Take 2

A political drama being played out in Sacramento, Calif., may hold lessons for any motorcoach operator who contracts with a government agency.

For 10 years, Amador Stages Lines of Sacramento has had a contract to shuttle state workers between parking lots and their offices. It has been a fine arrangement: State workers got good service from Amador, which provided buses on five-minute headways, and Amador benefitted from having a state contract.

The contract for the service expired at the end of last year but rather than rebid it through an open or sole-source process, the state secretly negotiated a deal with the public transit agency in Sacramento, Regional Transit.

After Amador found out what was going on and that it was being locked out of the process, it cried foul. And it was joined by the California Bus Association, with later support from UMA and others. Amador, CBA, et al, contend the contract between the state and Regional Transit is a willful violation of the Federal Transit Administration charter service regulations, which prohibit public transit agencies from providing charter bus service.

The clever folks at Regional Transit found a way to skirt the law. While the new RT routes will essentially mirror those of Amador, two things will be different. Anyone will be able to ride the RT buses, and a new route has been added that

serves the downtown Amtrak station.

"They can disguise it if they want," says Bill Allen, president of Amador Stage Lines. "We think it's pretty clear."

A complaint was lodged with the FTA, and the federal agency asked Regional Transit to hold up starting the service until it could complete an investigation. Regional Transit said no dice; it claimed state workers would be left high and dry with no buses starting April 7.

Hogwash, says Amador. There is nothing to prohibit the state from extending the contract while the FTA probed. After all, the state extended Amador's contract for more than three months back in December.

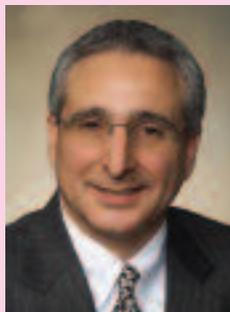
Meanwhile, the CBA will be filing a rebuttal to Regional Transit's response to the FTA questioning the arrangement.

This issue, as Bill Allen says, is a lose-lose-lose situation:

- Regional Transit admits it will lose up to \$200,000 if non-state workers don't take advantage of the new shuttle routes.
- State workers lose because the service Regional Transit will provide will have 10-minute headways instead of 5-minute.
- Amador loses a state contract requiring 16 coaches.

"It's one of those cases where you shake your head and say: 'Who would want to do this?'" says Allen.

Who indeed? You only have to look as far as the bureaucrats down the street.



Tom DeMatteo

Managing Risk: Five key factors to be considered

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

I just read an interesting article containing a matrix for analyzing business risk. The matrix has five categories of risk: Safety and security, business, political, legal and reputation.

Let's apply these categories to the motorcoach industry and develop a checklist for you to use.

1. Safety and Security Risk. Your employees and customers expect you to provide a safe workplace and safe coaches. Beyond the expectation you also are legally required to do so. Your facilities are required to meet health, safety, environmental and building code requirements. Your equipment is required to comply with federal, state and local motor vehicle regulations.

But don't forget to think about the physical safety and security of traveling employees and tour groups. Are your employees and tour groups staying at safe hotels? Are employees using company, personal or rental cars for busi-

ness? Are your computer systems vulnerable to unauthorized use or viruses? Are you backing-up your computer information systems on a regular basis? Are your vehicles locked in a secure area at night?

Are your CDL drivers properly trained? Do you have enough property and casualty insurance?

2. Business Risk. The easiest way to anticipate future business risk is to prepare one-, three- and five-year forecasts for your business.

Then incorporate these forecasts into a business plan model. My personal opinion is that businesses are going to have to reinvent themselves every three to five years. If you don't, your customers, suppliers and competitors will do it for you.

The point here is that business models and processes are changing and you need to anticipate the risks resulting from these changes. More importantly, you need to make sure you have adequate financial resources to meet the changes and weather an economic downturn. Are you building a "rainy day" fund? Are you buying enough insurance to cover catastrophic losses? Are you working with your bankers to anticipate future credit needs?

3. Political Risk. We all know about this one: September 11, war in Iraq and homeland security alerts. But let's not forget the strain on federal, state and local transportation budgets.

You need to analyze your business relationships that are subject to governmental spending cuts. You should also work closely with the United Motorcoach Association and your state association to monitor and lobby for or against regulations that would impact your

business. Staying politically involved with the help of UMA will help reduce your risk to adverse regulatory changes.

4. Legal Risk. Do you anticipate risks emerging from contract disputes; personal injury litigation; employee hiring, performance and discharge matters, and regulatory compliance failures? Do you have policies and procedures for employees to follow? Have they been properly trained?

Again, having the proper insurance can help minimize your risk. For example, you can buy employment practices liability insurance to help cover risks related to employee matters. You can also buy director and officer liability insurance to help protect you if you are personally sued. You should also buy umbrella insurance to help cover big losses. UMA has a worker compensation insurance program that you should look into.

5. Reputational Risk. Improving the image of the coach industry has been a priority of industry trade associations for quite some time. Are you providing clear, courteous, and safe coaches with value-added services? UMA is currently working on a "quality carrier" rating and recognition program that will go a long way towards improving the image of the coach industry.

Footnote. Eichbaum, June; The New CLO "Core Competencies," Chief Legal Officer, Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter 2002.

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

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Buses Welcome!

The WesterN SizzliN Road Rewards program welcomes tour bus operators and their passengers. We offer family dining in a casual atmosphere that can accommodate even the largest tour group. Our tradition of delicious Flamekist steaks and incredible buffets is the reason we have been in business for over 40 years. With our wide variety of entrees and buffet choices, we are sure to satisfy your entire party and get you back on the road.

Participating restaurants offer free meals for the driver and ample parking. Call us today to schedule a visit from your group!

Visit all of our Participating Locations!



For a complete location listing visit www.westernsizzlin.com

INDUSTRY NEWS

UMA announces health, dental insurance program for members

The United Motorcoach Association announced it has begun sponsoring a health and dental insurance plan for its members.

"We're very excited to sponsor this program that offers major medical, life insurance and optional disability and dental coverage to meet the needs of our members," said UMA President and CEO Victor Parra.

The UMA Health Insurance Program is being made available through Mass Marketing Insurance Consultants of Orland Park, Ill., which has 30 years experience

developing successful insurance programs for members of professional and trade associations.

Mass Marketing Insurance Consultants specializes in contracting with a number of health insurance companies to provide a wide variety of benefits.

Under the UMA program, association members can custom design a health plan that fits their particular needs. A total of 10 insurance companies are participating in the program, providing multiple plan designs and greater flexibility in terms of benefits and price.

Coverage under the UMA program is available to individuals and firms with two or more employees. For UMA members wishing to have group coverage, all active full-time employees, including owners, partners and officers, working at least 30 hours a week are eligible for coverage.

An insured spouse and dependent children under age 19 (23, if a full-time student) are also eligible to apply for coverage.

The cost of the UMA program may be paid in whole by the employer or shared with the

employees. However, the employer's contribution must be at least 50 percent of the total cost.

Other highlights of the UMA program include:

- A major medical plan with maximum lifetime benefits of \$2 million or \$5 million.
- Choice of standard indemnity, preferred provider organization, point of service, or health maintenance organization (not available in all states).
- \$10, \$15, \$20 or \$25 doctor's office visit co-pay.
- Deductibles of zero, \$250,

\$500, \$1,000 or \$2,500.

- Prescription drug card with co-payments for generic and brand-name drugs.

- Flexible family coverage and insurance benefits.

- Group life insurance, optional dental coverage and weekly disability insurance.

- Competitive rates and the promise of personal service.

UMA members can learn more about the program or receive a free, no-obligation proposal by calling Mass Marketing Insurance Consultants at (800) 349-1039.

ExecConnect

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

turned after a successful executive bus service operating between Calgary and Edmonton in Alberta. Daily, the Red Arrow line hauls Canadian businessmen and women back and forth between the two western cities—137 miles apart—in luxury Prevost coaches.

Anderson and ExecConnect co-founder Dale Bunce of Aiken, S.C., an industry consultant, picked Cleveland and Pittsburgh for their initial route for a number of seemingly good reasons. There is steady business travel between the cities, and Pittsburgh is one of those metro areas that has higher airfares because it is not served by a discount airline. Consequently, many Pittsburghers drive to Cleveland to take advantage of cheaper fares. The cities are 173 miles apart.

Bunce said last June they hope to not only attract business executives but also attorneys, sales representatives and bankers who do business in both cities.

Anderson now believes they may have overestimated the amount of business travel between Pittsburgh and Cleveland, and underestimated the impediment of having pick-up and drop-off points that weren't convenient to travelers.

Feedback from customers and potential customers indicated the convenience of pick-up and drop-off points was a major consideration. Because both cities have sprawling metropolitan areas, the pick-up points near airports and downtown hotels were not convenient for many travelers.

Another problem that was not readily soluble was the issue of corporate travel policies that prohibit



'Customers indicated the convenience of pick-up and drop-off points was a major consideration.'



executives from using a commercial carrier for a trip of less than 300 miles. The employees are required to drive. When such policies were adopted, the airlines were considered the only acceptable commercial travel for executives. When ExecConnect made sales calls on companies with such policies, the companies were inflexible about changing them, Anderson said. "That's the policy, we were told."

When ExecConnect was launched July 9, it offered first-class travel on coaches that had been outfitted with 27 extra-wide leather seats, power ports for laptop computers, free Internet and e-mail connections, on-board attendants, and overhead video monitors showing business and news channels. The coaches were paint-

ed black with their own livery.

The buses also had eight-channel audio systems, hot and cold beverages, great food, and two- and four-person meeting areas that could be reserved in advance.

Ticketing was available on-line or by calling an 800 number. Service originated four times daily in each city, starting at 6 a.m. A round-trip ticket cost \$129, while one-way service was \$79. Although it was not considered a competitor, a round-trip Greyhound ticket between Pittsburgh and Cleveland was \$36.50 at the time ExecConnect launched. A round-trip airfare between the two cities can cost as much as \$600.

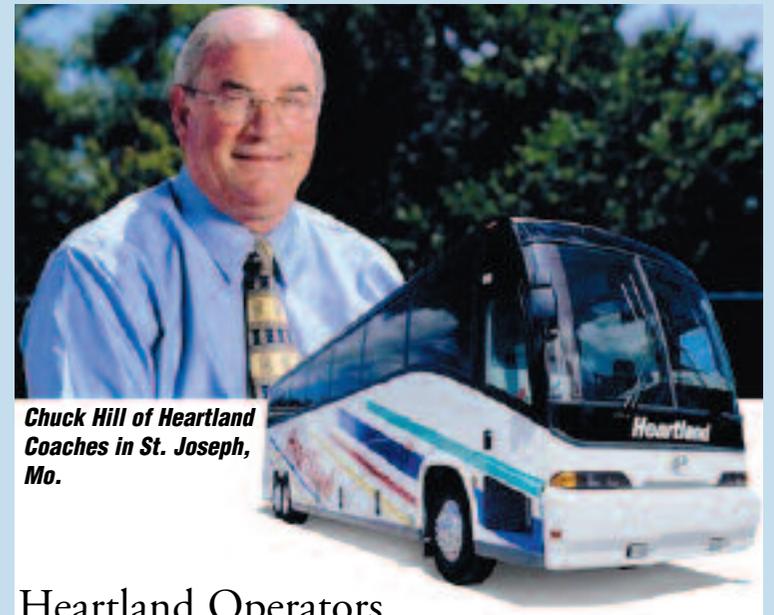
The one-way travel time on ExecConnect was roughly two hours and 40 minutes.

Does the shutdown of ExecConnect mark the end of Anderson and Bunce's noble experiment? That's up in the air.

A year ago, the pair identified more than 50 city pairs they believed were candidates for ExecConnect service. Anderson says that number has been whittled down to two or three "that have a lot more business travel between them" than do Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

Between now and June, they will be evaluating the potential markets and viability of launching ExecConnect service between two new cities. "It's a strong possibility," says Anderson, who despite the setback has retained his sense of humor.

"A lot of time and money has been invested in ExecConnect. There remains the question whether the business community will accept the service and adopt it. And there is the question of how much more of this fun I want to endure."



Chuck Hill of Heartland Coaches in St. Joseph, Mo.

Heartland Operators

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"One of the biggest things we've done is not to participate in the silly pricing wars," he said. Instead, Hill focuses on sharing the value-added story. "The customer that calls us whose mentality is price-driven only is a customer that won't ride on Heartland."

All Heartland drivers wear blazers and ties; a full-time safety director is on staff; Hill carries \$10 million of liability insurance, and he has a preventative maintenance program. He also markets more aggressively, concentrating on schools, churches and corporate events.

Hill says he's working harder but it's paying off. "It was the best winter we've ever had."

In Bloomington, Ind., Ian Patton, vice president of Star of Indiana, a 16-motorcoach charter operation, is warily eyeing the rest of the year after the number of cancellations he's seen.

"This is about as tentative as I've ever felt," Patton says. "The spring bookings are excellent but we haven't got much confidence."

In addition to cancellations, Patton is seeing more short-notice trips. Schools that once booked eight weeks ahead are now calling with two-weeks notice.

Cut-throat pricing by competitors is even worse now than it was in 1991 during the Gulf War—the last time Patton saw such trepidation in passengers and bookings. "I have not figured out how to do business that is cancel-resistant," he says. All he can do is work hard for his most reliable tour customers. "We are definitely giving them preferential treatment, making sure their stuff works when it's a busy week."

Arnsdorf sees a bigger, long-term payoff to the extra work and making changes in business strategy. He says he's getting a younger crowd on the bus for sporting events like NASCAR racing, rodeos and college basketball games. And he believes that's the future for the industry.

"We're finding ways to get them on the bus," he says. "Once they take one trip, they're going to come back."



Sheila Prince, of Allen A.M.E. wanted flexibility in her maintenance program.

MCI Maintenance by the Mile is launched for small operators

JAMAICA, N.Y. — Sheila Prince, manager of Allen A.M.E. Transportation in Jamaica, was looking for a better way to get a handle on the maintenance of company coaches when she heard about a new program offered by Motor Coach Industries.

Maintenance by the Mile “allows us to have our MCI coaches serviced in a timely manner that suits our needs,” says Prince. She sends Allen A.M.E.’s MCI coaches, which include E4500 and J4500 models, to the MCI maintenance center in Blackwood, N.J.,

for service when the coaches are in Atlantic City. “I’m hoping the program will give me an accounting of costs and keep me on track with maintenance,” she says.

Maintenance by the Mile was developed for operators seeking a cost-effective way to outsource maintenance, says Mitch Guralnick, MCI’s director of field service operations. Offered at the seven MCI service centers in North America, the program provides operators with maintenance on a scheduled basis to maximize performance and uphold value.

Prices are calculated according to the age, mileage and model of the MCI coaches being serviced.

“The Maintenance by the Mile program is designed for operators without a service facility, as well as for those that want more control over their maintenance costs,” says Guralnick.

“By enrolling in the program, operators receive regular maintenance with predictable costs, thereby facilitating the operator’s goal of achieving a high degree of reliability and residual value.”

The program follows MCI’s published mileage maintenance guidelines and federal and state DOT regulations, and includes record keeping for customer convenience.

Owners of new and used MCI coaches can enroll through any of the MCI service centers. Owners of used coaches must establish that their equipment meets minimum MCI maintenance guidelines before being accepted into the program.

“The program will assist companies like Allen A.M.E., which strive to minimize downtime, reduce costly emergency repairs and provide the best possible service to their groups,” says Jerry Cignarella, director of MCI Service Centers.

MCI sales and service locations are in Blackwood, N.J.; Clermont, Fla. (near Orlando); Dallas; Des Plaines, Ill.; Los Alamitos, Calif.; Loudonville, Ohio, and Montreal.

Prevost Parts upgrades online parts ordering

STE. FOY, Quebec — Prevost Parts has made major upgrades to its online parts ordering system, found at www.prevostparts.com.

“This is the first step in a two-part enhancement program to render our online ordering system as convenient and user friendly as possible,” said Michael Power, commercial sales development coordinator for Prevost Parts. “The enhancements give customers greater access to information in a much more user-friendly environment and a much faster processing time than before.”

The new features mean:

- It will no longer be necessary to choose a catalogue to order from.

- Once the password is entered, the customer goes directly to the order page.

- Both coach and transit parts can be purchased on the same order.

- Processing time is faster.

“In addition to these new features, Prevost Parts customers will still enjoy all the advantages of 24/7 access to the ordering process,” said Power.

On-line orders to www.prevostparts.com receive a 1 percent discount.

Prevost Parts is an OEM parts distributor for both coaches and transit buses and is the sole distributor of Prevost Car and Nova Bus certified parts and components.

Industry tested

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

major bridge, through a tunnel or on a ferry, and travel to metropolitan Washington, D.C. Out-of-state trips were banned completely.

The only hope for many operators may be to beat a path to the nearest bank that participates in the U.S. Small Business Administration’s (7a) lending program. A debt restructuring loan may save some operators.

One key is to open up your books and show that through no fault of your own you are being devastated by the war.

Call the nearest SBA regional office for a list of banks that participate in the 7(a) program, which was expanded just weeks ago. The SBA’s Web site, www.sba.gov can help you locate the nearest SBA office. See the March 1 and 15 issues of *Bus & Motorcoach News* for the latest news on the 7(a) program.

Lobbying

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

selected as deficit remedies. New Jersey and Pennsylvania chose to begin collecting corporate taxes on out-of-state carriers that bring tourism dollars into the state, supporting the local economies and enhancing the general tax base.

Instead of encouraging more motorcoach operators to come to the Garden State, legislators there decided to up the minimum corporate tax this year by 150 percent.

To keep up with its neighbor, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania decided to begin aggressively collecting a similar tax on out-of-state operators bringing buses full of dollars to spend in that state’s restaurants, hotels, attractions and destinations.

Both actions truly represent penny-wise, pound-foolish policies.

In states like Illinois, the problem is a little different. It has nothing to do with money, at least not the state’s money. The decision by

Illinois legislators to require all drivers who transport school children to have an Illinois school bus license definitely affects operators’ pocketbooks, particularly those in surrounding states.

All of these actions take an additional toll on operators’ operating expenses, wiping out already tiny margins.

But there is something the industry can do to challenge these actions.

The motorcoach industry clearly needs strong state associations, as evidenced by what happened in New Jersey, Ohio and Illinois where there were no statewide motorcoach groups.

The industry also needs to be smarter about how it handles such issues.

Let’s take a look at how one state association maximized its lobbying dollars to work toward the desired outcome.

Last year, when New Jersey elected to require out-of-state carriers to be registered as foreign corporations doing business in that

state and to pay corporate tax, operators (largely members of the Atlantic City Bus Owners Association) up and down the East Coast chose not to go it alone.

First, they identified others who would be affected by this measure that, in effect, discouraged motorcoaches from coming to that state. Next, they joined forces with the hotel, casino and tourism industries in New Jersey to pursue legislation to get motorcoach and tour operators exempt from paying the tax.

Across the river, a similar coalition is being formed, under the aegis of the Pennsylvania Tourism & Lodging Association, to combat the corporate tax being collected from motorcoach operators. The tourism industry there has a great deal at stake if operators and their customers opt for other destinations where similar attractions are available but where operators aren’t required to pay corporate income tax.

From these disparate local and state challenges, there are some

common lessons to be learned:

1. Develop and maintain a strong and vigilant state association. What happened in Illinois probably could have been avoided if operators in that state had someone in Springfield monitoring the legislature and helping legislators understand the full ramifications of requiring motorcoach drivers to hold a school bus drivers license.

2. Identify everyone who might be affected by a legislative and/or regulatory proposal and get them involved. In these days when margins are razor thin and operating capital is reduced, operators shouldn’t attempt to take on the financial burden of lobbying efforts by themselves. In Washington, D.C., for example, the D.C. travel and tourism industry is working with us to deal with the bus parking problem. Obviously, any measure to fine or penalize operators bringing busloads of tourists to a city where tourism is a primary industry will definitely impact the local economy, as well as every hotel, restaurant and attraction in

the nation’s capital.

3. Have a strong action plan with timetables, milestones and back-up plans. In Illinois, we have a time frame for revising the existing law by a certain date, and a back-up plan should it become obvious that our current strategy isn’t working.

The coming months will be trying for everyone in our industry.

The war with Iraq and threats of terrorism at home will no doubt impact our ridership. These issues will capture our attention, control our actions and dominate our thinking.

Nevertheless, we cannot overlook what goes on in our state houses. Governors across the country are under tremendous pressure to get their fiscal houses in order while continuing to improve the safety of travelers. While their actions may be well intentioned, we cannot allow them and state legislators to make hasty decisions about the motorcoach business without our input.

Be vigilant. Get involved. Work smart.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Laidlaw to emerge from bankruptcy

BURLINGTON, Ontario — Laidlaw Inc., the Canada-based holding company that owns Greyhound Bus Lines of Dallas, is expected to emerge from bankruptcy later this month after its third plan of reorganization was approved by courts in the U.S. and Canada.

The company will be renamed Laidlaw International Inc., and it plans to relocate its corporate headquarters from Burlington to Naperville, Ill., a suburb of Chicago, ending 79 years as one of Canada's foremost companies.

"This is an important step in a

long process," said Kevin Benson, Laidlaw's president and CEO. "In particular it signals to the 100,000 employees around the company that we are nearly at the end of a challenging few years."

Benson is Laidlaw's fifth CEO in the past 13 years.

Laidlaw has operated under Chapter 11 bankruptcy court protection since June 2001, when it went insolvent after an unsuccessful diversification program engineered by former CEO James Bullock. At one company in which Laidlaw invested there were huge accounting irregulari-

ties and hundreds of millions of dollars in losses.

Laidlaw purchased Greyhound in March 1999, in a deal Greyhound believed would give it access to more and less-expensive capital, enabling it to grow and update its fleet at a faster pace. As it turned out, Laidlaw became an albatross for Greyhound.

If final delicate negotiations are wrapped up successfully Laidlaw will emerge from bankruptcy as North America's largest provider of school and intercity bus transportation and public transit services.

NYC Web site provides coach parking information

The New York City Department of Transportation is using its Web site to provide motorcoach operators with extensive information about bringing coaches into the city, including parking information.

Godfrey LeBron of Paradise Trailways of West Hempstead, N.Y., says the information is both valuable and thorough. LeBron is secretary of the United Motorcoach Association and a member of the Trailways board.

The NYC DOT Web site includes:

- Charter bus parking guidelines for Manhattan and Brooklyn Heights.
- Operating instructions, including drop-off and pick-up areas, and prohibited areas.
- On-street parking and waiting areas.
- Off-street parking areas.
- Agency contact information, including fees and ticket adjudication.
- Maps of lower and mid Manhattan.

There also is information about

idling, stopping in a "no parking" and "no standing" zone, and obtaining accommodations for large parties.

Finding the Web site, like most things in New York City, can be a challenge. The Web site changes, meaning the Web address for the information can change. Here's one way to find it:

Go to the New York City Department of Transportation home page: www.nyc.gov/html/dot/home.html. Click on the "Getting Around NYC" button, which is in a blue bar next to the NYC DOT logo close to the top of the page. Look for "Charter Bus Parking Guidelines" on the lower right side of the page. Click on those words. You'll end up on a page titled: Charter Bus Parking Guidelines / Manhattan & Brooklyn Heights. Scroll down to the information you need.

The NYC DOT Web site contains a ton of information, including real-time traffic cameras, construction alerts, travel advisories, and — believe or not — customer service contacts for asking questions or reporting a problem.

DaimlerChrysler launches Web site with bus product information

GREENSBORO, N.C. — DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses North America has launched a Web site that provides in-depth information about all of its North American commercial bus and coach brands.

Featured on the site are motorcoaches from Setra of North America and buses manufactured by Orion Bus Industries and Thomas Dennis Co.

The site, www.dcbusna.com, provides details on products from each of the three units of DaimlerChrysler Commercial Bus, recent sales statistics, and service and parts assistance.

There also is corporate news and news from each company, as well as a dealer locator.

"We developed this Web site to provide our customers and dealers with the most up-to-date news

about our company and the quality products and services offered under the DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses umbrella," said Andy Strecker, president of DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses.

Elsewhere on the site is an overview of DaimlerChrysler Commercial Buses; its management and production locations; and contacts for sales, financing and career inquiries.

UMA Members Receive Only the Best!

Members of the United Motorcoach Association receive only the best information, advice and services. When you join the United Motorcoach Association, you will receive the 'New Member Information Kit'. This kit includes products that will help you drive your business to the next level. Items include:

UMA Membership Directory

Instantly puts you in touch with over a thousand operators and suppliers in the motorcoach industry.

Public Relations & Media Guide

This is a must-have guide for every operator. It outlines strategies to obtain effective PR relations, crisis management and helps you to leverage public relations effectively.

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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Every operator member is eligible to use UMA as their blanket process agent for in satisfaction of USDOT regulations. Just fill out the form and fax it to the UMA office and your BOC-3 form will be processed electronically within 5 days of receipt of your form.

Guide to Congress

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

How to Join the United Motorcoach Association

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 for additional membership information.

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People In The News



Frank Sorvino



Charlie Walser



Brian Pinckney

Frank Sorvino has received the 2002 Account Executive of the Year Award from ABC Companies, distributor of Van Hool motorcoaches and the ABC brand of midsize buses. Sorvino, who is a senior account executive based in New Jersey, received the award last month at ABC's national sales meeting. It was the second year in a row he has captured the top award. "Frank's performance and dedication is exemplary and has become a benchmark for all of us to strive for," said ABC President and CEO Ron Cornell. Sorvino has been an ABC Companies employee since 1992. **Charles Walser**, senior account executive/California, and **Brian Pinckney**, senior account executive/Florida, received the second- and third-place awards, respectively.

Vansco Electronics Ltd. of Winnipeg, Manitoba, has announced the appointment of **Dr. Niels Erik Hansen** as chief executive officer, succeeding company founder and **Chairman Ed Van Humbeck**. Dr. Hansen also has been elected to Vansco's board of

directors. Before joining Vansco, Dr. Hansen was executive vice president and chief operating officer of Sauer-Danfoss, one of the world's largest suppliers of mobile hydraulic systems. Prior to that he was president and CEO of Danfoss Fluid Power A/S in Denmark. Vansco Electronics designs and manufactures electronic modules, instrumentation and wiring harnesses for the bus, truck and heavy equipment industries. It has more than 800 employees and sales of more than \$100 million.

Ron Douglas has rejoined Cyr Bus Line of Old Town, Maine, as marketing manager for southern Maine. Douglas previously managed Cyr Northstar Tours, a division of Cyr Bus Line.

Warren E. Hoemann has been named chief counsel of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Hoemann, who also will serve as acting deputy administrator, was vice president of the California Trucking Association for the past six years. Prior to that he was vice president of government relations at Yellow Freight System.

Deborah Sexton has been promoted to president of the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau. She previously was executive vice president and continues to report to CEO Jim Reilly, who previously held the dual title of president and CEO.



Eight Setra S417s are being added to the fleet of Cyr Bus Line.

Cyr Bus Line is awarded top Defense Department rating

The U.S. Department of Defense's Military Traffic Management Command has given Cyr Bus Line of Old Town, Maine, its top rating following an inspection of company facilities.

The Department of Defense rates carriers on a scale of 1 (outstanding) to 5 (unsatisfactory), and Cyr Bus Line was rated 1/Outstanding.

A facility, terminal and equipment inspection was conducted by the Military Traffic Management Command.

In other news from Cyr:

Three employees were injured in a "bus accident" — their cardboard motorcoach (made from

refrigerator boxes) hit a tree. The employees were participating in a downhill winter event in Bangor, Maine. Six passengers were riding in the cardboard bus when it went off course and struck the tree. There were cracked ribs, injured shoulders and missing teeth but everyone returned to work.

Cyr is awaiting the arrival of two Seta S417 coaches, Serial Nos. 000001 and 000002. They are the first two of eight Setra S417s to be delivered to Cyr.

Robin Levesseur, supervisor of Cyr's tour office, is organizing a team to participate in a 24-hour fund-raising walk for the American Cancer Society.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS**APRIL 2003**

11-13 Bus Conversions magazine/ Gathering at the Caverns, Grand Canyon Caverns & Inn, between Kingman and Seligman, Ariz. Info: (714) 799-0062 or go to www.busconversions.com.

15-16 International Truck & Bus Safety Research and Technology Symposium, Holiday Inn-University of Central Florida, Orlando. Info: (407) 882-0260 or go to www.dce.ucf.edu/programs/symposium.

27-28 National Bus Traffic Association annual board meeting, Adams Mark Hotel, Dallas. Info: (800) 444-2326, ask for Greyhound Lines Group, or (800) 283-2877 ext. 226.

MAY 2003

4-8 UITP: 55TH 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, Americas Center, St. Louis. 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: www.bus-mag.com, click on Bus Bash link., or call (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.

29-31 Florida Motorcoach Association Annual Meeting & Show, Ritz-Carlton Golf Resort, Naples, Fla. Info: (407) 647-2491 or go to www.floridamotorcoach.org.

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, Calif. 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 2003, Las Vegas. Info: (310) 533-2556. E-mail: info@bobitexpos.com.

NOVEMBER 2003

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

8-12 Canadian Urban Transit Assn.: Fall Conference, Toronto, Ont.

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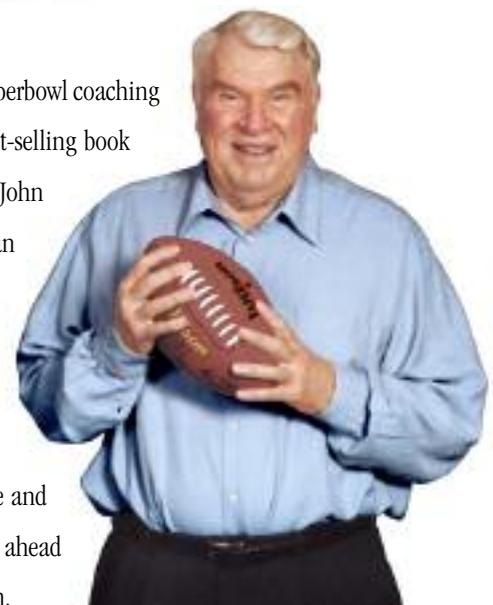


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