

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY

## Operators turn creative to fight business slowdown

The slumping national economy is turning motorcoach operators into business sleuths.

Although they're not out hunting for criminals, they are busy looking for ways to round up new customers to help bolster revenues and examining daily operations in search of possible ways to trim expenses.

It is a scenario that's being played out all across the country as the slowdown in general business activities begins to more seriously impact the motorcoach industry.

"It's definitely hurting us," said Gene Wright Sr., president of B & W Charters in Kalamazoo, Mich., noting that charter customers are making fewer long trips and schools

are starting to use their own buses for more of their activities.

Doyle Cummings, president of Adventure Bus Charters and Tours in Sumiton, Ala., said charter business is off about 10 percent, partially because some regular senior customers are backing out of new trips. "They're living off the interest on their savings and they're not

making much any more," he said. "That's their play money and they don't have enough to play now."

Dale Bohn, general manager of Kincaid Coach Lines in Kansas City, Kan., said bookings at his business have been off, too, and it is increasing competition. "People seem to be shopping around a lot more than they have in the past and

they're making a lot more last-minute bookings," he said.

### Cost-cutting challenges

Most operators are accelerating their efforts aimed at cutting expenses, especially fuel costs, which have become their biggest challenge.

"We're hammering our drivers

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The \$450-million, seven-level Newseum opens in Washington, D.C., on April 11. The complex features 14 major galleries. See story on page 15.

## Economy dips but not price of diesel fuel

Wouldn't you know it: As the pace of business slows, the soaring price of diesel fuel shows little sign of easing.

Welcome to the wonderful world of \$4 a gallon diesel fuel.

Diesel prices hit a new high practically every week during February and March, rising to \$4 a gallon in some parts of the country, while crude oil rose above \$110 a barrel.

The national average on-highway diesel price was above \$3.80 a gallon in late March, according to the U.S. Energy Department's Energy Information Administration. That's up \$1.15 a gallon from a year ago.

The highest prices were in the central Atlantic region, at just under \$4 a gallon, with California and New England close behind. The lowest prices were in the Rocky Mountains at roughly \$3.75.

Meanwhile, the Department of Energy has boosted its projection for diesel prices for the remainder of the year, saying it will average \$3.45 a gallon — 57 cents above last year's average.

Gasoline is expected to peak near \$3.50 a gallon this spring.

The projections are being driven by soaring crude oil costs, DOE said.

The annual average crude price, which was \$72 per barrel in 2007, is projected to average \$94 this year, but ease to about \$86 per barrel in 2009.

## Looming White House change clouds '09

In seven months, Americans will elect a new president...and that event looms large in the outlook for both the economy and the industry.

One of three U.S. Senators most likely will win the White House in November: Barack Obama (D-Ill.),

Hillary Clinton (D-N.Y.), or John McCain (R-Ariz.).

Irrespective of who wins the presidential race, his or her administration, on any given day, will be well positioned vis-à-vis some issues the nation's transportation industry cares about, and on the

next day, be positioned exactly the opposite of where the industry would want them to be.

For example, if there is a Clinton or Obama presidency, labor likely will gain a tremendous amount of influence on Capitol Hill, and that certainly would not

be viewed as a good thing by most private bus operators.

Conversely, though, there might be in a Clinton or Obama presidency a little more inclination to support funding for infrastructure that might not be part of a

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# BoltBus service launched between D.C.–New York

SECAUCUS, N.J. — Greyhound and Peter Pan Bus lines launched their new curbside service, BoltBus, on March 27, with runs between New York City and Washington, D.C. (See March 1 *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

Greyhound expects to begin operating BoltBus between Boston and New York this month.

With demand-driven fares starting at \$1 (plus a small handling fee), onboard wireless Internet access, electric plug-ins, and curbside drop-offs in New York and Washington, BoltBus is the newest effort by Greyhound and Peter Pan to compete with the aggressive ethnic curbside operators running in the

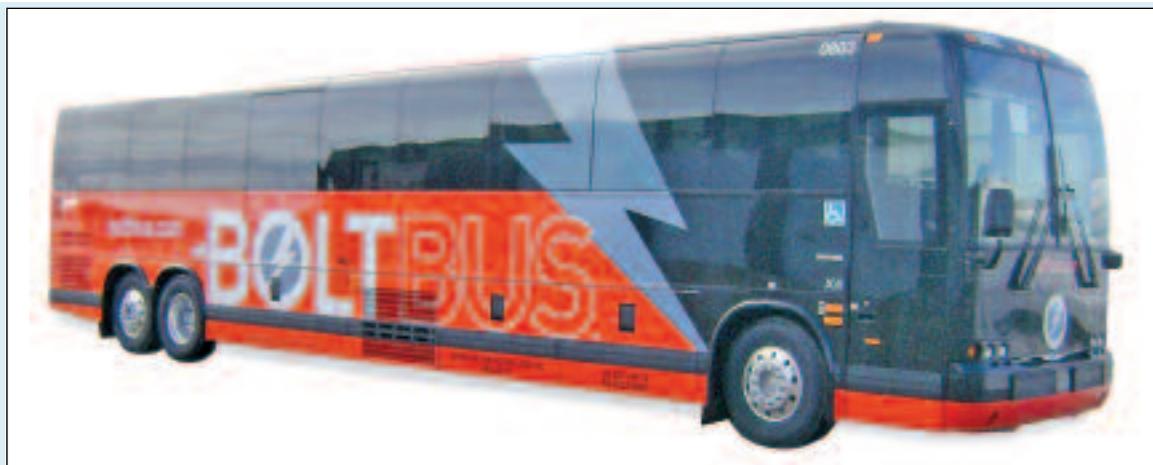
northeastern U.S.

Greyhound and Peter Pan reportedly are investing \$15 million in the new service.

The line-run companies expect to keep BoltBus fares low in a large part by selling most tickets online. (Just 10 percent of Greyhound tickets reportedly are sold via the Web.)

The target customer groups of BoltBus are young people, business travelers and tourists who increasingly are riding intercity coaches, boosting line-run bus traffic across the U.S. after years of decline.

Reasons for the increased ridership include rising gasoline prices, frustration with traffic, hassles associated with airline travel, new



BoltBus, featuring new Prevost X3-45 coaches, will compete with ethnic curbside operators in the northeast U.S.

operators, and cheap fares.

BoltBus coaches initially are offering eight-times daily runs between Washington and New York on new Prevost coaches, some outfitted with leather seats. Tickets cost from \$1 to \$25 each way, with the

lowest fares going to early bookers.

A frequent-rider program will give customers a free ticket after eight trips.

Fares for the Boston-New York route haven't been announced but will likely be in line with the New

York-to-Washington fares.

Robert Schwarz, executive vice president of Peter Pan, said BoltBuses at first are expected to appeal to college students, but they are aimed at other demographics as well.

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# FTA says shuttles in Tampa should be operated privately

TAMPA, FLA. — Tampa Bay Devil Ray baseball fans likely will be using a different parking lot shuttle service for the team's most-attended games this season.

The Federal Transit Administration suggested in an informal ruling that the service provided by a Tampa business organization,

using transit-owned trolley buses, qualifies as charter service under new federal regulations and will need to be offered to private bus operators.

Paul Jensen, counsel for the FTA's regional office in Atlanta, said the service is considered charter because it is paid for by a third

party and it is not part of normal daily service, but rather is conducted on an irregular basis and for a limited duration.

The shuttle runs 18 to 20 times a year during the baseball season to accommodate the larger-than-usual crowds that typically attend Rays' games against popular teams like

the New York Yankees and Boston Red Sox.

Jensen's ruling came in response to a request for an advisory opinion sought by an unlikely duo — a private coach company that would like to operate the shuttle and a transit agency that has financial ties to the business group that

has been providing the game-day shuttles.

Private operator Brian Scott, vice president of Escot Bus Lines in Largo, Fla., and transit executive William Steele, who was acting executive director of Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority when the

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# THE DOCKET

## Minnesotans to pay more in fuel taxes

ST. PAUL, Minn. — In an era when some states are reducing fuel taxes or not increasing them, the Minnesota legislature has decided to boost that state's fuel taxes by a nickel a gallon this year.

Effective April 1, the state tax on both gasoline and diesel fuel rises to 22 cents a gallon, up from 20 cents. Another 3 cents a gallon will be tacked on in the fall. The last fuel tax increase in Minnesota was 20 years ago.

The increase came after a contentious fight over a \$6.6 billion transportation finance bill that legislators adopted over the veto of Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty.

The new law increases funding for highway maintenance, authorizes the sale and issuance of bonds, establishes a bridge improvement program, and boosts the fuel tax this year and for the next four years.

The tax will gradually increase through 2012, culminating in an additional 3.5 cents per gallon for diesel and gasoline. Other aspects of the bill include:

- An increase in the length of time new vehicle owners will pay higher registration fees
- An increase in state car rental fees from 3 to 5 percent
- A one-quarter of a percent sales tax hike in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area dedicated to mass transit projects

Supporters of the bill named the I-35W bridge collapse in Minneapolis, the poor condition of Minnesota roadways, bottlenecks and gridlock in urban areas, and the opportunity for job creation as reasons why the bill was adopted.

Gov. Pawlenty had successfully vetoed the legislation twice

## State & Provincial Fuel Tax Rates

Four states reduced fuel-tax rates during the past six months while seven posted increases. Here are the updated rates for all states and provinces as of Jan. 1, 2008

| State             | Gasoline | Diesel | State                                       | Gasoline | Diesel |
|-------------------|----------|--------|---|----------|--------|
| Alabama           | 16       | 19     | North Carolina                              | 29.9     | 29.9   |
| Alaska            | 8        | 8      | North Dakota                                | 23       | 23     |
| Arizona           | 18       | 26     | Ohio  | 28       | 28     |
| Arkansas          | 21.8     | 22.8   | Oklahoma                                    | 16       | 13     |
| California        | 43.09    | 36.6   | Oregon                                      | 24       | 0      |
| Colorado          | 22       | 20.5   | Pennsylvania                                | 31.2     | 38.1   |
| Connecticut       | 43.9     | 37     | Rhode Island                                | 30       | 30     |
| Delaware          | 23       | 22     | South Carolina                              | 16.75    | 16.75  |
| Dist. of Columbia | 20       | 20     | South Dakota                                | 24       | 24     |
| Florida           | 20.69    | 31.07  | Tennessee                                   | 21.4     | 18.4   |
| Georgia           | 15.8     | 16.7   | Texas                                       | 20       | 20     |
| Hawaii            | 16       | 16     | Utah  | 24.5     | 24.5   |
| Idaho             | 25       | 25     | Vermont                                     | 20       | 26     |
| Illinois          | 34.3     | 37.5   | Virginia                                    | 21.6     | 21     |
| Indiana           | 29       | 27     | Washington                                  | 36       | 34     |
| Iowa              | 21.7     | 23.5   | West Virginia                               | 32.2     | 32.2   |
| Kansas            | 24       | 26     | Wisconsin                                   | 32.9     | 32.9   |
| Kentucky          | 22.9     | 24.2   | Wyoming                                     | 14       | 14     |
| Louisiana         | 20       | 20     | U. S.                                       | 18.4     | 24.4   |
| Maine             | 29.28    | 29.32  | <i>Tax Rate in U.S. is cents per gallon</i> |          |        |
| Maryland          | 23.5     | 24.25  | Province                                    | Gasoline | Diesel |
| Massachusetts     | 21       | 21     | Alberta                                     | 9        | 9      |
| Michigan          | 37.79    | 33.32  | British Columbia                            | 14.5     | 15     |
| Minnesota         | 20       | 20     | Manitoba                                    | 11.5     | 11.5   |
| Mississippi       | 18.4     | 18.4   | New Brunswick                               | 10.7     | 16.9   |
| Missouri          | 17       | 17     | Newfoundland                                | 16.5     | 16.5   |
| Montana           | 27.75    | 28.5   | Nova Scotia                                 | 15.5     | 15.4   |
| Nebraska          | 23.9     | 23.3   | Ontario                                     | 14.7     | 14.3   |
| Nevada            | 23.81    | 27.81  | Prince Edward Is.                           | 15.8     | 20.2   |
| New Hampshire     | 20.625   | 20.625 | Quebec                                      | 15.2     | 16.2   |
| New Jersey        | 14.5     | 17.5   | Saskatchewan                                | 15       | 15     |
| New Mexico        | 18.875   | 22.875 | <i>Tax Rate in Canada = cents per liter</i> |          |        |
| New York          | 38.4     | 36.65  |   |          |        |

before he was finally overridden by lawmakers. Trimming \$2 billion from the bill's total also is credited with securing the 91-41 vote in the House and 47-20 margin in the state Senate.

The override was uncharacteristic of the Minnesota legislature, which has not overridden a veto in the past six years and has only 14 veto overrides to its credit since 1939. The legislature had not increased state fuel taxes since 1988.

### Fuel taxes down, up

Fuel taxes decreased in four states during the last nine months of 2007, new figures show (see

fuel-tax table above).

At the same time, taxes on gasoline and diesel fuel went up in seven states, but all of the increases appear to have resulted from escalators in state laws that set fuel taxes.

The states posting tax decreases, which were generally confined to gasoline and not diesel fuel, were Florida, Georgia, Nebraska and Virginia.

The increases came in those states that typically have the highest fuel taxes in the U.S. — California, Connecticut, Illinois, Michigan, New York, North Carolina and West Virginia.

## UCR plan enforcement begins June 1

SANTA FE, N.M. — Most states that are members of the Unified Carrier Registration Plan, which replaced the old Single State Registration System, will begin enforcement of the UCR plan for 2008 on June 1.

Thirty-six of the 39 states that are members of the plan agreed with the June start date, while three states wanted to begin enforcement earlier.

However, and this is important, the vote was nonbinding and at least one state, Illinois, plans to begin enforcement before June 1 for bus and truck operators in that state. There may be others so operators should pay attention to the notice from their state.

Under the federal legislation that created the UCR plan, officials across the nation may detain vehicles operated in interstate

commerce and subject them to enforcement action if they have not paid their UCR fees. States may also conduct audits to determine whether proper fees have been paid.

The type of enforcement action taken will depend on each individual state's rules.

In any event, roadside enforcement for 2008 generally will begin on or about June 1.

## Raid on roadway funds decried by Wis. carriers

MADISON, Wis. — Motor carriers in Wisconsin are being urged to contact their state legislators and ask them to stop Gov. Jim Doyle from using state transportation money to pay for nonroad projects.

The Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association, which operates the Wisconsin Motor Coach Association, is encouraging members to call their legislators and tell them to "stop raiding the transportation fund."

Last month, in response to a projected shortfall in the state budget, Gov. Doyle proposed transferring another \$243 million from the state transportation fund to the general fund.

Since taking office in 2003, Doyle has transferred a total of \$1.1 billion from the transportation fund to help pay for schools and other nontransportation programs.

When calling or writing legislators to oppose transferring transportation money, the association said the following points should be emphasized:

- Wisconsin's diesel fuel tax rate of 32.9 cents per gallon is one of the highest in the nation. (See chart on this page.)

• With a 30 percent increase in annual registration fees recently approved by the legislature, Wisconsin's fees are among the highest in the U.S.

• With the price of diesel fuel approaching \$4 per gallon and no let-up in sight, many carriers are struggling financially.

Tom Howells, president of the Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association, said his members are extremely frustrated. "We have

one of the highest fuel taxes in the country. The price of diesel fuel is rising. Then the legislature raises truck registration fees by 30 percent.

*'Why did they raise the registration fees by as much as \$600... and then spend the money on something besides transportation?'*

"Now the governor proposes additional raids on the transportation fund. Why did they raise the registration fees by as much as \$600 per truck when they just turn around and spend the money on something besides transportation?" Howells asked.

Wisconsin operators can contact their legislators by calling the legislative hotline at (800) 362-9472. Legislators also can be found by going to <http://waml.legis.state.wi.us/>.

The following state leaders also should be contacted:

- Gov. Jim Doyle: (608) 266-1212
- Speaker of the Assembly Mike Huesch: (608) 266-3387
- Majority Leader of the State Senate Russ Decker: (608) 266-2502
- Assembly Co-Chair, Finance Committee Kitty Rhoades: (608) 266-1526
- Senate Co-Chair, Finance Committee Sen. Mark Miller: (608) 266-9170

## Bus incident bill advances in Ill.

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. — Legislation aimed at protecting emergency personnel working along highways is making its way through the Illinois General Assembly.

House Bill 4131, better known as Shib's Law, would give firefighters the authority to close roadways and highway lanes while they are working in emergency situations.

The bill was drafted in response to the death last July of

Sesser, Ill., firefighter James 'Shib' Miller, who was struck and killed by a Greyhound bus as Miller and other firefighters were finishing up at a trailer fire on Interstate 57.

After Miller's death, fellow Sesser firefighters lobbied for legislation that would protect emergency responders in similar situations. Rep. John Bradley sponsored the bill that is making its way through the state House.

# California to enforce engine tag rule with penalties

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Diesel engines in motorcoaches operating in or driving through California must have the manufacturer's engine data tag or the operator can be fined hundreds of dollars.

Citations issued by the California Air Resources Board for engine data tags that are missing, or have been tampered with, now carry penalties of as much as \$800, the agency has announced.

The tags, which the Air Resources Board calls "emission control labels," indicate the engine's

compliance with federal emission standards that were in force at the time the engine was manufactured.

The rule applies to 1974 and newer engines.

Although a regulation requiring emission control labels (engine data tags) took effect a year ago, there was a yearlong non-penalty phase.

The nonpenalty period has now expired, and "the registered owner of a vehicle without a proper label will get an automatic \$300 ticket," says Karen Caesar, Air Resources

Board spokeswoman.

"Even if the (label) is installed within 45 days, they will still have

to pay the \$300. If they don't, a late fee will be added."

Caesar said that while the Air

Resources Board hasn't determined an exact amount for the late fee, it could be as high as \$500.

## Cummins meets Calif. idle rules

COLUMBUS, Ind. — The complete line of new Cummins on-highway diesel engines now meet clean-idle requirements in California, allowing those engines to idle beyond the state Air Resources Board five-minute limit, Cummins has announced.

Cummins' 2008 ISX, ISM, ISL, ISC and ISB engines meet the new regulation by generating less than the 30-gram-per-horsepower-per-hour limit for emissions of oxides of nitrogen, or NOx, at idle.

Cummins customers can spec-

ify what the company calls a 50-state "Clean Idle Certified" engine option when ordering a new motorcoach.

Engines for the 2007 model year can be updated to meet the five-minute limit at Cummins distributors and achieve the 50-state Clean Idle Certified status.

Updating involves reprogramming the engine's electronic control module and costs \$300 to \$500. Distributors also will affix a sticker to the coach that alerts enforcement officers that its engine is idle-legal.

## Connecticut targets snow/ice removal from vehicle roofs

HARTFORD, Conn. — Conn. Gov. M. Jodi Rell has thrown her support behind a proposed law that would heavily penalize drivers who fail to remove snow and ice from their vehicles.

The bill is primarily aimed at truckers who fail to get rid of snow and ice that can fly off and pose a significant safety risk to other drivers.

However, the law would also apply to operators of all vehicles, including autos and buses.

Rell calls sheets of ice and snow that fly off "ice missiles."

The transportation committee of the Connecticut House has approved a measure that would prompt fines of up to \$1,000 for drivers who leave snow and ice on their vehicles, causing a crash or injury when it flies off.

Legislators pushing the bill want to crack down on truckers

who don't reduce the risk of ice missiles. The fines would apply to all drivers, but commercial tractor-trailers and box trucks will likely be targeted.

One problem, climbing up on the roof of a trailer to remove snow and ice is dangerous business. Many drivers have slipped and fallen off their equipment trying to clear their roofs.

The American Trucking Associations says it will help find ways for drivers to clear their vehicles without risking injury. The trucking group says it will ask the American Transportation Research Institute to study the issue, and to suggest new technology or equipment that helps clear roofs without the danger of slipping off.

Fleet owners who push drivers to climb trailers risk breaking safety and worker rights laws, the ATA noted.

## Trucker fined big for violations

ST. JOSEPH, Minn. — A St. Joseph trucking company that committed rather routine violations of federal motor carrier safety regulations has received a not so routine fine by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

JDR Express received civil penalties of \$6,180, the agency said.

An investigation in February revealed the company used a driver who had not been medically examined or certified in the previous 24 months; required or allowed a driver to drive after being on duty for more than 70 hours in eight consecutive days, and used a vehicle that had not received periodic inspections.

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# Say what? Pollution becomes byproduct of 'clean' fuels

Repeated oil spills from the Alabama Biodiesel Corp. plant outside Moundville, Ala., and similar spills from biofuel plants in the Midwest, have many people scratching their heads over the seeming incongruity of pollution from an industry that sells products with the promise of blue skies and clear streams.

The oily, fetid discharges, however, can be hazardous to birds and fish.

"Ironic, isn't it?" says Barbara Lynch, who supervises environmental compliance inspectors for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "This is big business. There's a lot of money involved."

Iowa leads the nation in biofuel production, with 42 biodiesel and ethanol refineries in production and 18 more plants under construction, according to the Renewable Fuels Association.

In the summer of 2006, a Cargill biodiesel plant in Iowa Falls improperly disposed of 135,000 gallons of liquid oil and grease, which ran into a stream killing hundreds of fish.

According to the National

Biodiesel Board, a trade organization, biodiesel is nontoxic, biodegradable and suitable for sensitive environments, but scientists say that position understates its potential environmental impact.

"They're really considered nontoxic, as you would expect," said Bruce Hollebone, a researcher with Environment Canada in Ottawa and one of the world's leading experts on the environmental impact of vegetable oil and glycerin spills.

"You can eat the stuff, after all," Hollebone said. "But as with most organic materials, oil and glycerin deplete the oxygen content of water very quickly, and that will suffocate fish and other organisms. And for birds, a vegetable oil spill is just as deadly as a crude oil spill."

Other states also have felt the impact.

Leanne Tippet Mosby, a deputy division director of environmental quality for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, said she was warned a year ago by colleagues in other states that biodiesel producers were dumping

glycerin, the main byproduct of biodiesel production, contaminated with methanol, another waste product that is classified as hazardous.

Glycerin, an alcohol that is normally nontoxic, can be sold for secondary uses, but it must be cleaned first, a process that is expensive and complicated. Expanded production of biodiesel has flooded the market with excess glycerin, making it less cost-effective to clean and sell.

Tippet Mosby did not have to wait long to see the problem. In October, an anonymous caller reported that a tanker truck was dumping milky white goop into Belle Fountain Ditch, one of the many man-made channels that drain Missouri's Bootheel region. That substance turned out to be glycerin from a biodiesel plant.

In January, a grand jury indicted a Missouri businessman in the discharge, which killed at least 25,000 fish and wiped out the population of fat pocketbook mussels, an endangered species.

Back in Alabama, Nelson Brooke of Black Warrior Riverkeeper, a nonprofit organiza-

tion dedicated to protecting and restoring the Black Warrior River and its tributaries, received a report in September 2006 of a fish kill that stretched 20 miles downstream from Moundville. Even though Brooke said he found oil in the water around the dead fish, the state Department of Environmental Management determined that natural, seasonal changes in oxygen levels in the water could have been the culprit. The agency did not charge Alabama Biodiesel.

In August, Black Warrior Riverkeeper, in a complaint filed in U.S. District Court, documented at least 24 occasions when oil was spotted in the water near the plant.

Clay Tindal, a Tuscaloosa, Ala., attorney representing the refinery, says the suit's claims are "sheer speculation, conjecture and unsupported bald allegations." Tindal said that "for various reasons," the plant was not now producing fuel.

The company has filed a motion to dismiss the complaint on the ground that it has entered into a settlement agreement with state officials that requires it to pay a \$12,370 fine and to obtain proper

discharge permits.

Don Scott, an engineer for the National Biodiesel Board, acknowledges that some producers have had problems complying with environmental rules but says those violations have been infrequent in an industry that nearly doubled in size in one year, to 160 plants in the United States at the end of 2007 from 90 plants at the end of 2006.

Scott said that the board had been working with state and environmental agencies to educate member companies and that the troubles were "growing pains."

Lynch said some of the violations were the result of an industry that was inexperienced in the manufacturing process and its wastes. But in other instances, she said, companies are skirting the permit process to get their plants up and running faster.

For some, the troubles of the industry seem to outweigh its benefits.

"They're environmental Jimmy Swaggarts, in my opinion," said Rep. Brian Bilbray, R-Calif. "What is being sold as green fuel just doesn't pencil out."

# Study confirms that first hour of driving holds most risk

BLACKSBURG, Va. — A new study underscores earlier evidence that the greatest risk of an accident occurs in the first hour of driving, and that the risk in the second through 10th or 11th hours is relatively flat.

The study by Richard Hanowski, director of the Center for Truck and Bus Safety at the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, found that the risk of a critical

driving incident is significantly higher in the initial hour of driving than in all other driving hours - and that there is no statistical difference in risk between the second through 10th or 11th hours.

In fact, a significant spike in the rate of critical incidents was found during the first driving-hour and was found across many different analyses.

Additional analyses found a

strong time-of-day effect which, upon closer examination, appeared to have resulted from hour-by-hour traffic density variations.

The study authors hypothesized that exposure to heavy traffic conditions, and possible sleep inertia and an increase in complex driving situations that may be typical in the first driving hour, may have influenced the increase in critical incidents recorded in the

initial driving hour.

The Virginia Tech research underscores the first-hour spike found by the federal government's Large Truck Crash Causation Study, which reported that the first hour had the highest raw percentage (14.7 percent) of crashes, Hanowski said.

Still, the data on this issue is mixed.

A 2005 study, for example,

found that risk increased as driving hours accumulate, Hanowski noted.

Hanowski said his analysis, which was completed in January and is now in peer review, is based on the largest on-road naturalistic study ever conducted. It includes 2.3 million miles of driving data and 190,000 hours of sleep data from wrist actigraphs worn by the drivers in the study.

## How to contact us

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## Election

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Republican administration.

Teamsters President James Hoffa believes Sen. Obama will fight to rebuild the nation's transportation infrastructure. "He will work with us to address critical issues from our ports to our highways, rails and airports. We need a president who is focused on rebuilding America and Barack Obama will be that president," says Hoffa.

Hoffa told reporters in Washington during a briefing that support for the Employee Free Choice Act, or card check, was a "litmus test" for his union. Both Clinton and Obama have pledged to back the measure, Hoffa said.

McCain not only opposes the measure but co-sponsored a bill that would eliminate voluntary card checks as a way for employees to organize.

Beyond labor issues, the election could have a profound impact on bus and truck industry safety.

"It's going to be the first time in the history of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration that someone other than President Bush will appoint the administrator," said Rod Nofziger, director of government affairs for the Owner-Operator Independent Drivers

Association. "It should be interesting to see how the culture of the agency changes with a new administration, whether that new administration is Republican or Democrat."

Regardless of the election outcome, the effect on FMCSA and the Department of Transportation's safety agenda figures to be the same.

"I would not be surprised if (commercial vehicle) safety was not high on the agenda of a McCain administration or whoever the Democrat is," said Dick Henderson, director of government affairs for the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance. "I would have every reason to believe that it is going to be very high on the agenda, at the top of the agenda."

Henderson said McCain's record in the Senate indicated he would elevate the importance of vehicle safety under his watch.

"Looking at Sen. McCain, for example — when he was chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee on highway safety — auto safety, truck safety was very high on his agenda," he said.

McCain chaired the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee from 1997 to 2001, then again from 2001 to 2003. A vocal critic of the USDOT's record at the time, he

sponsored and shepherded through Congress the Motor Carrier Safety Improvement Act of 1999, the legislation that created the FMCSA.

Given his experience on the Senate commerce committee, McCain would seem better positioned to address transportation issues immediately. From a broad standpoint, he probably knows more about transportation from his time on the committee and in the Senate. One advantage for McCain: He doesn't need to learn the language of transportation.

Though Obama and Clinton do not have McCain's experience in the Senate — Obama was elected to the body in 2004 and Clinton was elected four years earlier — both have announced plans during the campaign to repair and bolster U.S. infrastructure.

"For years, we have stood by while our national infrastructure has crumbled and decayed," Obama has said. "For our economy, our safety and our workers, we have to rebuild America. I'm proposing a National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank that will invest \$60 billion over 10 years. This investment will multiply into almost half a trillion dollars of additional infrastructure spending and generate nearly 2 million new jobs."

In response to the Aug. 1 col-

lapse of the Interstate 35W bridge in Minneapolis, Clinton called the deterioration of the nation's infrastructure "a silent crisis."

She said that as president she would "invest \$10 billion over 10 years in an "Emergency Repair Fund" to begin addressing the extensive backlog of emergency infrastructure repairs.

Regardless of which senator takes the oath of office next January, it is likely that there would be a strong emphasis on safety, certainly with a Democratic president, especially assuming the Democrats retain control of Congress. And the impact of that would be felt right away in the 2009 reauthorization of the federal highway and transit legislation.

The congressional elections are another piece of the 2009 political puzzle.

With all 435 seats in the House of Representatives and 35 seats up in the Senate, the landscape for the next president could be vastly different from what it is now — Democrats enjoy a 51-49 majority, thanks to two independent senators and a 233-202 edge in the House.

If the Republicans maintain a pretty firm position in terms of their numbers in the Senate, that could impede legislation and make it difficult for a president, espe-

## Calendar

### APRIL 2008

**2 Pennsylvania Bus Association 2008 Marketplace**, Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex, Harrisburg. Info: [www.pabus.org](http://www.pabus.org), or call (717) 236-9042.

**2-4 National Tour Operator Spring Meet**, Mohegan Sun, Uncasville, Conn. Info: Go to [www.nta.travel](http://www.nta.travel).

**9-13 Heritage Clubs International 24th Annual Peer Group Travel Conference**, Holiday Inn Select, Bloomington, Minn. Info: [www.heritageclubs.com](http://www.heritageclubs.com), or call (877) 881-0229.

**13 Eastern Bus Maintenance Management Conference**, East Elmhurst, N.Y. Info: Go to [www.ebmmc.org](http://www.ebmmc.org).

**17-19 Tourism Cares for America**, Louis Armstrong Park, New Orleans. Info: Go to [www.tourismcares.org](http://www.tourismcares.org), or call (781) 821-5990.

cially if it's a Democratic president, to sort of have their way with the Congress, and many see that as being good for the transportation industry.

But, if Republican numbers slip any more in the Senate, the industry could be at greater jeopardy.



# RELIABILITY DOWN THE ROAD

# Coach graphics: Do they add value, enhance your image?

By Dave Millhouser  
ABC Companies

It was the oddest thing.

Suddenly, the Massachusetts-based charter company began getting business inquiries from way outside its turf. Within a couple of hours the mystery became obvious; the telephone queries were heading West at about the same pace as the company's new coach.

The operator had just purchased the bus, which came with a stunning mural graphics scheme. The manufacturer had offered a discount on the decal package if the operator would display the bus at the UMA Motorcoach Expo in Albuquerque.

All along the route from New England to New Mexico, people were intrigued and called the toll-free number on the coach.

While this is anecdotal, it does seem clear that a coach's outward appearance does have value. The real question is how much, and in what form?

There are several ways to go, and since I'm not too bright (you did catch the graphics pun, right?), I'll just chunk them out there for your consideration.

The traditional concept is that a coach is a rolling billboard, advertising your company. You can establish a corporate identity by making your whole fleet consistent. Think of the companies you respect the most and I'll bet their coaches offer a uniform, quality image.

In the past, it was costly to do anything really striking. With the advent of modern decals anything you can conceive is possible. You dream it up, a computer transforms your dream to a digital image, and the image is transmitted to gigundous printers to be applied to sticky plastic that is then installed on the bus.

Multiple colors, logos and exciting patterns are relatively inexpensive. An added benefit is that changing schemes (or removing them when you sell the coach) also is reasonable.

Manufacturers have folks devoted to helping with these designs, and there are third-party vendors, like Turbo Images, that offer reflective graphics that are stunning.

There's little doubt that great appearance adds perceived value to your coach. Gee whiz, that's the

reason limousines are Lincolns, not Yugos. The question is: How much value? Best guess... each market is different but a nifty looking coach should give you a leg up in convincing your customers you provide quality.

One clever Colorado operator, in an effort to find out how much appearance contributed to its sales, applied unique graphics to a fleet involved in a new marketing effort. The scheme referenced a Website that was **only** used in this effort...and it counted the hits. A unique phone number could accomplish the same thing and give you an idea of what value appearance adds.

Graphics **do** cost, and it's important (as with every coach option) to decide how much benefit you're getting for your money.

One derivative of the "rolling billboard" concept is the brand-new Green Operators Motor Coach Council ([www.gocoach.org](http://www.gocoach.org)) effort to promote the motorcoach as an ecologically responsible way to travel.

Members are using sections of their coaches to spread the bus industry's message that, in addition to convenience, coaches save

fuel and reduce congestion and pollution. There have been few industrywide marketing efforts in the past and, at least in the early stages, graphics play an important role.

Another alternative is to "wrap" the coach in advertising. Transit authorities have been gobbling up this revenue for years. There are advertisers who will pay a lot, if you're willing to cover your entire coach with their message. The potential compounds if you're operating charters or line runs in an area they think is critical.

This opportunity may be seasonal or related to a major event (convention, Super Bowl and the like). If you decide to pursue this opportunity with an ad agency, be aware of a couple of caveats.

The advertiser will pay for the wrap, but someone also will have to pay to remove it, returning the coach to normal. Account for that. This coach will not contribute to your corporate identity while it's in disguise but, in this arrangement, it is easy to figure out the exact value of graphics.

A Maine operator once showed up at a charter with a brand new

coach — all white. The customer complained about having to use an "old" bus. The lesson he took away from this incident is that appearance does influence charter customers, as well as add value.

The irony is that this operator is known for his creativity. Almost every one of his coaches is different, the one thing they have in common is spectacular graphics. It's crafty because he's got folks in New England convinced that, every time a beautiful bus goes by it's his. Every good-looking coach somehow contributes to his corporate legend.

In fact, every time my wife sees a coach that's interesting, she calls me to say she "saw another one of Joe's buses." She's convinced he has thousands.

*Dave Millhouser is a marketing consultant for ABC Companies. Contact him at: [dave\\_millhouser@hotmail.com](mailto:dave_millhouser@hotmail.com).*



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## Slow down

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

about saving fuel every day," said Cummings, "We're asking them to cut idling time, shorten their trips and cut every mile off a trip they can."

Scott McGaughey, vice president of MBI Charters in Naples, Fla., said he gave up a long-time practice of buying fuel from a supplier whose price was a little higher, but who was convenient for his drivers. Now he has his drivers fill up where ever they can find the lowest price. "If they see something cheap when they're on the road, they'll even pull over and top off," he said.

Scott Holmes of Mayo Tours in West Monroe, La., went a step further and installed a diesel storage tank at his garage so he can buy fuel in larger quantities and at lower prices. "It's not too much of a difference but in the long run it will save us money," he added.

In addition to looking for bargains at the pump, operators are instructing drivers to constantly be on the watch for other ways to reduce fuel consumption, including regularly checking the tires on their coach to make sure they are properly inflated.

"I have my drivers shut down if they are sitting for more than 10 minutes now," McGaughey added.

## Rates vs. surcharges

Although fuel surcharges have become fairly commonplace in various parts of the country, many operators are holding back on them and, instead, increasing rates.

Alphonso Hernandez of Five Star Tours in San Diego recently tacked on a 6 percent fuel surcharge, while Wright put on a 3 percent surcharge and said it could go higher if diesel continues to climb. Bohn also added a small fuel surcharge, mostly to cover the higher fuel costs that his drivers encounter when they take trips to the East and West coasts.

"I just can't do that," Cummings said of a fuel surcharge. "If a church or youth group raised money for a trip, I can't tell them at the last minute that they need another \$200."

Martin Gunther, president of Gunther Charters in Hanover Md., agreed, emphasizing that it would be unfair to his customers to increase their price once they have signed up for a trip. "That just alienates folks," he said.

However, Gunther did increase his charter rates by 10 percent recently as a hedge against fuel increases and other expenses that have gone up as well.

Peg Motley of Wheatland Express in Spokane, Wash., increased her rates by \$1 a mile, Hernandez

raised his by 9 percent, and Holmes increased his by about 20 percent, but worked them in gradually over a 12-month period.

McGaughey also hiked MBI rates between 1 and 10 percent, depending on the number of miles rolled up during a trip. "If the bus goes to the hotel, then the golf course where it sits for five hours before going back to the hotel then there would be a very small increase," he said. "But if it is a longer trip then it would warrant a higher surcharge."

## Bringing in business

In addition to cost-saving measures, operators are zeroing in on ways to bring in new business and new cash as well.

"We're doing grass roots marketing and using the Internet to do it," said Hernandez, adding that the effort is targeting business and schools.

He said Five Star representatives regularly review the list of convention and conferences prepared by the San Diego Visitors and Convention Bureau and then sends e-mails to the businesses, offering them shuttle services. "It's been working, too," he noted.

Hernandez said the company also keeps in regular touch with schools in the area via e-mail so it knows of any school trips that

might need bus service.

Wright is going after more convention shuttle business for B & W, too, but in areas outside his Kalamazoo base where business has slowed. His advertising and promotions have landed him jobs in Detroit, Chicago and even some cities in Florida. "But they all know that things are slow in Michigan, so we're not getting top dollar for the shuttles," he added. "But that's better than having our buses sitting."

Cummings' Adventure Bus also is looking beyond its Sumiton hometown and is bidding for work in other nearby cities, too. In addition the company has begun offering discounts for trips taken early in the week and has spruced up its Internet page in an effort to draw more hits and more business.

Motley said Wheatland is pushing an advertising campaign designed to get more riders on its airport shuttles. "We're trying to be more visible so more people know us," she said. "If we can get more passengers on our shuttle runs then it will help cover the fuel costs more."

## The equipment game

Equipment also has become a money-saving target for some operators.

McGaughey said he recently swapped out four of his 10 coaches

for new models and it already is paying off in fuel efficiency. Plus, he said the new coaches have given him the added bonus of being able to shut down when parked, even in the Florida heat. "These buses cool down so much faster than our older ones so we can turn them off when they're sitting and still get them cooled quickly when we need to," he added.

Gunther plans to go even further. He's turning around his entire fleet of 20 buses and not only expects to have less maintenance costs, but will be able to bank some money, too. He said he has a substantial amount of equity in his fleet of 2000 model coaches and will be able to put enough of a down payment on the new buses to keep his interest rate and monthly payments low and still have money left over.

Meantime, some operators are calling for federal help.

"We have to tell our congressmen and senators that they have to come up with some type of alternate fuel," offered Cummings.

Wright suggested, too, that the motorcoach industry hook up with the trucking industry to increase its clout and campaign for the federal government to find a way to reduce the cost of fuel.

"We have to get the prices down," he stressed.



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## BoltBus

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

"With gas costs and the prices on Web fares today, it makes no economic sense for people to drive their auto from Boston to New York," he told a Boston newspaper.

BoltBus tickets can be purchased online, at [www.boltbus.com](http://www.boltbus.com), until two hours before departure. Ticket purchasers receive an e-mail confirmation that also serves as their boarding pass.

Greyhound said it is not overselling BoltBus schedules so every person getting a boarding pass will be guaranteed a seat on the bus

they are ticketed.

In addition, BoltBus is offering walk-up fares.

"The price of our walk-up fares will be available on our Web site and will typically be 30 percent higher than our highest advance-purchase fare," says Greyhound. "We will accept cash, Visa, MasterCard, Discover, American Express, and Diners Club credit cards issued in the U.S."

To conduct a walk-up, credit-card purchase, passengers will need a picture ID. Debit cards also will be accepted.

BoltBus passengers are being asked to arrive at the pickup point a

minimum of 15 minutes before departure and bring their online confirmation/boarding pass.

Borrowing a page from Southwest Airlines, BoltBus e-mail confirmations have a large number printed in the top right corner. The letter designates to which group passengers are assigned and will be boarded.

Members of the BoltBus loyalty program will board first, followed by customers who purchased tickets online, and lastly any walk-up passengers.

Passengers who've forgotten or lost their e-mail confirmations won't be left behind. After the

other groups have boarded, those people who have misplaced their confirmations can approach the driver, explain their plight and show the driver a picture ID. The driver, says Greyhound, will be able to verify the individual has a reservation.

Walk-up fares are being sold on a first-come, first-served basis if seats are available.

Greyhound says BoltBus coaches have fewer seats than standard buses, adding about three extra inches of legroom per seat.

And while the coaches are equipped with WiFi hot spots, Greyhound warns there are areas on

the trip that the Internet service may be unavailable. The service is free.

BoltBus is running between Metro Center at 11th and G streets NW in Washington and two stops in New York City — near Penn Station at 33rd Street and 7th Avenue and in south Manhattan at 6th Avenue and Canal Street.

For the Washington-New York runs, BoltBus is competing with such cut-rate curbside operators as Washington Deluxe, Apex Bus, Vamoose Express and DC2NY, a service that started in July between Dupont Circle and Penn Station in New York with a stop at the McPherson Square Metro station.

## Tampa shuttles

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

opinion was requested, have worked together on other charter issues in the past.

"It is rare that they work it out and work together to resolve their issues," Jensen noted, adding that motorcoach and transit people usually are on opposite sides in most complaints about charter rules violations by public transit agencies.

The issue in Florida centers on Pinellas Suncoast Transit's association with the St. Petersburg Down-

town Partnership, a business organization that receives a \$140,000 annual subsidy from the transit agency and leases five trolley buses from it for a circulator service — the Looper — that it operates in the city's business district.

Scott says the business group often uses the trolleys to provide illegal charter service for special events, and last year he filed a formal complaint with the FTA over the issue. That complaint still is being investigated by the FTA.

Pinellas Suncoast Transit said at the time it did not want to be in

violation of any federal regulations and agreed to cooperate with investigators and review its relationship with the partnership. Although the transit agency did not operate any of the questionable charters, it could be penalized because it owns the trolleys and federal funds were used to acquire them.

Pinellas Suncoast Transit spokesman Bob Lasher said the agency's new executive director, Tim Garling, has made it clear the agency's mission is to support community transportation objectives in a way that complies with all FTA, state

and local rules. "The Looper is currently reviewing options that will ensure compliance with the FTA charter rules," he added.

Scott said if the baseball game shuttles or the circulator service are offered to private carriers, his company would bid for the contracts.

The issues with Looper first surfaced about two years ago when Scott learned the business partnership was using transit-owned trolleys to provide transportation service for community events. He said the executive director at the time told him he would take care of the

problem.

However, last August, Scott stopped by a meeting of the transit board and found out the situation had not been corrected, leading to him filing the complaint with the FTA.

Meanwhile, the business partnership has been brokering some charter work to private companies but Scott has not been offered any of the work.

"Since I'm the person who rained on their parade, none of that business comes my way," he said. "I am waiting for a thank you card from my competitors."

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## 'Emissions tax' proposed in B.C.

VICTORIA, British Columbia — British Columbia is poised to become the first jurisdiction in North America to impose a direct "emissions" tax on users of all fossil fuels — diesel, gasoline, natural gas, coal, propane and home-heating oil.

The tax, which has been introduced by provincial Finance Minister Carole Taylor in the 2008 budget proposal, will begin at 2.76 Canadian cents per liter (roughly equivalent to 10.5 cents per gallon) for diesel and home heating oil.

It will be slightly cheaper (2.41 cents per liter) for gasoline.

Under Taylor's proposal, the tax will rise gradually over the next five years to approximately 32 Canadian cents per gallon for diesel in 2012.

If adopted, the emissions tax will begin July 1. With British Columbia's current diesel fuel tax at 12 Canadian cents per liter, this represents an initial tax increase of 23 percent for diesel.

B.C. taxpayers can avoid the tax in a number of ways:

- Reducing usage
- Increasing efficiency
- Changing fuels
- Adopting new technology
- Applying a combination of approaches

The proposal is described as a "revenue-neutral" method of encouraging consumers to make environmentally responsible choices about their use of fossil fuels.

Proponents of the plan claim the tax will be applied to fossil fuels but will come directly back to the taxpayer in the form of lower income, corporate and small business taxes. This aspect of the proposal means that no part of the money generated is intended to be used by the government as general revenue, nor is it to be applied as incentives to businesses that develop green technology, the traditional method governments use to encourage pollution reduction.

This bit of economic recycling also comes with a built-in protec-

tion for lower-income British Columbians — who, in most circumstances, would be forced to pay for the emissions tax but would not benefit much from lower taxes — by providing an annual credit of \$100 per adult and \$30 per child.

All British Columbians will be granted a one-time, \$100-per-person payment as an incentive to get them motivated to think about how they can reduce their fuel consumption.

Opponents of the bill claim that this form of taxation falls heavily on those businesses that don't have any option but to consume fuel. "We can't put our freight on buses," protested Paul Landry, president of the British Columbia Trucking Association. "We can't transport pianos on public transit."

Critics also claim that provisions in the proposal let big industry and banks off the hook while finding a way to tax ordinary individuals and businesses immediately. There is also concern that the measure will cause fuel-dependent

## Canada schedules upgrades for Quebec border crossing

LACOLLE, Quebec — One of Canada's busiest border crossings will soon be getting a facelift.

The Canadian government is committing \$10 million to expand the Canada Border Services Agency facilities at the Lacolle-Champlain border crossing, joining Quebec with New York state and the U.S. northeast.

The crossing is one of the 10 busiest Canada-United States border check points.

The upgrade project will consist primarily of the expansion of commercial truck and bus processing facilities. The project is designed to improve border infrastructure along the Canadian side of the corridor, enhance safety, and relieve traffic congestion.

businesses to divert some of their operations to the United States.

Currently there is little national leadership in Canada on the issue of emissions. Each province adopts its own measures. British

"This particular investment will provide border services officers with a state of the art facility at Quebec's busiest border crossing," said Jean-Pierre Fortin, Customs Excise Union's first national vice president. "This will improve the flow of legitimate commercial and traveler volumes, thus providing officers with a safer work environment, allowing them to direct more attention on high-risk individuals and goods."

In 2006, Lacolle accounted for approximately 735,000 commercial vehicle crossings (398,000 to the U.S. and 337,000 to Canada), and approximately 2,000 commercial vehicles per day, making it the sixth-busiest Canada-U.S. commercial border crossing.

Columbia has pledged to reduce greenhouse emissions by one-third over the next 12 years.

No other Canadian provinces have yet joined British Columbia in the carbon-tax experiment.

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## ABA blasts NTA over promotion, gets apology

WASHINGTON — American Bus Association President & CEO Peter Pantuso has accused the National Tour Association of conducting a disinformation campaign, attacking ABA's Marketplace.

In a news release and statement posted on the splash page of the ABA Website, Pantuso said the NTA "deliberately chose to misstate" the number of buyer operators at this year's Marketplace in Virginia Beach by 90 percent fewer than were actually at the show.

Not so, says the NTA.

The dust-up occurred when the NTA sent out an e-mail last month promoting its annual convention. Pantuso says the e-mail claimed ABA had 90 percent fewer buyer operators at Marketplace than were

actually there.

Here, specifically, is the language that upset Pantuso: "In just 5 days at NTA you can meet with up to 180 tour operators. That's compared to a maximum of 74 at Marketplace!"

The "actual" number of buyer delegates — those that own motorcoaches, as well as those that don't — at Marketplace 2008 was 717, according to Pantuso.

He accused the NTA of excluding entire categories of buyers attending Marketplace "just to malign ABA."

"I am deeply discouraged and perplexed by NTA's belief they need to falsify numbers in order to appear relevant to their membership," Pantuso said. ... "When the

facts are purposely distorted so drastically, it's not a simple error — it's an attempt to mislead and dupe their own membership.

"I find it disappointing, especially at a time when the industry needs to unite on so many common issues," Pantuso added.

"I'd like to invite NTA to take advantage of the opportunity to correct the record, apologize for their negative attack, and pledge to join us in representing the motorcoach, tour and travel community members by being positive," said Pantuso.

Within hours, NTA did apologize, but it didn't exactly "correct the record."

In a statement, NTA President Lisa Simon, CTP, said that "unfor-

tunately" the content of the promotional NTA e-mail had been misinterpreted.

"We do apologize to our friends at ABA," said Simon. "It was not NTA's intent to disparage an industry partner and in hindsight we could have illustrated the benefits of attending NTA's Convention without a direct comparison.

"We intended to highlight the advantages of being an NTA member and attending the NTA Convention, and we used comparisons that could be viewed as inaccurate.

"We continue to be a strong partner with ABA," Simon continued. "We have passed our apologies on to our friends at ABA... for any misunderstanding this may have created."

## ABA criticizes proposed rule for new drivers

WASHINGTON — The president of the American Bus Association has criticized a proposed federal safety rule that would require new applicants for a CDL to have both classroom and behind-the-wheel training from an accredited program. (See January issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

"The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration proposed rulemaking on entry-level driver training calls for a lot of tests, among other things," writes ABA President Peter Pantuso on the ABA Website. "But it has failed the first test of feasibility — acknowledging that driving a motorcoach is a heckuva lot different than driving a truck."

The proposed federal rule would not only mandate that institutional and motor carrier training programs for entry-level driver trainees be accredited but also:

- Establish qualifications for classroom and skills instructors
- Mandate specified training content for classroom and behind-the-wheel training on an hours rather than performance-oriented basis
- Obligate all entry-level driver trainees to pass both knowledge and skills tests
- Require training institutions or motor carrier companies to issue a certificate of completion and proficiency

"On the surface, these may not seem particularly unreasonable," says Pantuso. "But the proposal was clearly designed strictly from the perspective of truck drivers.

"The evidence is overwhelming: the proposal has no mention of passengers.... The bottom line is this — truck driving schools do not turn out good motorcoach drivers," Pantuso said.

"This is not a swipe at truck driving schools, which are fine institutions for training future truck drivers. But since a bus is not a truck, and there are no motorcoach driving schools, it is bad public policy to cobble together a regulation specifically affecting motorcoach drivers without any regard whatsoever for the specific needs of that group.

While Pantuso says the rule has no discernible benefits, he says it has costs for the industry.

"In the agency's regulatory analysis the cost for this rule, the motorcoach industry is expected to pay \$8.2 million to comply with the new mandate. That's too high a price to pay for something so lacking in any value as currently written," he says.

## NTA priority: Reaching presidential candidates

LEXINGTON, Ky. — As its top advocacy for this year, the National Tour Association wants to inform the presidential candidates about critical travel issues and push for the creation of a director of travel/tourism in the White House.

The NTA also is working to generate more cooperation among its industry partners to address issues affecting the industry.

Here, as determined by the NTA board of directors, are several of the association's top priorities for 2008:

- Presidential candidate outreach and creation of a director of travel/tourism in the White House. NTA is working to emphasize the

importance of travel and tourism to the presidential candidates, as part of its larger goal to establish an executive office of travel and tourism.

- NTA has contacted the 2008 presidential candidates to make them aware of travel-related issues that concern Americans and to share with the candidates what they can do to address them.

- Travel laws, regulations and passenger protection. NTA will continue to keep a close watch on regulations impacting the industry and all travelers.

- Taxes and fees. NTA strongly opposes increased travel and tourism taxes, especially if the rev-

enue is targeted to go to the general fund or toward deficit reduction. The only positive travel industry taxes are those that are "invested" in tourism promotion, infrastructure development and job creation.

- U.S. entry and exit issues. NTA will continue to help the federal government find ways to reduce visa delays, improve access at ports-of-entry, and address other issues creating negative perceptions about visiting the United States, while maintaining the highest possible levels of security.

- National Parks: Access, fees and voluntourism. Last year, NTA secured a re-commitment from the National Park Service to give tour

operators ample notice of any fee increases.

- Travel Promotion Act of 2007. NTA is working with the Travel Industry Association on many issues related to the Discover America Partnership, including the Travel Promotion Act of 2007 (H.R. 3232/S. 1661), which would create the Corporation for Travel Promotion. This nonprofit organization would provide funding necessary for the United States to promote itself as a destination to international markets.

"NTA has never been more strongly positioned to make change happen," said NTA Chairman and CEO Bob Hoelscher, CTP.

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# High-tech Newseum opens April 11 in Washington, D.C.

WASHINGTON — The \$450-million, seven-level Newseum, which is being billed as the world's most interactive museum, will open in the nation's capital on April 11.

In its 250,000 square feet of exhibit space the Newseum will offer visitors 15 theaters, 14 major galleries, 2 broadcast studios and a 4-D time-travel experience.

The building features a glass-fronted "window on the world" facing Pennsylvania Avenue and a 74-foot-high, 50-ton marble tablet emblazoned with the 45 words of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

"This museum is a unique blend of fun and inspiration," said Charles L. Overby, museum CEO. "There is something for everyone here — history, games, films, big screens, photos and major historical artifacts from around the world."

The opening April 11 will include a live broadcast of a portion of ABC's "Good Morning America" from the museum and free admission for the public that day. Special activities will continue throughout opening weekend, including musical entertainment.

Event details are being posted at [www.newseum.org](http://www.newseum.org).

"The Newseum will be a must-see in D.C. from opening day on," said Newseum Executive Director Joe Urschel. "Visitors will be transported through time from the dawn of the age of the printed word to the cutting edge of the digital age through an unparalleled blend of artifacts, photography, exhibits, films and interactive experiences."

Beginning April 12, the Newseum will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily and closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. Admission will be \$20 for adults (13 to 64), \$18 for seniors (65 and older) and \$13 for youth (7 to 12). Children under 7 will be admitted free.

Discounts will be available for groups. Tickets may be purchased online at [www.newseum.org](http://www.newseum.org), by telephone at (888) 639-7386, or in person at the Newseum admissions desk (beginning April 12).

In partnership with the Newseum, *The Washington Post* is sponsoring free admission for group tours of school children from the District of Columbia, 8 counties in Maryland and 11 Virginia cities and counties for the first year of the museum's operation.

The Newseum's 14 major galleries tell the story of news and highlight historic and contemporary First Amendment issues. The Berlin Wall Gallery includes eight sections of the original wall and a 40-foot guard tower originally

located less than a mile from Checkpoint Charlie.

The Pulitzer Prize Photographs Gallery encompasses photographs from every winning entry dating to 1942

The largest gallery is the 8,000-square-foot News Corporation News History Gallery, which fea-

tures more than 350 historic newspaper front pages, newsbooks and magazines that span nearly 500 years and artifacts such as a hotel door from the Watergate burglary and the script from the first "60 Minutes" broadcast.

Throughout the museum are more than 130 interactive stations

featuring more than two dozen experiences.

The museum's 15 theaters include the 535-seat Walter and Leonore Annenberg Theater, where the Newseum will present an original 4-D feature that takes visitors on a time-travel experience through three news events spanning more

than 150 years. The 13-minute film's 3-D effects (visitors wear special glasses) are combined with environmental effects — motion, air gusts, water and more.

The building, located between the White House and the U.S. Capitol on Pennsylvania, offers views of the Capitol and the National Mall.

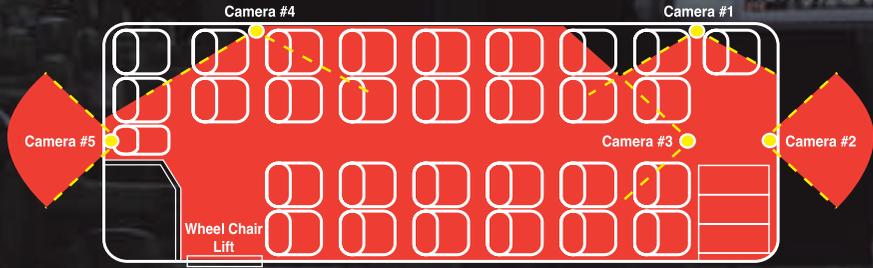


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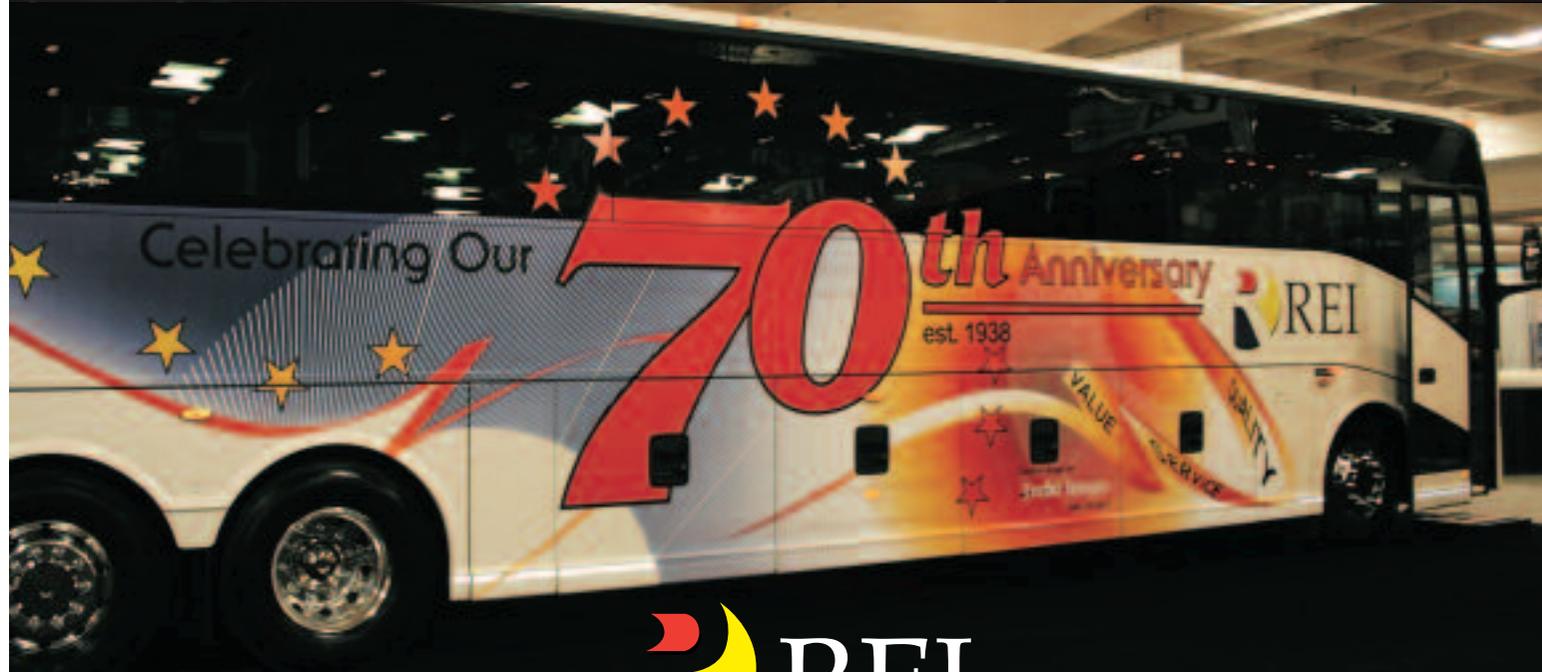
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