

# Bus & Motorcoach NEWS

April 15, 2007

WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE BUS INDUSTRY



## Are coach drivers being overloaded?

### More high-tech gadgets require added training

Although motorcoaches are being loaded up with all sorts of high-tech gadgets and gear, there appears to be little concern in the industry — so far — that the variety and volume of new equipment might be overloading drivers.

However, all of the new paraphernalia is making driver training more challenging, as well as time consuming.

That's the view of operators and safety experts who say as long as the new gear doesn't require drivers to fuss with it or pay much attention to it while they're driving, there's little reason for worry that drivers are being stressed by it.

"The only concerns regarding these technologies are that of driver distraction," observed veteran transportation safety consultant Carmen Daecher of Camp Hill, Pa.

He said if the technologies operate by signaling or giving a



warning — such as a flashing light or a beeping sound, then there shouldn't be safety concerns. But, he cautioned, if the driver must pay close attention to the device for it to be effective, then there would be an issue.

"As long as the equipment is passive then there is little chance it would pose a safety hazard," agreed Jack Burkert of Still Pond, Md., another long-time safety consultant in the bus and transportation industry.

The issue has been building over the past few years as commercial drivers adjust to having to

learn the workings of a wide assortment of new high-tech equipment that bus manufacturers have been adding to new coaches and aftermarket businesses have been making available for used coaches.

Among the newest add-ons are fire detection and suppression systems, electronic stability control systems, tire air pressure monitoring systems, onboard diagnostic and multiplex systems, computers with high-speed Internet capability, and driver and road monitoring systems.

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## FMCSA administrator keeps word to industry, steps up bus oversight

WASHINGTON — Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration boss John Hill appears to be a man of his word.

In January, he won wide applause from motorcoach operators from across the country when he spoke at the Motorcoach Expo in New Orleans and promised to step up the agency's oversight of the industry.

Now, it looks like he's doing just that.

In recent appearances before congressional committees, Hill has rattled off a laundry list of activities the FMCSA is doing to get and keep unsafe coaches and drivers off the highways.

Hill, who became administra-

tor of the federal agency last August after serving as its chief safety officer for more than three years, told U.S. House members that passenger safety remains a top priority at the FMCSA, and motorcoach operators can expect to see higher scrutiny through more inspections from federal and state authorities.

"Whether it be a college student boarding a bus for a summer cross-country trip, a senior citizens' group traveling by charter bus to see the Grand Canyon, or a class trip to Washington D.C., it is our duty to ensure our passenger carriers provide safe transportation," he emphasized.

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## Congress proposes hike in coach security grants

WASHINGTON — The House and Senate have passed separate bills that would substantially increase the dollar amount of federal grants given annually for over-the-road bus security.

The House overwhelmingly adopted the Rail and Public Transportation Security Act of 2007 that proposes \$12 million in bus security grants for fiscal 2008, with a jump to \$25 million annually for fiscal 2009 through 2011.

Earlier last month, the Senate passed the Surface Transportation and Rail Security Act of 2007 that proposes the same amounts as the House bill for 2008-2010. However, the Senate bill does not extend to 2011.

For fiscal 2007, the U.S. De-

partment of Homeland Security will be awarding \$11.6 million in over-the-road bus security grants. The deadline for applying for the '07 grants was March 6.

In the previous three years, less than \$10 million was handed out each year.

Still, no one should be making plans yet for spending an increased amount of grant money. The Bush Administration is threatening to veto the legislation in its current form because it contains a provision giving federal air traffic controllers collective bargaining rights.

The administration also has criticized the amount of spending contained in both bills.

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## Back to bargaining for Greyhound

NEW YORK — There will have to be more bargaining by Greyhound Lines and its unionized employees after drivers and mechanics overwhelmingly rejected a three-year contract the company insisted be put to a vote.

By a 77 to 23 percent margin, members of Amalgamated Transit Union National Local 1700 voted down the Greyhound proposal. Nearly 72 percent of the 3,300 eligible members cast ballots by phone or online.

Greyhound President and CEO Steve Gorman wasn't happy with the vote.

"We are disappointed in the outcome of the vote because we

provided a fair offer to our ATU-represented employees. We believe our offer addressed the issues that employees have told us are important to them, including improved wages and more affordable health care," said Gorman.

The contract turnaround by Local 1700 mirrored the results of voting by Greyhound drivers and mechanics in western Canada, and workers at the company terminal in Jackson, Miss.

ATU Local 1374, which represents Greyhound drivers, mechanics, terminal workers and other employees from British Columbia to Ontario, voted by a 92 to 8 percent margin to reject the compa-

ny's contract offer. And, in a second vote, the union membership voted in favor of a strike mandate by an 88 to 12 percent margin.

Greyhound's contract with Local 1700 expires April 15.

Business agents Jim Higgs of local 1374 and Bruce Hamilton of local 1700 urged Greyhound to return to negotiations with a different attitude.

There was some speculation in the financial press that the difficult contract negotiations could be a potential complication in the purchase of Greyhound's parent company, Laidlaw International, by FirstGroup Plc, the world's largest school bus operator.

## Tire makers announce price increases

Two of the nation's major suppliers of bus and truck tires, Bridgestone Firestone North American Tire and Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., have announced price increases.

Goodyear's tires went up by as much as 5 percent this month.

The Bridgestone Firestone prices also are generally going up by 5 percent, with "possible specific in-line adjustments in excess

of 5 percent." The price hikes are scheduled to begin phasing in May 1.

Yokohama truck and bus tires said it will increase prices by between 3 and 5 percent on May 1.

All three companies said increases in raw material costs are forcing them to hike prices.

"The continuing upward spiral of raw material costs makes this action necessary," said Asahiko

"Duke" Nishiyama, vice chairman and president of BFNAT.

"This unprecedented situation is simply not one that can be managed through the enhanced efficiencies and increased productivity that we are continually implementing at all levels of our company.

"As a result, we have no choice but to implement this price increase."

## UMA charter complaints pile up at federal agency

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — The United Motorcoach Association has filed charter service complaints against two more public transit agencies, including one that reportedly took away a \$4,900 charter from a private coach company after the customer already had paid a deposit.

Clemson Area Transit (CAT) of Clemson, S.C., and Belle Urban System in Racine, Wis., are the latest public transportation agencies to be named in the formal protests filed by UMA with the Federal Transit Administration.

UMA asked in its complaints that both agencies not only be cited for violating federal charter regulations, but that they be disqualified from receiving some federal funds for their operations.

The protests are among a series of complaints UMA has filed over the past several months against transit agencies that private operators maintain are running illegal charters and taking business away from them.

UMA contends in the filing against CAT that Atchison Charter Service in Spartanburg, S.C., had

been hired in February by the college sorority of Alpha Delta Pi to transport 350 of its members on a roundtrip between Seneca, S.C. and Anderson, S.C. It said the organization paid a deposit of \$980 to reserve seven buses for the trip.

Less than three weeks before the trip, however, the organization canceled the reservation, telling Atchison it had been offered a lower price by CAT and the transit agency would be handling the charter.

"Based on the number of inquiries and informal complaints I have received regarding Clemson Area Transit, I have little doubt this practice is routine," UMA Vice President Ken Presley wrote in the formal complaint.

FTA Regional Administrator Yvette G. Taylor in Atlanta, who declared the complaint has "obvious merit" and contains grounds on which relief may be granted, instructed the two sides to try to settle the issue on their own. If they are unable to do so, she said she would proceed with a formal investigation of the complaint.

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# THE DOCKET

## Drug usage declines in workplace

WASHINGTON — The federal government says drug use is declining in the U.S. work force, and credits workplace drug testing for driving down the number.

Quest Diagnostics' Drug Testing Index shows that since 1988, the number of those testing positive for drugs has fallen 72 percent, from 13.6 percent testing positive in 1988, to 3.8 percent in 2006.

This is a "new low for drug use among the combined U.S. work force," states a news release from the Office of National Drug Control Policy.

John Walters, director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, said the findings demonstrate that "drug testing can effectively deter drug use, and our efforts to eliminate meth labs are

having a significant impact."

According to 2006 figures from the Drug Testing Index, the number of persons testing positive for methamphetamine continues to decline. In 2004, 33 of every 10,000 persons tested in the general work force showed positive for meth, while 18 of every 10,000 people tested positive in 2006, a 45 percent reduction.

## Arkansas adopts driver drug-check law

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — The governor of Arkansas, Mike Beebe, has signed into law a bill that will create a state database to track drug test results of bus and truck drivers.

The law (formerly House Bill 2391) is intended to keep coach drivers and truckers who fail drug tests at one employer from applying for and getting a job elsewhere.

The law will put drug and alcohol test results in a state database. Employers will be required to obtain a report from the "Commercial Driver Alcohol and Drug Testing Database" before

hiring a driver. A fee of no more than \$1 will be charged for accessing the information.

The law also requires employers to report to the Office of Driver Services, within three days, the results of an alcohol screening that's performed on an employee. They also must report when an employee refuses to provide a specimen for an alcohol test.

Medical review officers must report test results for a whole range of illegal drugs, plus when a driver refuses to provide a specimen or tampers with a specimen.

The law contains a number of

privacy safeguards, including a provision that requires the employee to sign a request for information from the database. Employees also will be able to access information about themselves.

An employer who knowingly fails to check the database for a new hire is subject to a \$1,000 fine. There also are hefty fines for failing to provide drug and alcohol test results to the database. Finally, there is a huge fine — \$5,000 — for knowingly hiring an employee with a record of positive alcohol or drug tests. The penalties go into effect Jan. 1.

## Court supports carrier on fainting disqualification

CHICAGO — One of the nation's largest trucking companies could legally disqualify a driver who was diagnosed with a fainting disorder even though the condition is treatable and is not a disqualifying illness under Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, a federal appeals court has ruled.

Jerome Hoefner had driven a million miles for Schneider National of Green Bay, Wis., without an avoidable accident. But, in 2002, he had a fainting spell and was diagnosed with neurocardiogenic syncope, a disorder of the nervous system that can produce a sudden drop in blood pressure, causing the person to faint.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sued Schneider on Americans with Disability Act grounds, although Hoefner had gotten a different job at another trucking company.

Schneider had adopted a zero tolerance policy on neurocardiogenic syncope because two years earlier a Schneider driver with that

condition had driven his truck off a bridge and been killed.

Although the autopsy could not determine whether that driver had fainted, Schneider decided it could not accept the risk.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the 7th Circuit concluded that even though the risk of fainting while driving with the disorder is small, "Schneider is entitled to determine how much risk is too great for it to be willing to take."

Given Schneider's size and the fact that neurocardiogenic syncope is a fairly common disorder, the risk that at least one Schneider driver would have an accident because of the disorder "could not be thought wholly negligible," the court said.

## West Virginia legislators OK fuel tax again

CHARLESTON, W.Va. — Coach operators and others fueling in West Virginia will continue to pay a nickel-per-gallon portion of the state fuel tax. The tax had been slated to expire this summer.

The state's per-gallon tax rate for diesel fuel and gasoline is 31.5 cents.

State lawmakers decided to keep the nickel component of the tax until 2013. An analysis of the bill — HB2955 — indicates the nickel portion generates between \$45 million and \$55 million annually for roads ineligible for matching federal funds.

## Transit seeks charter firms

The following public transit provider has informed the United Motorcoach Association of its intent to provide charter bus service unless willing and able private operators step forward to offer their service, or to bid on contract opportunities. Appropriate operators are urged to take the time to respond to this public notice.

**Eagle and Pitkin counties, Colo.** Deadline: 5 p.m. April 19, 2007. Write to: Renee Allee Black, General Counsel, Roaring Fork Transportation Authority, 0766 Industry Way, Carbondale, CO 81623. Phone: (970) 963-9012.

## FMCSA to survey van operators before regulating 'em

WASHINGTON — The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration plans to conduct a telephone survey of 50 commercial passenger van operators before it begins requiring the companies to comply with virtually the same federal motor carrier safety regulations as motorcoach operators.

The FMCSA announced late last month it was planning the survey and is requesting comments on its proposal. The comment deadline is May 7.

As a result of a law passed in 2003, some operators of what the FMCSA calls "small passenger-carrying commercial motor vehicles" came under federal regulation if they operated interstate.

Under the five-year federal highway and public transit law passed a year and a half ago, Congress required the FMCSA to extend its regulatory reach to all interstate van operators. The change meant a far greater number of van operators were to become subject to Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations.

Most of the 9-15 passenger vehicles subject to the 2003 and 2005 laws are vans and they conduct business virtually everywhere, often transporting people from small towns to large airports, carrying workers to job sites, and transporting immigrants — both legal and illegal — along and away from the U.S. border, particularly in the Southwest.

"To effectively inform this segment of the motor carrier passenger industry of the regulatory

requirements that they will be subject to, and to assist the agency in administering an effective educational outreach program to this entire industry segment, FMCSA intends to conduct a survey to obtain information about all of these motor passenger carrier operations," the FMCSA said in its notice about the survey.

Specifically, FMCSA says it

wants to learn more about the safety and/or regulatory compliance challenges of van operators. The agency expects the information it gets by calling 50 van companies will provide insight into the common safety and regulatory compliance challenges these operators face.

"It is appropriate that FMCSA connect with and inform this seg-

ment of the motor carrier industry of its regulatory compliance responsibilities before implementing an enforcement program," the agency said.

Comments about the survey may be submitted on or before May 7, and sent to the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget, 725 Seventeenth Street, NW,

Washington, DC 20503. Attention: DOT/FMCSA Desk Officer.

For more information, contact Peter Chandler, FMCSA Office of Enforcement and Compliance, Commercial Passenger Carrier Safety Division, 400 Seventh St., SW, Washington, DC 20590. Phone (202) 366-5763, fax (202) 366-3621, or e-mail [peter.chandler@dot.gov](mailto:peter.chandler@dot.gov).

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## Speed limit is lowered at Malfunction Junction

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Officials here have cut the speed limit by 10 miles per hour at the intersection of I-20/59 and I-65, which is known locally as Malfunction Junction.

The intersection is where giant coils of steel have a propensity to spill off truck trailers and onto the

highway, creating a major traffic hazard. Since 1987, 26 of the huge coils have sprung from the trailers of semis and onto the roadway. (See Aug. 15 issue of *Bus & Motorcoach News*.)

The most-recent incident happened Feb. 18.

Dropping the speed limit to 50

Racine area.

In the letter, Belle Urban admitted it regularly operates charters in the eastern part of Racine County — 43 of them last year — and planned to continue doing so. However, it said Riteway had been placed on its list of private carriers available for charters in other parts of the county.

"In the past we have performed short, local charters to Racine residents who desire our services," the agency wrote. "We wish to continue that practice only, and have set a charter rate that we believe makes

## Booze measure sought in Connecticut

HARTFORD, Conn. — The Connecticut General Assembly is considering a bill that would prohibit open containers of alcohol in vehicles. However, the bill exempts passengers in buses, limousines and RVs.

mph from 60 mph resulted from a joint effort by state lawmakers, Gov. Bob Riley, trucking groups and others to mitigate what has become a regular occurrence at the interchange and elsewhere in the Birmingham area.

The Alabama Trucking Association suggested several solutions,

us competitive with local private operators."

Presley contends Belle Urban has set standards for the private operators far in excess of the FTA regulations and the wording in its correspondence may discourage private carriers that might be interested in providing charter service.

Meantime, the FTA has moved forward with a formal review of a charter violation complaint UMA filed earlier against Rome Transit Department of Rome, Ga. The FTA had given the agency 30 days in which to settle the dispute before

Drivers currently are prohibited from having an open alcoholic beverage, but passengers 21 years of age or older are free to drink while in the vehicle. The bill would eliminate the open-container provision.

including cutting the speed limit, imposing "strict penalties" on drivers and trucking companies that negligently drop loads there; load-securement inspections; truck-only lanes, and a certification program for haulers of steel coils in the state.

Birmingham is a major steel production center.

moving ahead to the review stage.

Presley said he spoke with Rome officials and was convinced talks with them would be futile and the transit system was determined to continue its charter activities.

Rome Transit, according to the complaint, violated the rules by running charters through a private shuttle service that UMA says is paid a \$50 commission to write the contracts and collect the money, which then is turned over to the transit agency.

Presley said Shuttle Tran owner Isaac Rudeseal acknowledged his participation in the scam, admitting that only Rome Transit buses and drivers are used for the charters. In addition, he said Rome director, Kathy Shealy, told him the agency not only does numerous bus charters but last year alone did 49 with its trolley bus.

## Roadcheck '07 inspections start June 7

WASHINGTON — The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance has announced that its 2007 Roadcheck will be June 7-9 in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico.

This year's Roadcheck, the 20th annual such bus and truck safety inspection program, will last 72 hours.

Roughly 8,500 state, provincial, local and federal truck and bus inspectors are expected to take part in Roadcheck '07. They will inspect commercial vehicles and their drivers at about 1,000 inspection sites along major interstates, plus mobile patrols will be on duty on other highways and at alternate locations, including motorcoach destinations.

Last year, the out-of-service rate for motorcoaches inspected during the safety blitz declined for only the second time in this decade. A record number of coaches — 1,238 — were inspected during Roadcheck 2006.

For more information, contact Steve Keppler at the CVSA by e-mail at [stevek@cvsa.org](mailto:stevek@cvsa.org), or 202-775-1623 ext. 106.

## FTA complaints

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Presley said UMA has not heard from CAT and the complaint is likely to be moved forward by the FTA.

The filing against Belle Urban claims the Wisconsin transit agency has been improperly disqualifying private carriers by failing to follow federal guidelines in determining if they're "willing-and-able" providers.

Presley said in the complaint that the violations appear to be repetitive and "constitute a blatant disregard for the federal charter rules."

The complaint was supported by a letter that Riteway Bus Service in Richfield, Wis., received from Belle Urban after the private operator responded to a notice from the transit agency that it was seeking carriers to provide charters in the

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Dallas, TX – Thursday, April 26  
Orlando, FL – Tuesday, May 1

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## FMCSA

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Most motorcoach operators welcome strong federal oversight because of the increased possibility of nailing unsafe and unscrupulous owners, long a thorn in their sides and a black mark on the industry.

"The availability of motorcoach safety data is more limited than that of property carriers due to fewer driver and vehicle safety inspections and a fewer total number of compliance reviews," Hill said in his congressional testimony. "However, we believe that bus companies deserve more careful program attention and dedicated enforcement resources because they transport people rather than cargo."

He pointed to two new initiatives that he stressed will help bolster FMCSA's oversight — one that will help track unrated and high priority motorcoach operators who appear to run unsafe operations and the other that will develop a comprehensive safety analysis.

## More Compliance Reviews

The program to identify possibly unsafe carriers will involve a dramatic jump in the number of compliance reviews the agency hopes to conduct this year to 1,600, from 600 the previous year, according to Hill.

In testimony before another House committee, Hill said the FMCSA would complete a compliance review of every motorcoach operator that has not been rated.

Later, FMCSA spokesman Duane DeBruyne told *Bus & Motorcoach News* that the high target number of 1,600, which

would amount to 43 percent of the 3,700 registered motorcoach companies in the country, is a top priority of the agency and the administrator is confident it can be reached.

DeBruyne said each state FMCSA director already has been assigned a share of the compliance reviews and that about 10 percent of the reviews were completed from mid-February to near the end of March.

Hill also told House members that the safety analysis initiative will reshape how FMCSA approaches its safety mission over the next few years by developing more effective and efficient ways to reduce commercial motor vehicle accidents. Among the measures, he said, are having more regular contact with carriers and drivers, better identifying unsafe carriers by improving its process of gathering data, and having a wider range of interventions beyond safety audits and compliance reviews to more quickly identify high safety risk behavior.

## Increased scrutiny

In addition to the two initiatives, Hill said FMCSA plans to apply more stringent safety standards for passenger carriers through an enhancement of SafeStat and the risk pointer system. Such changes, he said, will assure that passenger carriers receive a higher scrutiny through more frequent on-site reviews.

Spokesman DeBruyne said the details of the initiative still are being worked out, but could involve reducing the safety threshold for reviews, which would trigger more reviews.

States will soon be pitching in more too, according to Hill. He said state agencies that receive

motor carrier safety assistance program funds are being required to include bus inspection programs in the safety plans they file with the FMCSA. Several states currently do not have formal bus inspection programs, although most receive federal funding.

States also are being encouraged to increase the number of compliance inspections they conduct each year, he said. The effort is being carried out by FMCSA field offices working with state authorities.

Hill said the FMCSA also has stepped up its strike force activities, which involve large-scale inspection operations. The most recent was conducted in November in 14 eastern states, from Maine to Virginia. Working with state officials and nearly two dozen law enforcement agencies, the task force conducted more than 1,300 bus and driver safety inspections during a two-week period.

The inspections, which included all five levels, resulted in 1,679 violations, including 1,412 for vehicles and 267 for drivers. Also, 156 coaches were taken out of service and 43 drivers were ordered off the road. That translates to an out-of-service rate of roughly 12 percent for the coaches and more than 3 percent for the drivers.

All of the increased activity resulted in more than 26,000 inspections of all types last fiscal year, double the previous year's total.

## Looking at bus fires, too

Bus fires also are getting new attention from the FMCSA.

Hill said the agency has instructed its field offices and state partners to begin immediate-



John Hill

listing all fires in commercial vehicles as crashes. In the past, they were not counted on any accident lists, which made it difficult for the agency and the industry to track their numbers and causes.

Hill told members of the committee that the FMCSA also is taking a closer look at new motorcoach companies and is conducting on-site inspections of them within nine months of their beginning operations rather than the 18 months required by federal law. He said that where we have indicators of safety problems, the FMCSA immediately goes to the company.

Curbside carriers also are being targeted by the agency with a special task force continuing to track and inspect them, according to Hill. He said the task force identified 24 of them in the Northeast corridor last year and assigned satisfactory safety ratings to 18 of them and conditional ratings to three others. Two others, he added, went out of business and a third has yet to be inspected, but will be soon.

## Int'l Bridge, Ind. Toll Road increase rates

The toll for the International Bridge, linking Michigan and Ontario, increased this month to \$9 — from \$7.50 — for a three-axle motorcoach.

At the same time, a toll increase that went into effect on the Indiana Toll Road hit truckers hard but barely nicked motorcoach operators.

The toll on the International Bridge for buses and trucks had been \$2.50 per axle, but it was hiked to \$3. The toll for autos increased from \$1.50 to \$2.

Tolls are the bridge's primary revenue source, and the increase was needed for long-range improvements, said Phil Becker, general manager of the Joint International Bridge Authority. Engineers estimate the bridge's concrete deck will need to be replaced during the next 15 years at a cost of \$75 million.

For more information, go to [www.michigan.gov/iba](http://www.michigan.gov/iba).

Tolls for three-axle coaches driving the 157-mile length of the Indiana Toll Road went to \$10 from \$9.25. But tolls for two-axle motorcoaches, midsize buses and school buses remained unchanged at \$4.65.

Tolls jumped by 25 percent for five-axle big rigs running the entire route, going from \$18 to \$22.50.

ITR Concession Co., which operates the road, says the additional revenue will pay for a third driving lane on each side of the median in Lake County and complete the installation of electronic toll lanes.

For a list of tolls, go to [www.indianatollroad.org](http://www.indianatollroad.org).

## People

Linda Bauer Darr, senior vice president of the **American Bus Association**, has been named president and CEO of the **American Moving and Storage Association** of Alexandria, Va. Bauer Darr had been at the ABA for six years and worked on legislative initiatives, and strengthened the ABA Foundation.

Tara Sheehan, membership and marketing manager of the **United Motorcoach Association**, has joined the **Radio-Television News Directors Association** as director, membership and marketing. The RTNDA is based in Washington, D.C.

Mike Laffan has rejoined **ABC Companies** as senior account executive for ABC's western region. For the past four years Laffan has been sales manager for the school and commercial bus division of **DATTCO Inc.** of New Britain, Conn. In his new position, Laffan succeeds *Clint Guth* who was promoted last month to regional vice president/general manager of ABC's western region. Laffan will be responsible for sales and customer support in central California, Arizona, Utah and Nevada. He will be based in Garden Grove, Calif.

REI has announced a major expansion of the sales staff for its school bus/transit division. Eight account representatives were hired:

*Kevin Antoniak* comes to REI with 10 years of sales experience with welding equipment, robotics and lasers. He will cover Kentucky, Ohio, Tennessee and West Virginia.

*Brad Bates* previously was a list broker. He will cover California, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

*Joe Behrendt* joins REI after graduating from Creighton University. He will cover Alaska, Hawaii, Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

*Nick Gentile* spent two years in marketing for Ameristar Casinos. He will cover Alabama, Florida and Georgia.

*Phil Guenette* previously was a manager and sales representative in the auto industry. He will cover Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana and Missouri.

*Rick Ingalise* comes to REI with 30 years of sales experience in the direct home profession. Ingalise will cover Maine, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont.

*Denny Leick* has a background as a finance and broker loan representative. He will cover Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island.

*Jeanne Mullins* spent 10 years in international sales in the clothing industry. She will cover Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, North and South Carolina, and Virginia.

## ABC Companies honors top sales representatives

FARIBAULT, Minn. — ABC Companies has recognized its top sales performers for last year.

Bob Holloway, a senior account executive in the company's southern region, was named ABC Account Executive of the Year.

Holloway is responsible for

sales and customer support in northern Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado and Arkansas.

The second place award for 2006 went to Charlie Walser, who has been with ABC for more than 20 years. Walser was the top ABC sales executive in 2005.

Clint Guth, a senior account executive before his promotion last month to vice president/general manager of ABC's western region, was the No. 3 sales executive last year. Guth was the top performer in 2004 and 2003 and No. 2 in 2005.

ABC does not base its per-

formance award solely on sales achievements.

"It is a combination of several criteria, the least of which is sales volume," said company President and CEO Dane Cornell. "These three individuals encompass the best there is in terms of customer service and support."

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## Hi-tech coaches

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Plus, there are security systems with inside and outside cameras and panic buttons, global positioning systems, satellite radio and television receivers, 12-speed transmissions, electronic onboard recorders, lane departure warning

systems, cell phones, and more sophisticated entertainment systems.

New later this year will be diesel particulate filter systems that may require active regeneration by drivers.

**What's a driver to do?**

While most of the equipment

operates silently and passively, some of it — particularly onboard entertainment systems — could pose some safety issues because they easily can be operated by a driver while a coach is moving, according to Daecher.

"Most entertainment systems require little attention by the driver but, nevertheless, they do re-

quire attention at some point," he said. "The issue here is the importance for the driver to understand that control or operation of onboard equipment should only be attempted while not in motion."

He pointed out that the vast majority of the high-tech gear — fire suppression systems and tire air pressure monitoring systems among them — require almost no driver attention until something goes wrong and their warning lights or sounds are triggered.

Craig Dance, president of Champion Charter of Greenville, S.C., said while the new high-tech equipment may not be too much for the drivers to deal with, it has presented carriers with new challenges in training their drivers.

"We don't see any major problems with the electronic systems right now, although it is important to find the right trainers and teachers, and that already is a real challenge" he explained. "There are a lot of things for a driver to do and keep up with and we just hope that we're training them right."

Daecher emphasized, too, that it is critical that drivers be supplied with sufficient information for the safe and efficient operation or response to the new technologies.

"This type of familiarization may take one to two additional hours at most in terms of orienting them to the technology, its use, what they should expect to see within the vehicle as a result of its presence and how to operate it," he said.

"I don't see this as being a major contributor of time to the training program; however, it is an important additional element that must be covered."

**Young drivers vs. old**

Burkert said most young drivers seem to have few problems working or accepting the new equipment, while older drivers sometimes take longer to become acquainted with it and convinced of its value. "But once the older drivers accept them, then they seem to love them more than the younger drivers," he added.

Still, he noted that there are concerns that drivers are suspicious of some of the equipment and electronic onboard recorders, seeing them as being intrusive because they allow their bosses to keep a closer watch on their performance behind the wheel.

"But I've found that the complaints have less to do with the equipment and more to do with the

level of hostility already built up in a company that causes the problems," he said. "These are tools that can support the driver and the company and help them get better together."

Daecher pointed out that much of the new equipment can take some pressure off the drivers by making it easier for them to figure out what might be wrong when a coach breaks down on the road.

"Onboard diagnostics offer opportunities to more precisely pinpoint a problem," he said. "Drivers will still have the opportunity to do the old-fashioned hands-on work related to belt replacements and other more mechanical issues which cannot be replaced with these emerging technologies."

**Facing the inevitable**

While most of the new high-tech equipment is gaining strong, industrywide support, some operators have yet to embrace much of it, although most know they will have to buy into it soon.

"We have 19 coaches and our newest is a 1995, so we don't have a lot of high-tech equipment and aren't faced with any problems," said Judy Reed, general manager of Bill Rohrbaugh's Charters in Manchester, Md. "But, I'm sure we will when we upgrade."

Mike Abercrombie, general manager of Amador Stage Lines in Sacramento, Calif., said he's considering putting road-recording cameras on his 50 buses even though he knows drivers are likely to resist.

"But they can protect the drivers, too," he said, adding that cameras can show how drivers manage to avoid accidents by their skillful driving. "For every one incident, there probably are 10 near-misses and we could see those with cameras."

Other operators may not be as quick to want any of the high-tech equipment on their buses.

Warren Micale, owner of Master's Touch Christian Charter Service in Prescott Valley, Ariz., is one of them as is evident by his recently taking delivery of a 2007 motorcoach with few of the high-tech extras.

"They even tried to sell me a satellite, but we turned them down because all we needed were a DVD and VCR," he said, adding that his regular customers find other things to do, including playing cards and listening to narrations by drivers about their trip. "My clientele is a little different than most."

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## BIG event for Abbotts' 80th

PIGEON FORGE, Tenn. — When your company longevity reaches 80 years, and you're pondering how to mark the milestone, perhaps you'll remember the Abbotts of Roanoke, Va.

Since 1927, the Abbott family has operated Abbott Bus Lines, now Abbott Trailways.

To celebrate those 80 years, the Abbotts loaded-up 15 coaches, carrying 631 paying passengers, and took them 255 miles to Pigeon Forge, for a Great Smoky Mountains birthday party that included two-days of entertainment, shopping and dining.

The finale was a private show and giant birthday cake at the popular Smith Family Theater.

"We love Pigeon Forge," Fred Abbott told a local newspaper.

"The people here have done nothing but help us."

Pigeon Forge, a leading motorcoach destination and tourism mecca, has long been a favorite destination for Abbott Trailways coaches.

Fred Abbott's father, Taft, founded Abbott Bus Lines, and Fred's son, John, is the third generation to help operate the company.

Today, Abbott Trailways is the nation's 35th largest motorcoach operator, according to *Metro* magazine. About 200 people are on the payroll.

In Roanoke, Abbott is synonymous with coach travel but its following — and business — extends beyond the Roanoke Valley. Today, half of its charter runs originate outside the area.

## Greyhound picks marketing team

DALLAS — A three-agency advertising, marketing and public relations team from California has gone to work for Greyhound Lines with the mission of rejuvenating the company brand.

A Sausalito, Calif.-based advertising agency, Butler, Shine,

Stern & Partners, will lead efforts on the Greyhound account and be assisted by the Vidal Partnership, a Hispanic marketing agency, and the San Francisco office of the public relations giant Edelman.

The first work from the agencies could show up as early as June.

## John Giddens, UMA accountant, dies

WASHINGTON — John A. Giddens, who was the accountant and bookkeeper of the United Motorcoach Association for 35 years, died late last month.

Mr. Giddens went to work for the association in 1971, shortly after it was founded. He was the first employee hired by the association's long-time executive director, Wayne J. Smith.

He had held a number of accounting positions with financial institutions and nonprofit organizations before joining the United Bus Owners of America (which became the United Motorcoach Association more than a decade ago).

During his years at UMA he maintained the organization's fi-

nancial records until last November when he could no longer handle the daily commute to Alexandria, Va., where the association has its headquarters.

"John worked tirelessly in managing our finances," said UMA President and CEO Victor Parra. "If his month-end statements were off by a dime, he would search and search until he found the cause of the variance. He didn't — and wouldn't — write off a penny."

"I remember the first day I arrived at UMA in 1998, I introduced myself to John and asked him if I could take a look at the books. That produced a big smile as we went down to the bottom draw in a filling cabinet and pull

out a large green, hand-written ledger dating back to 1971.

"He then asked with that same big smile, 'How far back to you want to go?' Needless to say, he could track every dime we spent from our very beginning," said Parra.

Annette Ott, who worked with Mr. Giddens for 13 years on the UMA staff, said he was both a hard worker and a caring individual.

Mr. Giddens was a native of the Washington area, and studied to be a court stenographer before switching to accountancy. He was an avid political observer and relished discussing political issues and politicians.

He is survived by a brother and a sister.

## 11,000th ZF-AS Tronic installed in coach

VERNON HILLS, Ill. — ZF, a leading supplier of transmissions and axles for buses, motorcoaches and trucks, says that 11,000 of its AS Tronic automated manual transmissions have been installed in motorcoaches worldwide since the transmission became available in North America five years ago.

Following its U.S. and Canadian introduction in 2002, the AS Tronic was quickly adopted by many motorcoach operators when independent testing showed it provided a 10 percent fuel savings over fully automatic transmissions tested with pre-2004 engines.

Five years later, the AS Tronic

has become a viable option for motorcoach operators who want to reduce fuel consumption and component wear, while maintaining driver and passenger comfort, said Tom Galla, marketing manager for ZF North American operations.

The AS Tronic has been available in Europe since 1997.



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## MCI Grand Tour is rolling, stops planned for 21 cities

SCHAUMBURG, Ill. — Motor Coach Industries kicked off the motorcoach industry's biggest road show earlier this month, with plans to bring workshops, coach demonstrations, sales promotions and prizes to customers across the U.S. and Canada.

Dubbed the MCI Grand Tour II, the rolling promotional campaign has two caravans this year with the first one kicking off April 3 in Calgary, Alberta, moving to Seattle on April 5, and San Leandro, Calif. on April 9.

The second group started its tour April 5 at the MCI Sales and Service center in Lebanon, Tenn., and was scheduled to be in Louisville, Ky., for the grand opening of MCI's National Training Center on April 16.

An expanded and upgraded version of last year's event, the '07 Grand Tour is making 21 stops at MCI Sales and Service centers,

Caterpillar dealerships and other locations before it concludes next month.

For baseball fans, the May 8 stop in Boston is at Fenway Park.

"We planned the stops close to our customers for their convenience," said Patricia Ziska, MCI vice president and chief customer officer.

The tour will give operators an opportunity to learn about and test-drive new MCI models; see a demonstration of the new MCI driving simulator, and attend workshops on the 2007 engines, MCI diagnostics, and product support tools.

Each stop also will feature a sponsor expo area where attendees can learn more about sponsors' products and services.

Additionally, there will be prize giveaways and catered lunch.

Co-sponsors of the Grand Tour II event are Caterpillar, ZF, Blaupunkt, Amaya-Astron Seating, ION

## Cat: Ready to service '07 engines

MOSSVILLE, Ill. — When motorcoaches start rolling off assembly lines next quarter with 2007 Caterpillar engines, operators will find that the Cat dealer shelves are stocked with parts and Cat technicians are ready to provide any service needed.

In fact, Cat says its service and support network, including Cat dealers, is ready to roll.

"Over the past year, 56 fleets have rolled up nearly 12 million miles on more than 100 Cat 2007 preproduction engines," said George Taylor, director and general manager for Global On-Highway Business at Caterpillar.

To provide seamless service to bus and truck owners and operators, more than 600 technicians at both Cat dealers and OEM dealers have received extensive technical training on 2007 Cat engines.

The training, says Taylor, has

included hands-on instruction on all of the systems and technology employed by the 2007 engines:

- Diesel particulate filter
- Cat Regeneration System
- Cat Clean Gas Induction

Online training programs also have been provided, along with a dealer training kit, including a training manual, a DVD and various supporting material to train branch locations and OEM dealers.

The online training program has reached more than 20,000 technicians who work at both Caterpillar and OEM dealers, said Steve Ashburn, product support consultant, Caterpillar Global On-Highway Engines.

"And for three months last fall, we brought in Caterpillar training instructors from every dealership in North America for in-depth training on the new 2007

engines. These people are responsible for passing this knowledge to technicians at dealerships across North America," said Ashburn.

The parts distribution process also will be seamless, with parts already stocked and available when needed, according to Taylor. Cat engine parts currently are available through any Caterpillar authorized dealer.

The Cat electronic technician software has been updated to diagnose the '07 engines.

The ACERT emissions-reduction technology used by Caterpillar has been refined for 2007, and Cat engines have major enhancements — a refined combustion process called clean-gas induction and a self-regenerating diesel particulate filter.

More information is available at [www.cat.com](http://www.cat.com).

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## EPA rules spark Prevost training

SAINTE-CLAIRE, Quebec — Next week, upwards of 50 French-speaking motorcoach technicians, maintenance supervisors and parts managers will come here for updated training on Prevost coaches.

The training session that begins April 22 is part of Prevost Car's after-sales service program, which this year included two English-language seminars in February and March. Those classes also drew close to 50 attendees each.

While Prevost conducts training programs throughout the year across North America, the comprehensive sessions conducted early in the year close to the Prevost factory in Quebec City are consistently the most popular with both U.S. and Canadian technicians.

## EPA issues guidelines for 2010

WASHINGTON — The Environmental Protection Agency has announced controversial ground rules for diesel engine manufacturers that intend to use selective catalytic reduction to meet the 2010 emission rules.

The EPA says the engine makers must supply the urea that makes selective catalytic reduction work and prove it will be available to operators using those engines.

In a letter to the engine com-

panies, the agency also said original equipment manufacturers would have to design warning systems to disable an SCR-equipped bus or truck if a driver attempted to bypass emission controls, for example, by not refilling the vehicle's urea tank.

Interest this year was particularly high because of the changes brought about by the EPA emissions rules for 2007.

Not only did the Detroit Diesel engines that go into Prevost coaches get a makeover, but Prevost went in a different direction with the exhaust treatment system the new engines require. Prevost's system is installed vertically.

The '07 training also covered multiplex controls, the HVAC system, pneumatics, powertrain diagnosis, and basic electrical systems.

Prevost's entire field-service department contributes to developing the course and training materials used for the training.

"The whole experience was first rate from top to bottom," reported Rob Lavery, parts manager of Brewster Inc. in Banff, Alberta. "The Prevost service representatives are to be commended for their knowledge, approachability and their ability to relate to the students. I think they are what set Prevost seminars apart from so many others, where the teachers have the knowledge but not necessarily the ability or the field experience to relate to those being taught."

The Sainte-Claire seminars last five days.



Rob Lavery of Brewster Transportation, with elbow on service door, and other attendees check an electrical system.

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## Calendar

### APRIL 2007

**24-26 Ontario Transportation Expo**, Holiday Inn Select Toronto Airport and International Centre, Mississauga, Ont. Info: Go to [www.ote.ca](http://www.ote.ca).

**26-28 National Tour Association Spring Meet**, Grand Okanagan Lakefront Resort, Kelowna, British Columbia. Info: Go to [www.nta.travel](http://www.nta.travel), or call (800) 682-8886.

### MAY 2007

**6-9 APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference**, Renaissance Nashville (Tenn.) Info: [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com).

**17-19 Tourism Cares for America**, Virginia City, Nev. Info: Go to [www.tourismcares.org](http://www.tourismcares.org) or call (781) 821-5990.

**26-28 2007 National Tour Association Tour Operator Spring Meet**, Kelowna, British Columbia. Info: [www.NTA.travel](http://www.NTA.travel).

### JUNE 2007

**2-5 Georgia Motorcoach Operators Association Annual Meeting & Marketplace**, Savannah, Ga. Info: Go to [www.gamotorcoachoperators.org](http://www.gamotorcoachoperators.org), or call (866) 376-7770.

## Tourism training by motorcoach

HAGERSTOWN, Md. — Hagerstown and Washington County, Md., may not be among America's most popular visitor destinations but that doesn't mean local tourism leaders aren't proactive about being the best they can be.

And a local motorcoach operator, Atlantic Coach Trailways, is a key partner in the effort.

On April 10, the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau hosted a training session for front-line tourism staffers.

The annual "Washington County on the Road" program is designed to familiarize local tourism industry managers and employees with the attractions and parks in Hagerstown-Washington County.

The free tour is sponsored by the CVB

and a coach from Atlantic Coach Trailways is used to transport everyone.

"This tour helps the front-line staff person to relay accurate information to visitors, and it often leads to guests staying extra nights," said Betsy De Vore, director of sales for the CVB.

De Vore says the event is helpful for anyone who comes in contact with visitors. CVB President and CEO Tom Riford acts as tour guide.

After viewing a short film, the coach visits the county's most-popular visitor destinations, including Antietam National Battlefield.

For more information about the area and the Hagerstown-Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau, go to [www.marylandmemories.com](http://www.marylandmemories.com).

## Kobussen: No. 80 for Trailways

FAIRFAX, Va. — Kobussen Buses, a diversified operation with a name that seemingly wouldn't allow it to be anything but a bus company, has become the 80th member of the Trailways Transportation System.

Based in Kaukauna, Wis., Kobussen Trailways is in its third generation of family management; it was founded by Elwood Kobussen 70 years ago as a school bus operation.

In the ensuing years, the company added motorcoach and community service transportation while continue to operate school buses.

Today, Kobussen Trailways employs 400

people, and operates 12 motorcoaches, 300 school buses, and an array of other vehicles.

Company President Joe Kobussen said he expects Trailways' networking and other member advantages to boost business.

"We have always been strictly a charter company," said Kobussen, and now that Trailways is aggressively into this, we felt our affiliation would be a good fit. Also, we have always emphasized safety and security in our operations, and Trailways is on the same road.

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## Tourism Cares will tackle Virginia City next month

VIRGINIA CITY, Nev. — Tourism Cares, the travel industry organization that helps rejuvenate historically significant destinations by mobilizing hundreds of volunteers, will tackle this legendary mining town next month.

"We're going to clean up the town the Cartwrights couldn't," says Bruce Beckham, executive director of Tourism Cares, referring to the fictional family who lived outside Virginia City in the classic TV series *Bonanza* from the 1960s and early 70s.

At one time, Virginia City "was

one of the richest places on earth, with 30,000 rich and sometimes rowdy residents. Today, it's a town of only 1,000 residents whose job it is to restore and maintain its historic sites. They need a jump start from the tourism industry and Tourism Cares is going there on May 18 to do just that," says Beckham.

Beginning in 2003, Tourism Cares and its hundreds of volunteers have helped revitalize the south side of Ellis Island, New Orleans, Mount Vernon, and Biloxi, Miss.

Anyone working in the travel industry can join in. Virginia City is outside Reno. "Once you get to Reno, your transportation to Virginia City, your unique rural

accommodations, meals, worksite and tools will be provided," says Beckham. "And there will be a couple of great parties, too. After all, this is the tourism industry.

To register, go to [http://tourismcares.org/TCFA\\_2007.asp](http://tourismcares.org/TCFA_2007.asp). For more information, call (781) 821-5990, or go to [www.tourismcares.org](http://www.tourismcares.org).

## Industry to feel DaimlerChrysler split

DETROIT — The possible split-up of DaimlerChrysler could have implications for the North American motorcoach and bus industry.

That's because DaimlerChrysler owns Freightliner, the largest maker of heavy duty trucks in North America and a manufacturer of chassis for cutaway buses.

Additionally, Freightliner owns Thomas Built Buses, the school bus manufacturer, and Detroit Diesel, the No. 1 supplier of engines to the motorcoach industry.

There have been media reports that Daimler intends to keep Freightliner and Detroit Diesel, but sell the Chrysler auto-truck manufacturing operation.

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